

Teachers' Attitude on Students' Academic Achievement in Mathematics in Secondary Schools in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated teachers' attitude towards students' academic achievement in mathematics in Secondary Schools in Cross River State. The study was a descriptive and correlational one involving 230 teachers made up of 100 female teachers and 130 male teachers, drawn from 10 out of the total of 232 public Secondary Schools in Cross River State by simple random and systematic sampling technique. Academic performance records of 400 students were used; a four page questionnaire and a rating scale were also used to collect data for the study. The data collected were subjected to descriptive statistic using mean (\bar{x}) standard deviation (SD) in order to answer the research questions while the Pearson's product moment correlation (r) was used to answer the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that positive attitude by teachers produced better performing students while negative attitude is in the contrary and should be discouraged. However, the observed difference in male and female teachers attitude could also be due to social status and school environment related factors. It was concluded that teachers' attitude is not the only determinant for students' academic achievement. It was however recommended that male and female teachers should learn the art of cooperative within themselves in the teaching subjects in school; they should do everything possible to discourage rivalry as this does not enhance agreeableness in group assignment. Wise counselling should be given by parent teachers and counsellors regarding their attitude towards teaching not only at home nor in classroom alone but later in the workplace and in the society for peaceful co-existence. This should however not be at the expense of truth and objective, good manners through sound moral instructions by their teachers.

Keyword: Teachers', Attitude, Students', Academic Achievement, Mathematics.

Background to the study

The significance of education to societal growth and development cannot be overemphasized. This is because, internationally, education is considered as a human right that should be accorded to all individuals in the society, in fact it was the reason why a lot of international human right bodies consider education as a fundamental human right. The greatest challenge facing Nigeria and making it difficult for good quality education that is capable of bringing about sustainable development is poor performances of students in public examinations especially in

Mathematics, where some managed to pass. Sometimes the credit level pass obtained is through examination malpractices of different forms (Afe, 2001)

However, majority of Nigerian students generally fear mathematics. Most of them consider it difficult, complex and abstract (Harbor-Peters, 2001). Worse still, many students do not immediately see the use or applicability of the subject to their lives and to the world of work and so wonder why they should be troubled with the study of the subject. Except as a requirement for admission into institutions of higher learning, most students do not see any other need for mathematics learning. Agboor, (2005) observed that some teachers of mathematics are either not convinced themselves, or do not consider it needful to let students know the benefits that could be derived from the study of mathematics beyond being a necessity for entry into institutions of higher learning. Regrettably, This attitude of teachers towards students learning has resulted most people (students particularly) find it difficult to give time and attention to anything they have not seen the value that would be derived from it, some students may only be paying lip service to the study of mathematics if teachers do not make known to them the importance of mathematical knowledge. Their focus would then be on acquiring a good grade in the subject at the end of their secondary school career whether by fair or foul means. The implication of this is that examination malpractice would be on the increase and a greater majority of the students would always fail the subject each year and so end up forfeiting the pursuit of many careers that would have benefitted them and the country better (Akpan, (1998). More importantly, they would also be losing out in acquiring the basic knowledge, skills and habits that effective mathematics learning is expected to equip students with so that they can live a more meaningful and productive life in the society.

Some researchers lay the blame on the government for their shortcoming towards schools such as inadequate funding, lack of teaching materials poor environmental conditions and lack of qualified and competent teachers. Some also blame the principals' administrative inefficiency, while others lay blame on the teachers for their incompetence in their various areas of specialization (Ezeanolue, 1982).

This study has attributed poor performance of students in mathematics studies partly to teachers' factors. More specifically follow up studies have been conducted on teacher factors to determine the extent and magnitude of their contribution to student's academic achievement. Considering the important roles of teachers, invariably, role models whose behaviours are easily copied by students (Okon & Anderson, 1992). What teachers like or dislike and how they feel about their learning or studies could have a significant effect on their students. Unfortunately, however, many teachers seldom realize that how they teach, how they behave and how they interact with students can be more paramount than what they teach. In a nutshell, teacher's attitudes directly affect students' academic achievement. Teachers' attitude towards their students in school must be favourable enough to carry students along. This study was designed to determine the influence of teachers' attitude on secondary school student's academic achievement in mathematics studies in Cross River State. Nigeria.

It is believed that efficiency of human achievement depends on environmental conditions such as the temperature of the room, the humidity and circulation of air, distracting noise. Human efficiency depends also on morale. Man's morale is his attitude to his work that, if an individual is self-confident, believes that what he is doing is worthwhile with potentials to produce and succeed; therefore his morale is bound to be high. The morale of students can change by such incentives as praise or reproof, rewards or punishments, working against a competitor or cooperating as a member of a group.

Generally, human achievement varies with the incentives employed or used. There can be under motivation or over-motivation. It is an art to know or discover high motivation because the effectiveness of an incentive changes with repeated use. There are other sources of motivation other than primary drives. Primary drives of motivation originate from bodily mechanism exemplified by general human hunger for food, thirst for water, and the urge for air, the urge to urinate or defecate, to rest after a protracted exertion and to be active after a prolonged inactivity. While secondary drives originate in the environment and for which no bodily mechanism has been discovered. For instance, an individual in an unfamiliar environment explores and manipulates the surrounding objects. When he is habituated or he gets used to the environment, the exploratory behaviour ceases. No bodily mechanism using glands, nerve centre or muscle, which arouses exploratory behaviour rather the exploratory drive is secondary since it originates from the novelty or newness of the environment and not from any condition within the tissues. Environmental motivations are known as incentives and there are two types of incentives, namely, goal-objects, and stimulating conditions. Achievement is usually directed toward goal-objects and usually too, there is a variety of stimulating conditions which act as spurs and checks to achievement.

In summary, motivation is a concept, which identifies the factors that move human beings to achieve goals. These goals may be established by a group, but most actions are inclined primarily toward meeting personal needs and secondarily toward meeting objectives. The drives, needs and desires that motivate people to act include both the physiological needs for air, water, love (sex), food and sleep, and the psychological needs for self-respect, satisfaction, meaningful interaction with other people, status, and being liked or accepted by others (Onyechu, 1996).

Hussain (2004), citing Adams and Garret are of the opinion that teaching is a planned interaction between those who function as teacher and those who function as learners". The above definition shows that teaching especially in mathematics education does not only imply telling, but stimulating, fascinating and motivating learning. It is directing learning activities towards the achievement of appropriate education goals. Furthermore, the definition presupposes the possession by the teacher on the relevant knowledge, skills attitudes, information and competence necessary to the profession.

In mathematics education, students are induced to learn through motivation and practice. Such motivation and practices therefore, can be sustained only when the learning materials are functional. The above explanations showed that motivation plays a vital role in the learning of mathematics education. Emphasis therefore, will be focused briefly on motivation as a factor in the learning of mathematics skills (Ofoegbu, 2004).

Attitude towards profession means a person's feelings, behaviours and commitment to the profession or job. If the teacher is committed and has positive attitude then it is sure that his performance will be better and his effort will be fruitful. (Skinner & Nwachukwu, 2000), narrated that education is a nation building activity. The quality of education depends upon ability and efficiency of teachers. If the teachers are well trained, motivated and committed with their profession, learning will be enhanced.

Hussain (2004), reported in a study of teacher and student characteristics as correlates of learning outcomes in mathematics studies that teachers' attitude towards teaching significantly predict student's attitude as well as achievement in mathematics studies. He further noted that found that teachers' positive attitude towards science and technology could be enhanced by the following teacher-related factors:

- Teachers' Enthusiasm
- Teachers' resourcefulness and helpful behaviour.
- Teachers' thorough knowledge of the subject matter and their making science and technology quite interesting.

From the above, we can say that the role of the teacher as facilitator of learning and the contributions to students' academic achievement is enormous. Onyeachu, (1996) was of the opinion that the success of our science and technology programme depends greatly on the classroom teacher as he is the one that translates all our thoughts into action. It can be argued to some extent that the characteristics of teachers and their experiences and behaviours in the classroom, contribute to the learning environment of their students, which in turn will have an effect on students outcomes, it is also important that we do not undermine the role of the parents in affecting student learning. A common hypothesis with respect to the relationship between teachers' experience and students' academic achievement is that students taught by more experienced teachers achieve at a higher level, because their teachers have mastered the content and acquired classroom management skills to deal with different types of classroom problems.

Poor academic performance of students in Nigeria has been linked to poor teachers' performance in terms of accomplishing the teaching task, negative attitude to work and poor teaching habits which have been attributed to poor motivation (Oloegbu, 2004). It has also been observed that conditions that would make for effective teaching such as resources available to teachers, general conditions infrastructure as well as instructional materials in public secondary schools in Nigeria are poor (Oredein, 2000). These prevailing conditions would definitely show a negative influence on the instructional quality in public schools which may translate to poor academic performance, attitude and values of secondary school students. Although teachers' strong effect would significantly influence students' academic achievement other factors such as socio-economic background, family support, intellectual aptitude of student, personality of student, self-confidence and previous instructional quality have been found to also influence students examination score positively or negatively (Star 2000).

Taiwo (1980) has observed that the teaching profession had gone down on the state of respectability. He also reported that the majority of secondary school teachers does not possess positive attitude towards their profession.. The teaching profession has considerably suffered as it could not attract the best talent because of the poor pay scale, limited prospects of promotion and insecurity of service particularly in private institutions. No one can deny that the success of any system of education depends upon the quality of teachers.

Ofoegbu, (2004) carried out a research to determine how effective time used in the classroom could raise student's achievement. Teachers and students were observed as students were tested for learning gains in some subjects taught. The most pronounced finding was the opportunity to learn (or time allocated) on academic content was strongly related to students achievement. Butin, (2000) examined multipurpose class spaces, educational trends/time influencing multipurpose classrooms, key issues when using these spaces. The design principles indicated that the classrooms should reflect the spirit of the school and faster adaptability. It also explained that the uses of time and space were related to each other around learning tasks. The researchers therefore counselled that effective teachers should develop an attitude of flexibility and experimentation about these features of classroom life. They need to know that every class was different and therefore plan about the use of time and space must be adjusted to particular circumstances.

Significantly, few courses deal specifically with the implication of our growing awareness of the nature sex role socialization for instruction and educational practice. Although existing course often incorporate materials on sex stereotyping in textbooks differential reinforcement of male and female students or information on possible student outcomes few provide opportunities for the development of skill necessary for classroom application. It is important that we as teacher educators recognize the significance of sex role stereotyping as a factor in perpetuating educational inequity, a factor which limited male and females. It is further important that we articulate the relationship between eliminating sex role stereotyping and increasing the ability of our educational system to fulfil its stated goal of providing equal opportunity to all students.

According to Sexton, (1975), school words tend to be the word of women. They have their own sound and smell perfumed or antiseptic just as there are dialects of class occupation and region as there are distinguishable dialects of gender. Women use different words stress them differently, write them differently and usually mush more legibly. Boys for example usually prefer tough and colourful short words while female teachers, girls lean toward longer, more floral and opaque synonym school words are clear and refined remote from physical thing as the typical school manner from the tough realities of ordinary life. Male models are a necessary ingredient to the healthy development of young children. From the studies "both boys and girls stated that the female teachers preferred girls while their male teachers did not show preference". Onyeachu (1996), revealed that woman ranked significantly ahead of men as democratic leaders. Actually these investigators indicated that women probably should be favoured, since women possessed interests in the objective of teaching encouraging students participation, gaining positive reactions from teachers and superiors, working with teachers and community, and evaluating learning to a significantly greater degree than men did.

Theoretical framework

This theoretical background is concerned with two theories namely:

- 1 Social Learning Theory by Bandura (1967)
- 2 Traits Theory by Gordon Willard Allport (1924)

Social learning theory by Bandura (1967)

Social learning as described by some authorities in psychology of learning as the interactive approval to learning. Social learning theory as advanced by (Bandura 1971) who demonstrates that behaviours are acquired by watching another that performs the behaviour. The model displays it and imitates it. The theory is based on the fact that behaviour is a learned phenomenon and as a result personality can be explained in terms of cumulative effects of a series of learning experiences. Social learning emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between an individual and his environment. To Bandura, the most basic and significant principle of social learning is reinforcement. He argued that most of our behaviour in social situation is acquired through the principle of vicarious reinforcement. After we are exposed to models performing behavioural sequences we tend to imitate therein; depending on the type of reinforcement given to such behaviour. In other words vicarious reinforcement refers to the modification of an observer's behaviour through the reinforcement administered by a model, which is being observed.

The implication of this theory to this study is that teachers are invariably role model, whose behaviours are easily copied by students what teachers like, or dislike appreciates and how they feel about their learning or studies could have a significant effect on their students. How they behave and how they interact with students can be more paramount than what they teach.

Traits theory by Gordon Willard Allport (1924)

A trait is a remarkable physical or psychological characteristic that under-grounds a person's behaviour. The traits theory developed in the traditions of classical management Known as the "Great man theory" traits considered teaching in terms of teacher traits which were supposed to be mental, physical and psychological. These were to include physical stature weight, age, et cetera. Mentally this would include high intelligence quotient. Psychologically, a teacher was to have positive adjustment and be aggressive, alert, enthusiastic, creative, extroverted or introverted, humour-inclined, tolerant, dominant etc.

This theory believed that teachers were born not made. The greatest undoing of trait theory is the point that trait are unable to come up with globally applicable sets of traits to be found in all teachers, (James 2004). The nexus of this theory to the study is that teachers are expected to exhibit or possessed all the sterling qualities that would enhance effective and efficient teaching and learning process

Statement of the problem

Considering government huge investment in public schools, its output in terms of quality of students has been observed to be unequal with expenditure. Consequent upon the observed deterioration in the academic achievement of students in mathematics, attitude and values of secondary school teachers in public secondary school one wonders if the high failure rates and the poor quality of students are not a reflection of the instructional quality in the school.

It has been observed that teachers teach mathematics in a way that merely requires the students to listen, read and write. Whereas teaching and learning involved both the teacher and students interaction especially in a subject such as mathematics. Mathematics is a subject that has to do with individual daily life transaction for that reason the students should be given an opportunity to share in their experiences in the course of classroom instruction. Therefore, if the students are not involved in the classroom interaction it depicts negative attitude to teaching/learning. Negative attitude of a teacher may have a negative impact on one's teaching. The attitude of teachers largely depends upon their personal characteristics and disposition, both seem to be highly interlinked. Teacher's attitude is instrumental for better instruction. A good teacher is expected to be committed to his work and have the ability to take the initiative. The teacher is not only to master the subject and various methods of teaching but also to show that he is capable of selecting the various study materials according to the teaching goals and varied group of students.

This study seeks to determine the problem of poor academic achievement in mathematics as a result of teachers' attitude to the teaching of mathematics in secondary school in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The general purpose of this study is to determine teachers' attitude towards teaching and its effect on students' academic achievement in secondary schools in Calabar Municipality.

Specifically, the study seeks to;

- (i) Examine how teachers' positive attitude towards teaching Mathematics influences students' academic achievement in the subject.
- (ii) Examine teachers' negative attitude towards teaching influences students' academic achievement in the subject
- (iii) Examine male and female teachers' attitude towards teaching of mathematics.

Research questions

The following questions were slated to direct this study.

- (i) To what extent does teachers positive attitude towards teaching Mathematics influence student's academic achievement in the subject?
- (ii) To what extent does teachers' negative attitude towards teaching Mathematics influence students' academic achievement in the subject?
- (iii) To what extent do male teacher's attitudes towards teaching Mathematics differ significantly from their female counterpart?

Statement of hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 levels of significance.

- Ho₁: Teacher positive attitude towards teaching does not significantly influence student academic achievement in Mathematics
- Ho₂: Teachers' negative attitude towards teaching does not significantly influence students' academic achievement in Mathematics.

H_{03} : Male teachers' attitude towards teaching does not significantly differ from their female counterpart in Mathematics.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was correlation design, with a sample of 230 teachers consisting of 100 female teachers and 130 male teachers, with the use of a 30 item questionnaires on teachers' attitude towards student's academic achievement (TATSAA) in mathematics. Constructed by the researcher and vetted by experts in measurement and evaluation for data gathering. Both primary and secondary methods of data collection were adopted in this study. Primary sources consisted of personal observation, interview and questionnaire, while secondary sources were derived from text books, journals, lecture notes and other related materials. The questionnaire was directly administered by hand on students to elicit information useful to this study. The student academic performance scores in mathematics was collected from their respective schools and standardized by the researchers. The data collected were subjected to descriptive statistical using mean (X) standard deviation (SD) in order to answer the research questions while the Pearson's product moment correction (r) was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and discussions

The result presented below is based on the questionnaire administered to the student and successfully returned by the respondents for data collection. The analysis was based on a four point likert scale instrument administered to the subjects.

Hypothesis 1

Teacher positive attitude towards teaching does not significantly influence students' academic achievement.

Table 1
 Teachers' positive attitude towards teaching does not
 Influence students' academic achievement

Variables	N	Mean	SD	DF	Sig	r.cal	r.cri	Decision
Teachers positive attitude	130	34.52	18.11	228	0.05	0.65	0.113	Accept H_0
Students' academic achievement	100	29.85	17.60					

From table 1, it can be discerned that the r-calculated value of 0.65 is greater than the table value of 0.113 for a two tailed test. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states "Teacher positive attitude towards teaching does not significantly influence student academic achievement is rejected, aptly put the alternate hypothesis is therefore retained

Hypothesis two

Teachers' negative attitude towards teaching does not significantly influence students' academic achievement.

Table 2

Teachers' negative attitude towards teaching does not influence students' academic achievement

Variables	N	Mean	SD	DF	Sig State	r.cal	r. crit.	Decision
Teachers negative attitude	130	32.00	19.78	228	0.05	0.77	0.113	rejected H ₀
Students' academic achievement	100	29.06	17.81					

Table two clearly shows that the r-calculated value of 0.77 is greater than the table value of 0.113 for a two tailed test. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states “Teacher negative attitude towards teaching does not significantly influence student academic achievement is rejected

Hypothesis three

Male teachers' attitude towards teaching does not significantly differ from their female counterparts

Table 3

Male teachers' attitude towards teaching does not significantly differ from their female counterparts

Variables	N	Mean	SD	DF	Sig State	r.cal	r. crit.	Decision
Male and female teacher's attitude	130	23.18	16.89	228	0.05	0.78	0.113	rejected H ₀
Students' academic achievement	100	20.13	18.69					

From table3, it can be inferred that the calculated r value is 0.78 and the table value is 0.113 at 0.05 level of significance with 228 degree of freedom the null hypothesis of male teachers attitude towards teaching is rejected.

Discussion of findings

The first finding as shown that teachers' positive attitude influences students' academic achievement. According to (Denga, 1988) observed that teachers' positive attitude are significant for learning. He referred to such attitudes as friendliness fairness, politeness, uprightness, dignity and firmness in dealing with his students. There is nothing more than being friendly and accommodating in the course of interacting with students in classes. Children will surely be very much attracted to such teachers and are sure to learn better. Children are easily motivated by teachers who come closer to them; such teachers are good model to them.

Taiwo, (1990), postulated that quality of education depends on the teachers as reflected in the performance of their duties. Over time, students' academic performance in mathematics in both internal and external examination had been used to determine excellence in mathematics teachers. Also agreed that mathematics teachers have been shown to have an important influence on their students' academic achievement 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.

Stallings and Kaskowitz (2001) also conducted a research to determine how effective time used in the classroom could raise students' achievement. Teachers and students were observed as students were tested for learning gains in some subjects taught. The most pronounced finding was the opportunity to learn or time allocated on academic content was strongly related to students' achievement

The second finding as shown in the study indicates that teachers' negative attitude towards teaching highly influence students' academic achievement. The reason for this study is that teachers who do not interact freely with their students depriving their student from not asking question in the classroom and other views may hinder the students negatively from achieving better academically.

The finding is in consonance with Olegbu, (2004), who asserted that poor academic performance of students in Nigeria has been linked to poor teachers' performance in terms of accomplishing the teaching task, negative attitude to work and poor teaching habits which have been attributed to poor motivation. This finding is also in line with Oredein, (2000) the conditions that would make for effective teaching such as; resources available to teachers, general conditions, infrastructure as well as instructional materials in public secondary schools in Nigeria are poor. These prevailing conditions would definitely show a negative influence on the instructional quality in public schools which may translate to poor academic performance, attitude and values of secondary school students.

However, it contradicts with Squires, Huitt & Segars (1983), who puts forward the following factors such as socio-economic background, family support, intellectual aptitude of student, personality of student, self-confidence and previous instructional quality have been found to also influence students examination score either positively or negatively.

The third finding uncovered the distinction between male and female teachers attitude towards student academic achievement. Squires, Huitt & Segars (1983), propounded that women ranked significantly ahead of men as democratic leaders. Actually these investigators indicated that women probably should be favoured, since women possessed interests in the objective of teaching, encouraging students' participation, gaining positive reaction from teachers and superiors, working with teachers and community and evaluating learning to a significantly greater degree than men did.

Sexton, (1975) argued that school words tend to be word of women. They have their own sound and smell perfumed or antiseptic just as there are dialects of gender. Women use different words stress them differently, write them differently and usually much more legibly. It can also therefore be concluded that male and female teacher's attitude towards student academic achievement varies with respect to school environment, un-conducive working environment. A condition under which a teacher work, professional and social status, school infrastructure poor libraries, laboratories, safety conditions, job satisfaction et cetera, these create new variables that re-define even the most devoted and well prepared teacher.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the data collected, it was observed that mathematics as an indispensable subject cannot be overlooked this is hinged on the numerous factors that influence achievement in mathematics like attitude, pupil-teacher relationship and school disciplinary climate. Teachers' attitude to pupils learning of the subject matter can influence pupils outcome.

Recommendation

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations were put forward.

- (1) Teachers negative attitude like; anger, depression anxiety, hostility towards their students should be discouraged at all levels both in school and at home. The teachers should allow students to express their opinion, feelings attitude towards the teaching/learning process, this will encourage them to learn more and develop themselves academically. Teachers should be vigilant to spot these negative tendencies on time and curb them. The government on their part should formulate policies to discourage dehumanizing treatments of students at all levels so that our youths who intend to take teaching as a profession can have good examples in the society to copy from.
- (2) Parents and teachers should encourage their children/students to set clear goals and ensure that they are disciplined and carefully, consistently achieve them. Incentive (reinforcement) should be arranged to accompany success to enhance continuous positive achievement. This will serve as positive reinforcement. Teachers should endeavour to be close to their students through interaction in and outside the classroom. Government too can encourage more sponsorship programme to support the serious students to further education.
- (3) Male and female teachers should learn the art of cooperative within themselves in the teaching subjects in school; they should do everything possible to discourage rivalry as this does not enhance agreeableness in group assignment.
- (4) Wise counselling should be given by parent teachers and counsellors regarding their attitude towards teaching not only at home nor in classroom alone but later in the workplace and in

the society for peaceful co-existence. This should however not be at the expense of truth and objective, good manners through sound moral instructions by their teachers.

- (5) Male teachers' attitude does not significantly differ from their female teachers' attitude. In the course of findings, it was found to have a significant influence on students' academic achievement. This implies that male teachers attitude toward teaching differs from the way their female counterparts teach.

Contributions to Knowledge

- (i) The study has revealed the moral values of mathematics teachers as well as their attitudes towards the teaching of mathematics. This will assist them to make necessary adjustment where needed. The study also revealed existing relationship between teachers' attitude towards teaching of mathematics and students' academic achievement in the subject. This will expose teachers' factor and its contribution to students' achievement in mathematics. Through this, solutions to students' poor performance could be recommended.
- (ii) Most pupils are of the opinion that mathematics as a difficult and abstract subject, mathematics teachers must teach the subject at slower pace and show a lot of positive attitudes in form of patience. Teachers should ensure that all the problems which pupils forward to them are solved in a way which does not offend those who have asked them. Teachers must ensure that they treat all the pupils equally, without showing a lot of positive attitudes towards fast learners.

On the part of students, they will become conscious of situations that predispose them to poor performance in various subjects. This research work will therefore open new grounds for more researchers to delve into this area as well as adding to the existing knowledge in the field.

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