



RESEARCH ARTICLE

TEACHERS' CHARACTERISTICS AND WORK ENVIRONMENT AS CORRELATE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN NIGER EAST SENATORIAL DISTRICT, NIGER STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the correlation between teachers' characteristics, work environment, and secondary school students' academic performance in Niger East Senatorial District, Niger State, Nigeria. Employing a descriptive survey design, the research sampled three hundred (300) participants, comprising 100 teachers and 200 students from ten senior secondary schools. Data collection utilized a structured questionnaire and students' term scores in English and Mathematics. Results reveal significant relationships between teacher qualifications, experience, competence, and work environment on students' academic performance. Findings highlight the critical role of conducive learning environments and teacher development in academic success. Recommendations are made to policymakers and educators to prioritize teacher training, improve school infrastructure, and ensure equitable distribution of resources.

Keywords: Teachers' characteristics, Work environment, Academic performance, Teacher qualifications, Teacher competence.

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Received: 27/12/2024; **Revised:** 10/2/2025 **Accepted:** 21/2/2025; **Published:** 28/2/2025



1.0. INTRODUCTION

Academic performance is the result of student evaluation during the educational process, and it represents the amount to which students have met the educational goals outlined in the curriculum (Reil, 2019). It is heavily influenced by circumstances both within and outside the classroom. This study supports the preceding idea by pointing out that academic progress is routinely quantified through assessments (exams) and continuous assessment, but there is no universal consensus on how to effectively measure it. According to Mellisa (2016), academic performance is an indication of how well a student achieves the standards set by an institution. Academic performance is used to assess student success. Academic performance, according to Scott (2020), is generally related to how well students complete assignments and studies. According to Scott (2020), grades are the most well-known metric of academic accomplishment. A grade represents a student's overall performance over the course of their academic career.

Academic performance has to do with what a learner is able to accomplish by execution of class work in the school. Stiggings (2021) sees academic performance as something a learner do or achieve at school, college or university, in class, in a laboratory or field work. Some of the purposes of academic performance measurement are enumerated in Ukwuije (2019) as follows: to identify students growth or lack of growth in acquiring desirable knowledge skills, attitudes and social values; to help teachers determine the effectiveness of their teaching technique and learning material; to help motivate students to learn as they discover their progress or lack of progress in given task; to encourage students to develop a sense of discipline and systematic study habits; to acquaint parents or guardians with their children performance; to make reliable decision about education planning and to provide educational administrators with adequate information about teachers effectiveness and school need.

Despite the recognized importance of qualified teachers and conducive school environments, many secondary schools in Niger East Senatorial District face persistent issues of inadequate



resources and under-qualified staff. This has contributed to a decline in academic performance, particularly in core subjects. Understanding the correlation between these factors is essential for devising targeted interventions. Therefore, the major concern of this study is to examine teachers' characteristics and work environment as correlate of secondary school students' academic performance in Niger East Senatorial District, Niger State.

Research Questions

The following research questions are raised to guide this study.

- i. What is the influence of teachers' qualification on students' academic performance in Niger East Senatorial District, Niger State?
- ii. What is the influence of teachers' experience on students' academic performance in Niger East Senatorial District, Niger State?
- iii. What is the influence of teachers' competence on students' academic performance in Niger East Senatorial District, Niger State?
- iv. What is the influence of work environment and students' academic performance in Niger East Senatorial District, Niger State?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between teachers' qualification and students' academic performance in Niger East Senatorial District, Niger State

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between teachers' experience and students' academic performance in Niger East Senatorial District, Niger State

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between teachers' competence and students' academic performance in Niger East Senatorial District, Niger State

H₀₄: There is no significant relationship between work environment and students' academic performance in Niger East Senatorial District, Niger State



2.0. CONCEPTUALIZATION AND EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Teachers' Characteristics, Work Environment and Academic Performance

More so, teachers' characteristic is widely thought of as an essential determinant of academic performance, yet there is little agreement as to what specific characteristics make a good teacher (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2016). This is an important issue as the economic impact of higher student performance can be a function of the depreciation rate of student learning, the total variation of teacher quality (as measured by student performance on standardized tests), and the labor market return to one standard deviation of higher performance. Varieties of skills are needed for good teaching and teachers. According to Ehindero and Ajibade (2020), for effective teaching and learning, teacher requires skills such as qualifications, experience, updating knowledge and maintaining personality (personal quality). No one can teach effectively until he/she have these basics qualities of teaching. According to Younge (2018), teachers characteristics matters in teaching profession, but defining teachers' characteristics is a far more controversial task.

It has been determined that a supportive work environment is necessary for efficient teaching and learning. Olutola (2018) posited that the teaching-learning process is facilitated by a work environment that contains instructional spaces, administrative spaces, circulation spaces, spaces for conveniences, and spaces for accessories. In environments that are designed for formal education, the teaching-learning process cannot exist in isolation. Interaction between elements of the learning environment leads to its occurrence. In a school environment where positive learning outcomes and the desire to learn are valued, respected, and rewarded, students and instructors collaborate effectively. Students perform better academically in an environment where learning is valued for its own sake. The school is a unique social setting where children's education, training, and personality development who are the future assets of a community are built and managed through adequate training techniques, suitable physical space, and a supportive psychological environment (Raccoon, 2018). In order to improve their performance,



students who are still in the socialization process need a supportive psychological environment and role models.

It is impossible to overstate the significance of having qualified teachers and a positive work environment in secondary schools in Osun State today. The main reason for this is that the quality of education students receive is greatly influenced by their educational environment. This suggests that schools may not be able to bring out the most in its students, particularly in the area of academic performance, if they do not provide the required learning facilities and foster an environment that is favorable to teaching and learning together with trained teachers. The effectiveness of a teacher's classroom management skills is just as important to the quality of education as their instructional abilities (Ajao, 2021). Students' low academic performance may be caused by a variety of factors, such as bad study habits, a lack of resources, an unfavorable school climate, indiscipline, inadequate facilities, ineffective teachers, the style of instruction used, and the kind of learning environment available to both students and teachers. One can determine if a teacher's incompetence stems from their training in the subject or subjects they are teaching.

Younge (2018) grouped teacher's characteristics into four categories as Teacher's qualifications, Teacher's characteristics, Teacher's effectiveness, and Teacher's practice. The first strand of the framework for defining teacher characteristics focuses on teacher qualifications (also commonly called teacher inputs).

Teachers' qualifications are among the resources they bring with them to the classroom and are considered important in establishing who should be allowed to teach (Noel, 2016). According to Noel (2016), qualifications also include teachers' course work, grades, subject matter education, degrees, test scores, experience, certification, and credentials, as well as evidence of participation in continued learning such as internships, induction, supplemental training, and professional development. Experience also can be considered in this category because it is counted as a qualification for many purposes. The advantage of focusing on qualifications is that it allows



education decision makers to use documents alone to estimate a teacher's potential effectiveness for licensing and hiring purposes, prior to any determination of the teacher's suitability for a position or effectiveness in the classroom. The major disadvantage of the qualifications definition of teacher characteristics is that a teacher can be deemed to be of high quality on paper yet perform poorly in the classroom (Noell, 2016). Also, the second strand of the framework for defining teacher characteristics focuses on teacher characteristics, including attributes and attitudes of teachers as well as immutable (or assigned) characteristics such as race and gender. Research in this area that links these characteristics to student outcomes is still relatively scarce. The advantage of viewing teacher characteristics in this way is that it expands the scope of teacher quality and thus creates an opportunity for greater precision in the definition of it. The main drawback to defining teacher quality in this way is that it focuses on characteristics that are often logically, ethically, or practically beyond the teacher's (or school's) ability to change (Younge, 2018).

A third strand of the framework for defining teacher characteristics is teacher effectiveness, as determined by growth in student learning, typically measured by standardized achievement tests. This strand most closely approximates a comprehensive measure of teaching quality rather than teacher quality because teacher effectiveness would be the empirical evidence that defines teacher quality and teaching quality, based on how much student learning a teacher fosters. Teachers might be considered high quality if their students learn significantly more than would have been predicted given those students' prior achievement (Nwangwu, 2020).

Finally, the fourth strand of the framework for defining teacher's characteristics focuses on examining teachers' actual classroom practices and correlating those practices with student learning outcomes (Nwideeduh, 2018). By this definition, teacher characteristics is not what teachers have on paper but by what they actually do in the classroom with their students, including instructional and classroom management practices, interactions with students, and performance of tasks.



Kain (2016) found that teacher characteristics explained the largest portion of the variation in reading and math achievement. Jordan, (2017) found that there is difference between students who had three consecutive highly effective teachers defined as those whose students showed the most improvement than those who had three consecutive low-effect teachers as those with the least improvement.

In addition, it is also possible to argue that learning happens as a result of successful interactions with one's surroundings. In this context, "environment" refers to the presence of resources that can effectively support students' learning and improve their academic achievement. This environment includes things like textbooks, audiovisual materials, instructional technology hardware and software, classroom size and configuration, seating arrangements, tables, seats, and shelves holding practical instruments (Farrant & Farombi, 2021).

More so, Tsavga (2021) maintained that the learning environment plays a vital role in determining how students perform or respond to circumstances and situations around them. This implies that no society is void of environmental influences. The learning environment determines to a large extent how a student behaves and interacts, that is to say that the environment in which we find ourselves tend to mould our behaviour so as to meet the demands of life whether negatively or positively. The desire for both qualitative and quantitative education has multiplied the problem of providing an effective and conducive learning environment for teaching and learning.

Karemera (2018) found that students' performance is significantly correlated with satisfaction with work environment and the facilities of library, computer laboratory and other important facilities in the institution. With regard to background variables, he found a positive effect of high school performance and school achievement; he found no statistical evidence of significant association between family income level and academic performance of the student. Robert et al (2021), found that the member of educational board will be educated and their impact on school is positive, for professional development it is essential for student learning. A study effort from



student and the proper use of the facilities provided by the institution to the student, a good match between students' learning style positively affect the student's performance. Younge (2018), held the view that the student performances are linked with the work environment and the level of their parental education. The use of work environment positively affects the student performance. The academic environment is the effective variable for students and has positive relationship with fathers' education and grade level.

Allis and Kamme (2018) conducted a cross-section survey on academic performance among 2170 preparatory and secondary school students enrolled in the mainstream governmental schools in Alexandria in Egypt. Academic performance cases were related to work environment of the school and family background whereas the majority was related to the children themselves. Schools are social systems which have several objectives to achieve and the role of guidance and counseling is vital in improving students' academic performance.

There is a general lack of consensus among academics and researchers on the importance of school environments, including teacher administration, in relation to positive academic achievement as compared to other factors (Patrick, 2015). There is no denying the teachers' crucial role in education. It's been suggested that teachers have a big say in what happens in the classroom. Teachers should possess and use particular teaching skills and talents that are evident in their students' performance in the subject matter they teach, enabling the students to draw connections between what they learn in the classroom and how to solve problems in the real world.

3.0. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design, allowing for the systematic collection and analysis of data on teacher characteristics, work environment, and academic performance.

The study targeted senior secondary school teachers and students in Niger East Senatorial District. A total of three hundred (300) respondents were sampled using random and purposive



sampling techniques, comprising one hundred (100) teachers and two hundred (200) students from ten (10) schools.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled *Teachers' Characteristics and Work Environment Questionnaire (TCWEQ)* and students' term scores in English and Mathematics. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: demographic details and variables related to the study objectives/research questions, rated on a 4-point Likert scale.

The instrument was validated by educational experts for content and face validity. Reliability was established through a pilot test, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency.

Data collection involved administering questionnaires and retrieving students' academic scores. Analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics, including Pearson's correlation and regression analysis.

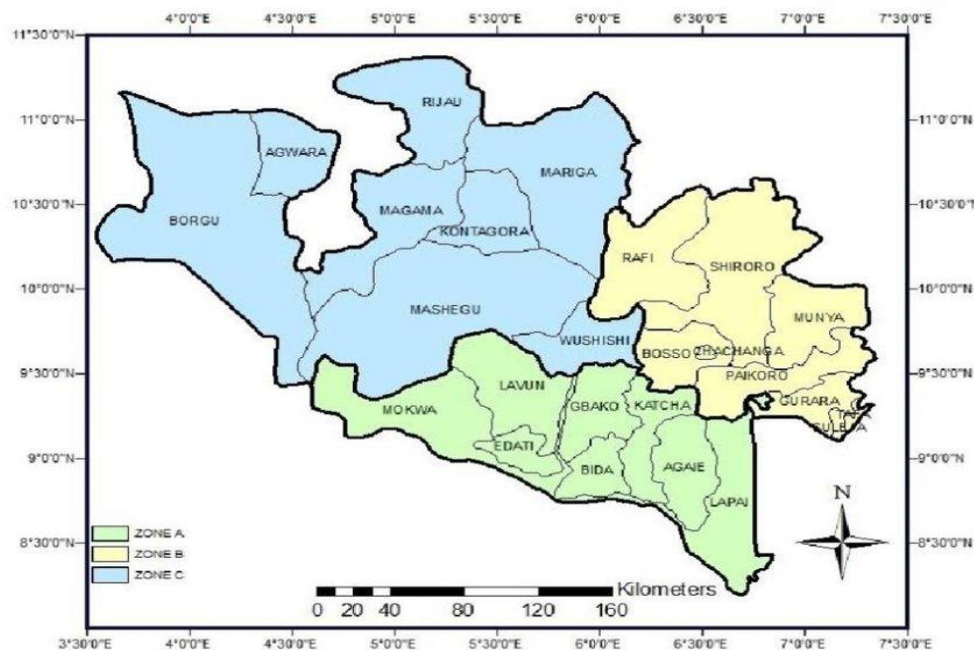


Figure 1: Niger State showing the three Senatorial Districts.



4.0. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Presentation of Results

The data analysis is structured based on the research questions and hypotheses.

The responses on teachers' qualifications and their perceived influence on students' performance were scored and analyzed using mean and standard deviation.

Research Question 1: *What is the influence of teachers' qualification on students' academic performance?*

Table 4.1: Assessment of the influence of teachers' qualification on students' Performance

Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Teachers with higher qualifications perform better in delivering lessons.	3.45	0.68	Agree
Qualified teachers enhance students' understanding of difficult concepts.	3.52	0.72	Agree
Teachers' qualifications influence students' academic performance in English and Mathematics.	3.60	0.65	Strongly Agree
Continuous professional development programs improve teaching quality.	3.48	0.70	Agree

Source: Author's Analysis (2025).

Table 4.1 highlights respondents' perceptions of the impact of teachers' qualifications on students' academic performance. The results show a general agreement that teachers with higher qualifications are more effective in lesson delivery (Mean = 3.45, Std. Dev. = 0.68) and enhance students' understanding of difficult concepts (Mean = 3.52, Std. Dev. = 0.72). There is strong agreement that teachers' qualifications positively influence academic performance in key subjects like English and Mathematics (Mean = 3.60, Std. Dev. = 0.65). Additionally, respondents agreed that continuous professional development programs improve teaching quality (Mean = 3.48, Std. Dev. = 0.70).



Research Question 2: *What is the influence of teachers' experience on students' academic performance?*

Table 4.2: Assessment of the influence of teachers' Experience on students' Performance

Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Experienced teachers are better at classroom management.	3.50	0.69	Agree
Students perform better under teachers with more teaching experience.	3.58	0.64	Strongly Agree
Teachers with longer years of experience are more effective in preparing students for exams.	3.55	0.67	Agree
Teacher experience has a significant impact on students' academic outcomes.	3.62	0.63	Strongly Agree

Source: Author's Analysis (2025).

Table 4.2 presents respondents' perceptions of the influence of teachers' experience on students' academic performance. The results indicate agreement that experienced teachers excel in classroom management (Mean = 3.50, Std. Dev. = 0.69) and are more effective in preparing students for examinations (Mean = 3.55, Std. Dev. = 0.67). There is strong agreement that students perform better under teachers with greater teaching experience (Mean = 3.58, Std. Dev. = 0.64) and that teacher experience significantly impacts students' academic outcomes (Mean = 3.62, Std. Dev. = 0.63).

Research Question 3: *What is the influence of teachers' competence on students' academic performance?*

Table 4.3: Assessment of the influence of teachers' Competence on students' Performance

Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Competent teachers make their lessons engaging and interactive.	3.62	0.65	Strongly Agree
Teachers' competence influences students' interest in learning.	3.60	0.66	Strongly Agree
The use of diverse teaching methods improves students' performance.	3.55	0.68	Agree
Teachers' ability to identify students' weaknesses positively impacts academic performance.	3.64	0.62	Strongly Agree

Source: Author's Analysis (2025).



Table 4.3 illustrates respondents' perceptions of the influence of teachers' competence on students' academic performance. There is strong agreement that competent teachers make lessons engaging and interactive (Mean = 3.62, Std. Dev. = 0.65) and that their competence enhances students' interest in learning (Mean = 3.60, Std. Dev. = 0.66). Respondents also agree that the use of diverse teaching methods improves students' performance (Mean = 3.55, Std. Dev. = 0.68). Additionally, there is strong consensus that teachers' ability to identify students' weaknesses significantly impacts academic performance (Mean = 3.64, Std. Dev. = 0.62).

Research Question 4: *What is the influence of work environment on students' academic performance?*

Table 4.4: Assessment of the influence of Work Environment on students' Performance.

Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
The availability of teaching aids enhances teachers' performance.	3.50	0.69	Agree
A conducive classroom environment positively impacts students' learning.	3.62	0.63	Strongly Agree
Overcrowded classrooms affect academic performance negatively.	3.48	0.71	Agree
Adequate school facilities improve students' outcomes.	3.58	0.64	Strongly Agree

Source: Author's Analysis (2025).

Table 4.4 highlights respondents' views on the influence of the work environment on students' academic performance. Respondents agreed that the availability of teaching aids enhances teachers' performance (Mean = 3.50, Std. Dev. = 0.69) and that overcrowded classrooms negatively affect academic performance (Mean = 3.48, Std. Dev. = 0.71). There is strong agreement that a conducive classroom environment positively impacts students' learning (Mean = 3.62, Std. Dev. = 0.63) and that adequate school facilities significantly improve students' outcomes (Mean = 3.58, Std. Dev. = 0.64).

Hypothesis Testing (Pearson's Correlation Analysis)



Table 4.5: Correlation Model of Teachers' Characteristics on Students' Performance

Variable	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p-value)	Decision
Teachers' qualification	0.68	0.001	Significant correlation
Teachers' experience	0.72	0.001	Significant correlation
Teachers' competence	0.75	0.001	Significant correlation
Work environment	0.70	0.001	Significant correlation

Source: Author's Analysis (2025).

Table 4.5 presents the results of the Pearson correlation analysis, showing the relationship between various teacher-related factors and students' academic performance. The correlation coefficients for all variables are positive, indicating a positive relationship with academic performance. Teachers' qualification has a correlation coefficient of 0.68, which is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.001, suggesting a significant correlation between teacher qualifications and students' performance. Similarly, teachers' experience ($r = 0.72$, $p = 0.001$), teachers' competence ($r = 0.75$, $p = 0.001$), and work environment ($r = 0.70$, $p = 0.001$) all show significant positive correlations with academic performance.

4.2. Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study underscore the significant impact of teachers' characteristics and work environment on students' academic performance in the Niger East Senatorial District. The study revealed that teachers' qualifications, experience, competence, and the work environment are critical determinants of student outcomes. This aligns with existing literature that highlights the importance of teacher quality and a conducive learning environment in shaping student achievement.

The positive correlation between teachers' qualifications and students' academic performance found in this study is consistent with the work of Noel (2016), who argued that teacher qualifications, including higher education, certifications, and continued professional development, are fundamental to improving teaching effectiveness. Qualified teachers bring with them the subject matter knowledge and pedagogical skills necessary to engage students



effectively, leading to improved academic performance. This is also supported by Younge (2018), who observed that teachers' qualifications are one of the strongest predictors of student success, particularly when paired with ongoing professional development. The study's findings, with a significant correlation between teachers' qualifications and academic performance, suggest that schools should prioritize hiring qualified staff and provide opportunities for continuous learning.

The significant influence of teachers' experience on student academic performance found in this study echoes the findings of Kain (2016) and Jordan (2017), who noted that experienced teachers are better equipped to manage classrooms and cater to diverse learning needs. The experience allows teachers to develop effective teaching strategies and build better relationships with students, thus fostering a more positive learning environment. The present study's finding that teachers with greater experience contribute to better academic performance suggests that teacher retention and the accumulation of teaching experience are essential for sustaining high educational standards. Furthermore, the results support the assertions of Ehindero & Ajibade (2020), who emphasized the importance of teachers' experience in creating an effective teaching and learning environment.

The significant impact of teacher competence on student performance highlighted by this study is in line with the work of Hanushek & Rivkin (2016), who identified teacher competence as a central factor influencing student outcomes. Competent teachers are better at delivering engaging lessons, identifying students' learning needs, and adjusting teaching methods accordingly. As the study's findings show, students performed better when their teachers demonstrated strong pedagogical skills and a deep understanding of the subject matter. This corroborates the findings of Kain (2016), who argued that teacher effectiveness, as measured by students' performance, depends not only on qualifications and experience but also on the teachers' ability to adapt and meet students' learning needs effectively.



The study also found a significant relationship between the work environment and academic performance, which is consistent with the views of Olutola (2018) and Raccoon (2018), who emphasized that a positive and supportive work environment is vital for both teacher effectiveness and student learning. The availability of teaching aids, adequate school facilities, and a conducive classroom environment have all been shown to facilitate effective teaching and improve academic outcomes. This is supported by Tsavga (2021), who argued that the physical and psychological environment in which students learn significantly influences their academic achievements. In environments with adequate resources and where students' efforts are respected and rewarded, students tend to perform better academically.

The findings of this study also support the broader literature on educational environments. Karemera (2018) found that students' academic performance improved in schools with better facilities, such as libraries and computer labs, which offer students more opportunities for independent learning and research. Similarly, the study's finding that overcrowded classrooms negatively affect performance aligns with the work of Younge (2018), who found that overcrowding diminishes the quality of instruction and hinders students' ability to focus and learn effectively.

5.0. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results of this study demonstrate that teachers' qualifications, experience, and competence, as well as the work environment, play crucial roles in determining students' academic success. These findings align with previous research, suggesting that educational policies and interventions aimed at improving teacher quality and the learning environment will likely lead to better academic outcomes. Schools should therefore prioritize hiring qualified teachers, provide opportunities for professional development, and ensure that the school environment is conducive to learning. This study adds to the growing body of literature advocating for holistic approaches to improving educational quality through both teacher development and environmental support.



Competing Interest

The author declares that no conflicting interest existed in this paper.

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