The Quality of School Climate and Teachers’ Classroom Communication Skills as Predictors of Pupils’ Performance in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the quality of school climate and teachers’ classroom communication skills as predictors of pupils’ performance in Lagos State, Nigeria. A correlational survey research design was used for the study. The sample comprised 120 teachers who were selected from 30 primary schools. Multi-Stage sampling technique was used for the selection. Two validated self-designed instruments were used to collect data for the study. The first was titled “Observational Schedule on School Climate and Teachers Communication Skills (OSSCTCS). The second was an achievement test titled ”Pupil’s Achievement Test (PAT) “, used to collect data on the pupils' performance in the study. OSSCTCS was subjected to a reliability test through an inter-rater scale technique, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.82. At the same time, Kuder-Richardson 20 formula was used to determine the reliability of the achievement test. It produced a reliability index of 0.91. Data collected were analysed using inferential statistics of multiple regression. Findings from the study revealed that there was significant composite contribution of school climate and teachers’ communication skills to pupil performance (F(6,113) = 4.744; p<0.05). Again, school climate had the highest significant relative contribution to pupils’ performance (β = .504; t = 7.741; p<0.05), followed by teachers’ communication skills which had the least non-significant relative contribution (β = .015; t = .349; p>0.05). Based on the study's findings, it was recommended that training programs, seminars or workshops should be organised by experts in the field of early childhood education to train school heads and teachers on the importance of aesthetically designed early childhood schools. Also, teachers should be trained on the significance of effective communication.

Keywords: Quality, School Climate, Teachers’ Communication Skills, Pupils’ Performance

INTRODUCTION

The early years of children to age five years plus is a critical and remarkable period for young children’s growth and development. It is an informative period in that children learn faster and acquire diverse skills that determine their future survival. Young children's early childhood experiences shape their brains and capacity to learn and get along with everyone around them.
Every child thinks differently and has a unique manner of learning due to their unique traits and individual learning styles. Despite how important early-year learning is, a painstaking observation revealed that the performance of pupils in primary schools is poor (Adeogun & Oselueka, 2011; Ehindero & Ajibade, 2015; Oke, 2015; Olowe & John, 2017; Olowe, Oshin, & John, 2019). This poor academic performance of pupils has been a serious issue, especially in Nigeria.

Olowe and John (2017) blamed the persistent poor academic achievement of pupils and students on the poor education structure in the country. There is no doubt that a number of factors are said to have contributed to the pupils' poor academic achievement in schools. The scholarly empirical factors given are poor study habits, lack of available resource materials, poor school climate, indiscipline, inadequate facilities, teachers' ineffectiveness, inappropriate teaching methodology, lack of effective assessment techniques, types of learning environment available for both the pupils and the teachers among others (Odeh, Oguche, & Ivagher, 2015; Shamaki, 2015; & Torupere, 2016). Olowe and John (2017) stated further that teachers' teaching methodology, lack of interest in teaching, incompetency of the teachers, lack of motivation, and unavailability and utilization of learning materials, among others, are also contributing to the consistently poor performance of pupils in Nigerian schools.

Other factors that have not received much research attention are school climate and teachers' classroom communication skills, which interest this current study. According to Rapti (2012), school climate is the sum of the values, cultures, health and safety practices and work, organizational structures, teaching effectiveness, and print-rich that allow the school to fulfil its function and to respond in certain manners. In this context, the school climate is formed by different parts of the school. One is the physical environment that provides an intimate and positive learning, the social environment that encourages positive communication and interaction among stakeholders. Tsavga (as cited in Odeh, Oguche, & Ivagher, 2015) submitted that the learning environment is vital in determining how pupils perform or respond to circumstances and situations around them. This could be why Odeh, Oguche, Angelina and Ivagher (2015) concluded that no society is void of environmental influences. Again, Torupere (2016) agreed with Adams (2004) that a quiet, cool, clean and beautiful physical environment makes the teacher and students happy and enhances their performance and productivity. Now, it is possible to conclude that school climate expresses the environment or personality of the school, and it is associated with the behaviours of the teachers, pupils and other members and stakeholders of the educational institutions.

It is in light of the above that Torupere (2016) advocated the policy that recommended that schools should be well constructed and spacious to accommodate all types of physical facilities such as instructional materials, library, laboratory, playing ground, toilets and staff rooms for effective teaching and learning to take place. Studies have revealed that the school environment is associated with various positive outcomes for pupils, teachers and schools. It is because a positive relationship exists between school climate and pupils' academic performance in primary schools (Shamaki, 2015).

Another factor of interest to this study is teachers' communication skills. Practical communication skills are essential for a teacher in transmission of education, classroom management and interaction with pupils. Teachers' communication skill is the ability of the teachers to transmit a message that involves a shared understanding between the contexts in which the communication occurs (Saunders & Mills, 2015). Teachers' communication skills are essential in delivering instruction to learners (McCarthy & Carter, 2001). Teachers with good communication skills would make learning easier and understandable to learners. Good communication skills of teachers are the basic needs of pupils' academic and professional success. It is why Loss (2000) recommended that teachers should communicate clearly and understandably.

In searching the literature further, it was revealed that much research efforts have been made due to the importance of school climate and teachers' communication skills, especially in foreign countries. For instance, the study by Ehindero and Ajibade (2015) revealed that school environment and teachers' communication skills are good predictors of pupils' good academic performance. Shamaki (2015) found a positive and significant relationship between the learning environment and
pupils’ performance. Adeogun and Olisaemeka (2011) found a significant relationship between school climate, performance and productivity. Lindsey, Brennan, and Michael's (2014) study revealed that school climate and teachers’ expressive skills predict pupils’ academic achievement. Shamaki (2015) found a significant difference between the mean performance of students taught in an ideal learning environment and those taught in a dull learning environment.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to reiterate that effective teaching and learning that results in the maximum achievement of both pupils and teachers in the classroom largely depends on the nature of the environment in which they find themselves and classroom expressive skills of the human resources particularly the teachers in the environment. The reviewed literature has highlighted huge empirical gaps to be closed since many reviewed studies were conducted in foreign countries, not Nigeria. Hence, the authors considered it imperative to examine school climate and teachers’ communication skills as predictors of pupils’ performance in primary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Children’s early stages are remarkable periods with future implications for their achievements. It is why the federal government of Nigeria, in the National Policy on Education (2014), section 2, Page 10, stated that opportunities should be provided for children to develop manipulative skills that would enable them to function effectively in society within the limit of their capacity. It informs why learning needs to be facilitated consistently to enable children to develop and maximise their potential. Despite how informative the early years are, empirical evidence has highlighted that the academic performance of pupils is poor (Akinsolu, 2010; Kurgat & Gordon, 2014; Ehindero and Ajibade, 2015; Shamaki, 2015; Oke, 2015; Torupere, 2016; Boma, 2019; Olowe, John & Oshin, 2019). It has made previous scholars make remedial efforts to exterminate the issue of poor performance of learners with a focus on other factors not interested in this study. Again, many studies were conducted in foreign countries and not Nigeria. Therefore, there is a wide gap to be filled in relation to this current study. Hence, the study of this kind becomes highly imperative.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine school climate and teachers’ communication skills as predictors of pupils’ performance in primary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. Specifically, the main objectives are to:

1. Examine the joint contributions of the independent variables (school climate and teachers’ communication skills) to the prediction of the dependent variable (pupil’s performance).

2. Examine the relative contributions of the independent variables (school climate and teachers’ communication skills) to the prediction of the dependent variable (pupil’s performance).

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

Ho:1 There is no significant composite contribution of the independent variables (school climate and teachers’ communication skills) to the prediction of the dependent variable (pupil’s performance).

Ho:2 There is no significant relative contribution of the independent variables (school climate and teachers’ communication skills) to the prediction of the dependent variable (pupil’s performance).

METHOD

The correlational survey design was used for this study. The population for this study consisted of all primary schools and teachers in the six educational districts in Lagos State. Thirty (30) primary schools and one hundred and twenty (120) primary school teachers constituted the sample. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select participants for the study. At first, a simple random sampling technique was used to determine one educational district out of the six in Lagos State. In the district, 120 participants were randomly selected from the thirty (30) primary schools covered in the Shomolu Local Government Area of Lagos State.

Two self-designed instruments were used to collect data for this study. The first was titled “Observational Schedule on School Climate and Teachers Communication Skills (OSSCTCS). The
research instrument was divided into four sections—section (A, B and C). Part A was used to collect the participants’ demographic data, part B was used to observe the climate of the schools covered and part C was used to observe the teachers’ communication skills. The response types used for section Band C were poor, fair, good, and excellent. The second instrument was an achievement test to collect data on the pupils’ performance in the study. The achievement test was titled “Pupil’s Achievement Test (PAT).” The instrument was marked and scored based on the scoring criteria used. The designed instruments were submitted to research experts in the Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education (Early Childhood Education Cohort, University of Lagos) for constructive scrutiny and criticism to ascertain their content, construct, and face validity. After that, the reliability of the observation instrument was determined using an inter-rater scale, and it yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.82.

In comparison, Kuder-Richardson 20 formula was used to determine the reliability of the achievement test and yielded a reliability index of 0.91. These values indicate high reliability; hence, the instruments were reliable. The data were collected by the researchers and five other trained research assistants. When the research assistants got to the schools covered for the study, they sought permission. After permission had been granted, OSSCTCS instruments were used to observe the school climates and the teachers during classroom activities. The observation technique adopted was a non-participatory method. The observation duration was six (6) weeks. Data collected were analyzed using inferential multiple regression statistics at a 0.05 significance level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Hypotheses Testing

H0:1 There is no significant composite contribution of the independent variables (school climate and teachers’ communication skills) to the prediction of the dependent variable (pupil performance).

Table 1
Summary of Multiple Regression showing Composite Contribution of the independent variables (School Climate and Teacher’s Communication Skills) to the dependent variable (Pupil’s Performance).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model Summary</th>
<th>R = .449</th>
<th>R Square = .201</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square = .159</th>
<th>Sd. Error of Estimate = 3.364</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>24.147</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.024</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>95.853</td>
<td>113</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.745</td>
<td>.000b</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>120.000</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>.848</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent Variable: Pupils’ Performance
Predictors: School Climate and Teachers’ Communication Skills
Table 1 shows the composite contribution of the independent variables (school climate and teachers' communication skills) to the dependent (pupil performance) variable. The model summaries revealed that the independent variables, when combined, have a positive relationship with pupils’ performance ($R = 449$). The two independent variables are good predictors of pupils’ academic performance. Also, the R square value in the model summaries indicates that the independent variables jointly explained 20.1% of the total variance in the dependent variable ($R^2 \times 100 = 20.1\%$). It implies that the remaining 79.9% are due to other factors not examined in this study.

Furthermore, the F value in the ANOVA indicates the fact that the joint contribution of school climate and teachers’ communication skills is statistically significant on pupils’ academic performance ($F_{(6,113)} = 4.745; p<0.05$). Hence, hypothesis 1 is not accepted. Summarily, the result from the table implies that the joint contribution of school climate and teachers’ communication skills to pupils’ performance is 20.1%.

**Ho:2** There is no significant relative contribution of the independent variables (school climate, teachers’ communication skills and assessment techniques) to the prediction of the dependent variable (pupil’s performance).

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>6.875</td>
<td>1.711</td>
<td>4.018</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Climate</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td>.508</td>
<td>.504</td>
<td>7.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ Communication Skills</td>
<td>.617</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.349</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent Variable: Pupils’ Performance

Table 2 shows the relative contribution of school climate and teachers’ communication skills to pupil’s performance. The table shows that school climate had the highest significant relative contribution to pupils’ performance ($\beta = .504; t = 7.741; p<0.05$), and it is followed by teachers’ communication skills which had the least non-significant relative contribution ($\beta = .015; t = .349; p>0.05$). Based on the results from this table, it can be inferred that the relative contribution of school climate to pupil performance is high and significant. At the same time, the teachers’ communication skills are low and insignificant. Hence, Hypothesis 2 is also not accepted.

**Discussion**

The hypotheses tested revealed that there is a significant composite contribution of school climate and teachers’ communication skills to the prediction of pupil performance ($F_{(6,113)} = 4.744; p<0.05$). Again, school climate had the highest significant relative contribution to pupils’ performance ($\beta = .504; t = 7.741; p<0.05$), followed by teachers’ communication skills which had the least non-significant relative contribution ($\beta = .015; t = .349; p>0.05$). The reasons for these findings are unconnected to the fact that effective teaching and learning that results in the maximum achievement of both pupils and teachers in the classroom are primarily determined by the learning environment and the communication skills of the teachers in the environment. These findings substantiate the results of Ehindero and Ajibade (2015) and Oke (2015), who found in their various studies that school climate and teachers’ communication skills are good predictors of pupils’ academic performance. Again, the findings are consistent with the finding of Adeogun and Olisaemeka (2011) that there was a significant relationship between school climate, performance, and productivity. Similarly, these findings lend credence to Lindsey, Brennan, and Michael's (2014) result that school climate and teachers’ expressive skills predict pupils’ academic achievement.
CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion
Based on the findings from the study, it is concluded that both school management and teachers are aware of the significance of school climate and teachers’ communication skills as they all contribute to the holistic development and maximum achievement of pupils. Hence, the issue of school climate and teachers’ communication skills cannot be belittled when referring to the problems of recording learners’ academic success in an educational setting. It points to the fact that rapt attention needs to be directed toward designing a fascinating and captivating school climate.

Suggestion
Based on the findings from the study, the following practicable recommendations were made:
1. Training programmes, seminars or workshops should be organised by experts in early childhood education to train school heads and teachers on the importance of aesthetically designed early childhood schools. It is because when a school is well designed, it captures children’s interest and energises them towards learning.
2. The teachers should also avail themselves of the opportunities to attend early childhood training programmes to update their knowledge and learn new trends in early childhood education. It will enable them to become more efficient in communication and classroom management. It will bring a desired change in the learners' lives and help them acquire life skills.

REFERENCES


