

Teacher Mastery of the Subject Matter and Classroom Management Skills as Correlates of Student's Attitude to Learning in Senior Secondary Schools in Sokoto State

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between teacher mastery of subject matter and classroom management skills as correlates of students' attitude to learning in public senior secondary schools in Sokoto State. The study has 2 research objectives, 2 research question and 2 research hypotheses. The study adopts Correlational survey research design of quantitative approach. The population of the study consists of 17,287 students and 3,436 teachers in public senior secondary schools in Sokoto state. Sample size consist of 370 students and 346 teachers total 716 respondents across the six education zones in Sokoto State. Proportionate sampling techniques were used. Two researcher developed instruments were used to collect data for the study: Teacher Mastery of Subject Matter and Classroom Management Skills Questionnaire (TMCQ) and Student Attitude Questionnaire (SAQ). The instruments were validated by experts from the Department of Educational Management Sokoto State University. While test-retest method of reliability was adopted to determine the reliability coefficient of 0.86 for teacher mastery of subject matter and classroom management skills questionnaire (TMCQ) and 0.85 for Students' attitude towards learning questionnaire (STAQ). The data was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). Hypotheses formulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings reveal that there is strong positive significant relationship between teacher proficiency and students' attitude towards learning in public senior secondary schools. Part of the recommendations states that, teachers should show good mastery of the subject matter in their areas of specialization so as to be able to impart the necessary knowledge to their students which will in turn bring about improved students' performance. Teachers should develop sound pedagogical attitudes in the three domains of learning so as to enhance the students' performance.

Keywords: Teacher, Secondary School, Mastery of the subject matter, Classroom management, Students' attitude to learning

Introduction

Education is a cornerstone of societal progress, and the quality of education greatly depends on the interplay between teachers and learners within the classroom environment. Eshet, Steinberger, and Gri, (2021) mentioned that, in the context of secondary education, teachers play a pivotal role in shaping students' academic achievements and attitudes towards learning. At the same time, students' attitudes towards learning can significantly influence their educational outcomes and future success. According to Franklin and Harrington, (2019), the effectiveness of teachers in the classroom goes beyond their subject knowledge; it encompasses pedagogical skills, teaching strategies, classroom management, and the ability to create an engaging and inclusive learning environment. A proficient teacher has the capacity to inspire, motivate, and effectively impart knowledge to student ([Adhikari & Shrestha, 2023](#)). Proficient teachers are widely recognized as a cornerstone of effective education systems. Research consistently shows that teacher quality significantly impacts student learning outcomes. Teachers who are knowledgeable, skilled, and motivated tend to foster a positive learning environment and facilitate better academic achievement among students (Darling, 2018). Ongoing professional development is crucial for teacher proficiency.

Nigeria has institutions that offer teacher education and training programs. Teachers are expected to undergo these programs and obtain necessary certifications. Proficiency in subject knowledge and teaching methodologies is emphasized. Certain regions and rural areas in Nigeria face shortages of qualified teachers, leading to larger class sizes and reduced individual attention for students (Evans & Yuan; 2018). Variations in the quality of teacher training institutions can impact the proficiency of teachers (Bahr & Mellor, 2016). They emphasized on the fact that there is a need for standardization and improvement in training methodologies. There has been a push for continuous professional development to enhance the skills of existing teachers by organizing Workshops and training sessions to keep teachers updated with modern teaching methods and technologies (Fekede, 2017). The

Nigerian government has implemented initiatives to address these challenges and improve teacher proficiency, which include training programs, policy reforms, and efforts to attract qualified individuals to the teaching profession (Adeosun, 2014).

Likewise; Students' attitudes towards learning influence their level of engagement, participation, and overall academic performance. Also positive attitudes, characterized by enthusiasm, curiosity, and a growth mindset, can foster a deeper and more meaningful learning experience. There is a high speculation that, many students worldwide exhibit positive attitudes towards learning when they find the curriculum engaging, relevant to their lives, and when they have supportive teachers and a conducive learning environment (Erdoğdu, 2019). The scholar further contends that students may lose interest if the teaching methods are uninteresting or if the curriculum is not stimulating (Erdoğdu, 2019). Socioeconomic issues, family problems, or peer pressure can affect a student's attitude towards learning. Emphasis on high-stakes testing can create a stressful environment, impacting students' enthusiasm for learning.

students' attitude towards learning in senior secondary in Sokoto state.

Teacher embodies a multifaceted role that extends beyond mere instruction to encompass leadership, mentorship, and advocacy for societal change through education. Teachers serve as catalysts for individual empowerment and national development, navigating a landscape marked by diverse challenges and opportunities. Historically, teachers in Nigeria have held a revered status as custodians of knowledge and moral values within their communities (Okebukola, 2018).

According to Oliver, Wehby and Reschly (2011) identified in their study that teachers' classroom management tasks and practices have positive effects on reducing students' aggressive, negative, lethargic and unattentive way of learning in the classrooms. Those teachers who utilize effective classroom strategies can expect to have greater achievements through their instruction in their class. Evertson and Weinstein (2006) stated that management of classrooms are acts that a teacher could take in the class to make such environment that could be more supportive and facilitative for both learners and teachers. They stated five major characteristics of effective classroom which the teacher should take care of through their actions. These characteristics were including the more caring climate, cooperative relations

with students and teachers and learners; organizing and implementing instruction in such a way which ensure maximize learning; encouraging learners, academic tasks engagements; developing and promoting learners' sociological skills and using appropriate and suited interventional measures to help learners with behavioral issues.

Lawal and Aminu (2024) conducted a study to explore how teacher subject mastery, particularly in the sciences, influenced students' attitudes toward science education in Sokoto State's senior secondary schools. The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, surveying 350 students and 45 science teachers, with additional classroom observations. The study found that students who were taught by teachers with high subject mastery in science subjects, such as physics, chemistry, and biology, demonstrated increased interest and positive attitudes toward learning these subjects. These students showed greater enthusiasm for learning, participated more in class activities, and were more likely to pursue careers in STEM fields. Teachers who demonstrated deep knowledge of their subject matter were able to connect lessons to real-world applications, making learning more relevant and engaging for students. The study concluded that teacher subject mastery is a critical factor in shaping student attitudes toward STEM education

Statement of the Problem

One of the major issues facing teacher proficiency is that some teachers possess strong subject knowledge, they may lack the necessary teaching skills to deliver lessons in an engaging and understandable manner. Many teachers struggle with using modern teaching methods, failing to incorporate interactive learning strategies that capture students' interest. As a result, students often find lessons boring, which negatively affects their willingness to participate and stay motivated in class.

Another challenge is the variation in teacher qualifications and training. Some secondary school teachers may not have undergone proper teacher education programs, which means they lack the necessary skills to handle students effectively. Inadequate teacher training leads to poor classroom management, ineffective lesson delivery, and limited ability to address students' diverse learning needs. This, in turn, affects students' attitudes toward learning, as they may feel frustrated or disengaged due to the lack of proper guidance and support. Furthermore, the lack of continuous professional development for

teachers worsens the situation. Many teachers do not have access to regular training or workshops that would help them improve their teaching skills. Without up-to-date knowledge on new teaching techniques, curriculum changes, and student-centered approaches, teachers often resort to outdated and ineffective teaching methods. This can make learning less interesting for students and reduce their motivation to engage in academic activities.

The reality in many secondary schools, especially in Sokoto State, is quite different from the ideal. Many teachers lack proper training and professional development, which affects their ability to teach effectively. Some teachers struggle with outdated teaching methods, making lessons uninteresting and difficult for students to grasp. Large class sizes also make it hard for teachers to give students individual attention, which results in disengagement and poor academic performance. Additionally, a lack of teaching resources, such as textbooks and instructional materials, further reduces the quality of education. Many students develop a negative attitude towards learning because they do not find lessons engaging, relevant, or supportive of their individual needs.

Objectives of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine teacher mastery of the subject matter and classroom management skills as correlates of student's attitude to learning in senior secondary schools in Sokoto state the specific objective are to find out:

1. The relationship between teacher knowledge of the subject matter and students' attitude towards learning in secondary school in Sokoto State.
2. The relationship between classroom management skills and students' attitude towards learning in secondary school in Sokoto State.

Research Question

The following questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the relationship between teacher knowledge of the subject matter and students' attitude towards learning in secondary school in Sokoto State?
2. What is the relationship between classroom management skills and students' attitude towards learning in secondary school in Sokoto State?

Research Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between teacher subject matter and students' attitude towards learning in senior secondary school in Sokoto state.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between teacher classroom management skills and students' attitude towards learning in secondary school in Sokoto State.

Methodology:

The study adopted descriptive survey research design of correlational type, and quantitative approach. The populations of the study consisted of all 3,436 teachers and 17,287 SS3 students across 166 public senior secondary schools found in six (6) education zones in sokoto state. 346 teachers and 370 SS3 students across 36 senior secondary schools in the six education zones in sokoto state were selected using simple random and proportionate sampling technique. The data for the study were collected using two researcher-developed instruments titled: (i) Teacher Mastery of Subject Matter and Classroom Management Skills Questionnaire (TMCQ) and (ii) Students' Attitude Questionnaire (SAQ) were used for the study. The questionnaires are divided into two sections 'A' and 'B'. Section A contains Demographic information of the respondents while section B contains five items each that are meant to measure the variables concerned. The instrument is closed ended with 4 point Likert-type rating scales: Very High Level (VHL) =5, High Level (HL) = 4, Moderate Level (ML) =3, Low Level (LL)=2 and Very Low Level (VLL) = 1.

These instruments were submitted to the supervisors and other experts in the Department of educational management Sokoto state university for validation Test-retest method was employed to establish the reliability indexes of the instruments at 2-weeks interval. Results were correlated using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC). The reliability indexes were 0.89 for the TPQ and 0.78 for the SAQ, indicating strong reliability. Consequently, both instruments were deemed reliable for use, the three hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC).

Results:

Research Question One: What is the extent of Teacher Mastery of Subject Matter and Classroom Management Skills in public senior secondary school in Sokoto state?

Table 1: Extent of Teacher Mastery of Subject Matter and Classroom Management Skills in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Sokoto State

S/no	Item Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
1	Extent of teacher mastery of subject matter and students' attitude towards learning in senior secondary school in Sokoto state.	3.07	0.97	High Extent
2	Extent of teacher classroom management and students' attitude towards learning in senior secondary in school in Sokoto state.	3.20	0.95	High Extent

Criterion mean = 2.50

Findings shows a general consensus among respondents that the following teacher proficiency (mastery of subject matter (N=3.07), and Classroom management (N=3.20), communication skill (N=2.99), are carried out at high extent, the respective means are greater than the criterion mean of 2.50.

Research Question 2: What is the extent of students' attitude towards learning in senior secondary school in Sokoto State?

Table 2: Level of Students' Attitude Towards Learning in Senior Secondary Schools in Sokoto State

S/N	Item Statement	N	VHL	HL	ML	LL	VLL	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I enjoy attending school and participating in lessons	348	175	117	48	42	0	3.11	1.007
2	I am motivated to study hard to achieve good grades.	348	208	122	29	23	0	3.35	.861
3	I find the subjects taught in school interesting	348	205	112	41	24	0	3.30	.897
4	I like to participate in class discussions and activities	348	206	113	35	28	0	3.30	.914
5	I complete my assignments and homework on time.	348	215	111	34	22	0	3.36	.869
6	I ask questions when I do not understand a topic in class	348	162	93	91	36	0	3.00	1.021
7	I have a set time for studying at home.	348	201	95	66	20	0	3.25	.921
8	My parents support and motivate me to focus on my studies.	348	218	93	56	15	0	3.35	.870
9	My friends have a positive	348	205	99	59	19	0	3.28	.901

	influence on my attitude towards learning								
10	I value feedback from my teachers because it helps me learn better	348	205	103	55	19	0	3.51	.740
	Grand Mean							3.28	1.1335

Criterion mean = 2.50

Table 2 shows level of student attitude towards learning in senior secondary schools in Sokoto State. Looking at the results item: 1 was in agreement that students have attending school and participating in lessons at high level with a mean score of 3.11 which is greater than criterion mean of 2.50. In item two there was a strong agreement that students motivated to study hard to achieve good grades high level with a mean score of 3.35 which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. Whereas item 3 was in agreement that students find the subjects taught in school interesting at high level with a mean score of 3.30 which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. Item 4 was in agreement that student like to participate in class discussions and activities at high level with a mean score of 3.30 which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. Item 5 was in agreement that student complete their assignments and homework on time at high level with a mean score of 3.36 which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50.

However, item 6 was in agreement that student ask questions when they don't understand a topic in class at moderate level with a mean score of 3.00 which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. Item 7 was in agreement that students have a set time for studying at home regularly at high level with a mean score of 3.25 which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. Whereas item 8 was in agreement that students' parents support and motivate to focus on studies at high level with a mean score of 3.35 which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. Item 9 was in agreement that friends have a positive influence on students' attitude towards learning at high level with a mean score of 3.28 which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. Item 10 was in agreement that students value feedback from their teachers because it helps them learn better at high level with a mean score of 3.51 which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. The analysis indicates that the majority of respondents agrees that students in secondary schools in Sokoto State demonstrate a high level of attitude towards learning. This is evidenced by a grand mean of **3.28**, which surpasses the criterion mean threshold of 2.50 and at standard deviation of 1.1335.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between teacher subject matter and students' attitude towards learning in senior secondary school in Sokoto state.

This hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using PPMC analysis as shown in Table 3

Table 3: Relationship between teacher subject matter and students' attitude towards learning in senior secondary school in Sokoto state.

Variables	N	Mean	S. Deviation	r-Cal	p-Value	Decision
Mastery of the Subject Matter	346	3.26	0.944	0.934**	0.000	H ₀ Rejected
Students' Attitude	348	3.30	0.920			

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

level of significance = 0.05

The results in Table 3 show a strong positive and significant relationship between teacher subject matter and students' attitude towards learning, with $r(348) = 0.934^{**}$, $p < 0.05$. This indicates a significant relationship between teacher subject matter and students' attitude towards learning in public senior secondary schools in Sokoto State, as the p-value is below the 0.05 significance level. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_{01}), which proposed that there is no significant relationship between teacher subject matter and students' attitude towards learning in public senior secondary schools in Sokoto State was rejected. This implies that school administrators and policymakers should recognize teacher subject matter as part of their strategy to improve teaching quality in secondary schools in the state.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between teacher classroom management skills and students' attitude towards learning in senior secondary in Sokoto state.

This hypothesis was tested using PPMC analysis as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Relationship between Teacher Classroom Management Skills and Students' Attitude Towards Learning in Senior Secondary in Sokoto State.

Variables	N	Mean	S. Deviation	r-Cal	p-Value	Decision
Teacher classroom management skills	346	3.25	0.944	0.914**	0.000	H ₀ Rejected

Students' Attitude	348	3.27	0.922
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Source: Fieldwork, 2025

level of significance =0.05

The results in Table 4 show a strong positive and significant relationship between teacher classroom management skills and students' attitude towards learning, with $r(348) = .914^{**}$, $p < .05$. This indicates a significant relationship between teacher classroom management skills and students' attitude towards learning in public senior secondary schools in Sokoto State, as the p-value is below the .05 significance level. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_0), which proposed that there is no significant relationship between teacher classroom management skills and students' attitude towards learning in public senior secondary schools in Sokoto State was rejected. This implies that teachers in secondary schools should possess classroom management skills as a strategy towards student attitude which will ultimately improving overall educational outcomes.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between teacher assessment and evaluation and students' attitude towards learning in senior secondary in school in Sokoto state.

This hypothesis was tested using Pearson r -test analysis as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 5: Relationship Between Teacher Assessment and Evaluation and Students' Attitude Towards Learning in Senior Secondary in School in Sokoto State.

Variables	N	Mean	S. Deviation	r -Cal	p -Value	Decision
Teacher Assessment and Evaluation	346	3.25	0.944	0.817**	0.000	H_0 Rejected
Students' Attitude	348	3.39	.887			

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

level of significance =0.05

The results in Table 5 show a strong positive and significant relationship between teacher assessment and evaluation and students' attitude towards learning, with $r(348) = 0.817^{**}$, $p < 0.05$. This indicates a significant relationship between teacher assessment and evaluation and students' attitude towards learning in public senior secondary schools in Sokoto State, as the p-value is below the 0.05 significance level. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_0), which proposed that there is no significant relationship between teacher assessment and evaluation and students' attitude towards learning in public senior secondary schools in Sokoto State was rejected. This finding suggests

that teachers in secondary should employ the use of assessment and evaluation method to support student attitude towards learning thereby improve the quality of education and academic excellent of student.

Discussion

This study investigates relationship between teacher proficiency and students' attitudes towards learning in public senior secondary schools in Sokoto State. Results were discussed in accordance with the research questions and hypothesis as presented below;

Finding as shown in table 1 revealed a strong and significant positive relationship between teacher subject matter and students' attitude towards learning in senior secondary school in Sokoto state. Teachers' professional mastery of the subject goes a long way in bringing about improved students' attitudes toward learning. It can be said that good mastery of the subject content by teachers affects the students' ability to learn effectively. However, the finding state that teachers with a robust understanding of their subject matter can provide clear explanations, anticipate and address student misconceptions, and offer meaningful learning experiences that resonate with learners. This clarity and competence directly contribute to students' confidence in their own abilities and their motivation to actively participate in learning activities.

Findings as shown in Table 2 revealed a strong significant and positive relationship between teacher classroom management and students' attitude towards learning in senior secondary in school in Sokoto state. The finding of this study shows that a professional teacher must demonstrate excellence attitudes in his teaching. Furthermore, on the hypothesis which was tested on table 5, the finding of this study was similar to the findings of Grieser which revealed that successful classroom management enhances students questioning and exploration when the learning environment is conducive and suitable for learning. The study specifically focused on how teachers' skills in managing classroom dynamics affected students' behavior, engagement, and academic attitudes. The study found that teachers who demonstrated strong classroom management skills fostered a more orderly and supportive learning environment. Students in these classrooms exhibited fewer behavioral issues, such as disruptions and absenteeism, and were more likely to show a positive attitude towards learning. In contrast, students taught by teachers with weaker

classroom management skills displayed more negative attitudes, including increased disengagement and a lack of motivation.

Conclusion

The study reveals several important findings regarding the state of students' attitudes towards learning and Teacher mastery of subject matter and classroom management skills as correlates in public senior secondary schools in Sokoto State. Proficient teachers create effective teaching and learning experiences for their students. They know the unique backgrounds of their students and adjust their teaching methods to meet their individual needs and diverse cultural, social and linguistic characteristics. They develop safe, positive and productive learning environments where all students are encouraged to participate. Proficient teachers are team members. They work collaboratively with colleagues; they seek out and are responsive to advice about educational issues affecting their teaching practice. They communicate effectively with their students, colleagues, parents/careers and community members. They behave professionally and ethically in all forums. Therefore, this study hopes that it gives a light among glowing candles in education stand.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Government should adequately provide proper motivation on teacher proficiency development and student attitude towards learning because no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Thereby focus on in-service training programme of teacher so as to improve teachers' teaching skills and adapt to emerging educational trends. This becomes necessary so that teachers can be upgraded in terms of skills and qualification.
2. Teachers should show good mastery of the subject content in their areas of specialization so as to be able to impart the necessary knowledge to their students which will in turn bring about improved students' performance.
3. Secondary school teachers should develop caring, supportive, encouraging attitude in the classroom, so that they can maximize students' learning, develop students' social skills and maintain a good

disciplinary environment in the classroom. This may be possible by adopting constructivist approach in the classroom.

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