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TEACHERS' COMMUNICATION STYLESAS CORRELATE OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS INANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

The study examined teachers' communication styles as correlate of students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted correlational research design.The population of the study is 20,804 senior secondary school students in form 2 (SS2) (9,235 male and 11,569 female) in 267 Anambra State, public secondary schools. The sample of 1,040 SS2 students was used for the study.Multi-stage sampling procedure was used for the study. The instruments for data collection were researchers-structured questionnaire titled:Teachers Communication Styles Questionnaire (TCSQ), and Students' Academic performance Scores (SAPS). The instruments were validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient method and the average coefficient of0.78 for Verbal Communication Styles, and 0.80 for Assertive Communication Styles.The data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The study revealed thatverbal and assertive communication have positive and significant relationship with students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The study recommended thatassertive communication which promotes clarity and respect, should be encouraged for all teacher as a key strategy for ensuring a positive classroom environment.

Keyword:*Teacher Communication, Communication Style, Academic Performance, Assertive Communication, Verbal Communication*

Introduction

Education is an important tool for national awareness, positive change and development. The growth of a nation's economy, politics and social values mostly depend on the amount of qualitative and quantitative education the nation could offer to its citizens. Ezeaku andNnamdi (2021) noted that education is the process of acquiring knowledge,skills, norms, values and aptitudewhich will enable the individual to be useful to himself and the society at large.At individuals' level, education is an

instrument for human capital building and for all round development of individuals' personalities in society. According to Ezeaku and Nebolisa (2024), education encompasses formal learningin schools, as well as informal learning through life experiences. It also empowers individuals to achieve their potential and make informed decisions for themselves and their communities.

Enhancing students' academic performance has become crucial because it directly impacts their future opportunities and the overall economic growth. This underscores the immense significance of improving academic performance, a point that cannot be overemphasized.Ezeaku and Obunike (2024) explained that academic performance is the quality ofresults produced by students as reflected in the quality of their examination scores.Academic performance plays a pivotal role in students' academic pursuits and career trajectories. It serves as a benchmark for educational attainment, influencing students' opportunities for further studies and professional development. In Nigeria, high academic performance is often a prerequisite for admission into reputable tertiary institutions, where competition is intense (Adeyemo, 2020).In the context of this study, students' academic performance is refers to the level of success students achieved in academics endeavors which encompassing various dimensions like cognitive, emotional, social and physical development.This underscores the importance of teachers' communication irrespective of students' academic backgrounds.

Communication is the exchange of ideas and information between two or more persons. It is a process of exchanging messages, sharing ideas and feelings between two or more persons. In education, communication is the act of creating, processing and disseminating information through suitable channels to promote teaching and learning. Agogbua and Emegwa (2024) explained that communication is not only about talking but also about understanding, connecting feelings and emotions. Therefore, teachers must understand the skills of effective communication. Similarly, Adebayo (2014)described teachers' communication style as the use of spoken language to deliver content, provide explanations, and engage students in dialogue.It includes lectures, discussions, and oral feedback.Teachers' communication style could be expressed using body language, facial expressions, gestures, and eye contact, which can enhance understanding and classroom management.

In this study, teachers' communication styles is seen as the patterns, approaches, and methods teachers use to convey information, share knowledge, interact, teach, express themselves, and respond to students in daily conversations and interactions to achieve specific goals in the school.It is the teacher's responsibility to use a communication style tailored to the students' learning abilities to ensure effective teaching and encourage students' performance.Farah Deeba et al. (2021) indicated four types of communication styles namely: verbal communication, non-verbal communication, visual

communication and written communication, but she also agrees that the two most essential areas are oral and written communication.Akinwale and Ubben (2019) also included open communication, inclusive communication, assertive communication,aggressive communication, passive communication, and passive-aggressive communication as styles of communication. This study focused only on verbal communication styles, and assertive communication styles.

Verbal communication plays a crucial role in enhancing students' academic performance. Through direct interaction, teachers can provide immediate feedback, clarify doubts, and offer personalized guidance, fostering a better understanding of the subject matter (McKay, 2019). This immediate feedback loop helps students to correct mistakes in real time and grasp complex concepts more effectively. Moreover, verbal communication encourages active participation and engagement in the classroom, as students are more likely to ask questions and contribute to discussions, thereby deepening their comprehension and retention of knowledge (Ogunyemi, 2016). Effective verbal communication also allows teachers to adapt their instructional methods to suit the diverse learning styles of their students. By observing students' verbal and non-verbal cues, teachers can gauge understanding and adjust their teaching strategies accordingly, ensuring that all students are adequately supported (Adeyemo, 2020). Additionally, the interactive nature of verbal communication helps build a positive teacher-student relationship, which can boost students' confidence and motivation, further enhancing their academic performance (Ogunlade&Fashiku, 2014).The teacher as the manager of the class should ensure to be an assertive leader, thereby given equal attention to all students irrespective of their background.

Assertive communication style is another communication style that is believed can improve students' academic performance. Assertive communication style is considered a democratic approach, where the leader or manager, as described by Lussier (2018)ischaracterized by cooperation, democracy, the use of political language, authority, and two-way communication. This style emphasizes respect for everyone's opinions and ideas. In environment with a democratic communication style, leaders are people-oriented and care about the welfare and well-being of their followers. They strive to keep subordinates happy to motivate them to give their best and achieve the organization's goals and objectives. it also help to express one's thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in a direct, honest, and respectful manner, while also respecting the rights and opinions of others. It involves clear and confident communication without being aggressive or passive. Assertive communicators advocate for their own needs and boundaries while also considering and acknowledging the needs of others. This style aims to promote open dialogue, constructive problem-solving, and mutual understanding in interpersonal interactions.

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In the classroom, teachers using good communication styles act as managers, counselors, motivators, role models, and comforters. They are open to hearing the opinions of colleagues and students, and they feel comfortable expressing themselves. This, in turn, can help to improve students' academic performance in secondary schools. Unfortunately, it appears that some teachers in public secondary schools in Anambra State, are either unaware of these factors or choose to neglect them.This neglect could potentially contribute to the reasons why some students often struggle and fail in their external examinations.According to Punch Newspaper (2024), 44.29% of students achieved credits pass and above in both WAEC and NECO, while showing that 55.71% of students nationwide, including thosefrom Anambra State, scored below the minimum requirement in some subjects. This could suggest that communication styles used in teaching these students should be looked. It is against this background that the study examined teachers' communication styles as correlates of students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

The poor academic performance and high failure rates in examinations such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), National Examination Council (NECO), and University Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) are a significant concern, particularly in government-owned secondary schools in Anambra state. Despite efforts by the Anambra State government to enhance the education system such as hiring qualified personnel, providing free education from basic to junior secondary levels, and improving educational facilities in public secondary schools, the outcome have not matched expectations. It is distressing that despite these initiatives, many students do not perform well in external examinations.

This situation has raised concerns among teachers, parents, evaluators, and researchers, as continued decline in students' performance could potentially hinder the nation's economic and technological progress. Consequently, the researcher sought to examine whether teachers' communication styles contribute to this poor academic performance of in public secondary schools in Anambra State.Addressing these issues is crucial for finding sustainable solutions and improving academic outcomes. It is on this backdrop that this study sought to examine teachers' communication styles as correlate of students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine teachers' communication styles as correlate of students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the relationship between verbal communication style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. examine the relationship between assertive communication style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between verbal communication style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?
2. What is the relationship between assertive communication style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significant:

1. There is no significant relationship between verbal communication style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. There is no significant relationship between assertive communication style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Method

The study adopted correlational research design. The study was carried in Anambra State.The population of the study is 20,804 senior secondary school students in form 2 (SS2) (9,235 male and 11,569 female) in 267 Anambra State, Public Secondary Schools. (Post Primary Schools Service Commission (PPSSC), Anambra State, 2024).The sample of 1,040 SS2 students was used for the study.The sample size was 5% of total number of SS2 students. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used in drawing the sample.Two researcher-developed instruments titled Teachers Communication Styles Questionnaire (TCSQ),and Students' Academic performance Scores (SAPS) were

used for the study. The instrument has two sections, A and B. Section 'A'Teachers Communication Styles Questionnaire (TCSQ) has two Clusters 'A-B'. Cluster 'A'elicits information on verbal communication style with 10-item statements;while Cluster 'B' elicits information on assertive communication style with 10-item statement.All the clusters were weighted on four point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) (4 points), Agree (A) (3 points), Disagree (D) (2 points), and Strongly Disagree (SD) (1 point).Section 'B'Students' Academic performance Scores (SAPS) was derived from third term SS2 students score in English and Mathematics respectively. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained through a pilot test on 20 students from public secondary schools in Enugu State.The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient method and the average coefficient of0.78 for Verbal Communication Styles, and 0.80 for Assertive Communication Styles. Out of 1040 copies of the questionnaires administered to students, 998 (96%) of them were correctly completed and returned, while 42 (4%) were either misplaced or not correctly filled.Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to answer research questions 1 to 2 with hypotheses 1 to 2 at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between verbal communication style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the Relationship Between Verbal Communication and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

Variables	N	Verbal Communication Style	Students' Academic Performance	Remark
Verbal Communication Style	998	1.00	.787**	StrongPositive Relationship
Students' Academic Performance	998	.787**	1.00	

The summary result of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient on Table 1 showedthat there is a strong positive relationship between verbal communication style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The analysis revealed a correlation coefficient value of 0.787, indicating a strong positive relationship between verbal communication style and students' academic performance. This suggested that students'

academic performanceis influenced by verbal communication style. In other words, a unit increase in verbal communication style leads to 0.787 (78.7%) increase in students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between assertive communication style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 2: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the Relationship between Assertive Communication Style and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

Variables	N	Assertive Communication Style	Students' Academic Performance	Remark
Assertive Communication Style	998	1.00	.776**	StrongPositive Relationship
Students' Academic Performance	998	.776**	1.00	

The summary result of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient on Table 3 showedthat there is a strong positive relationship between assertive communication style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The analysis revealed a correlation coefficient value of 0.776, indicating a positive but strong positive relationship between assertive communication style and students' academic performance. This suggested that students' academic performanceis influenced by assertive communication style. A unit increase in aggressive communication style leads to 0.776 (77.6%) increase in students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between verbal communication style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 3: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the Significant Relationship between Verbal Communication Style and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

Variables	N	Verbal Communication Style	Students' Academic Performance	Sig.	Remark
Verbal Communication Style	998	1.00	.787**	.000	Significant
Academic Performance	998	.787**	1.00		

The summary result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient on Table 3showed the significant relationship between verbal communication and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State with p-value = 0.000. Since p-value (.000) is less than 0.05, the study rejected the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between verbal communication style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State and accepted the alternative hypothesis that there is significant relationship between verbal communication style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between assertive communication style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 4: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the Significant Relationship between Assertive Communication Style and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

Variables	N	Assertive Communication Style	Students' Academic Performance	Sig.	Remark
Assertive Communication Style	998	1.00	.776**	.000	Significant
Students' Academic Performance	998	.776**	1.00		

The summary result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient on Table 11 showed the significant relationship between assertive communication style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State with p-value = 0.000. Since p-value (.000) is less than 0.05, the study rejected the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between assertive communication style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State and accepted the alternative hypothesis that there is significant relationship between assertive communication style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Discussion

Findings on the relationship between verbal communication style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between verbal communication and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The findings also showed that there is significant relationship between verbal communication and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This results can be attributed to the respondents agreeing that their always give feedback to show how much they values them, asks questions that requires them to give explanations in their own words; ensure that their ideas about the subject taught become clearer after verbal immediacy on the topic in the classroom among others. The findings are in consonance with the findings of David and Musa (2023) who disclosed that there are strong positive and statistical significant relationships between head teachers' communication skills and students' academic achievement. Onofe-Overah et al. (2022) also revealed that there is a positive relationship between teachers' verbal, and writing communication styles and students' academic achievement. Ogunyemi (2016) noted that verbal communication encourages active participation and engagement in the classroom, as students are more likely to ask questions and contribute to discussions, thereby deepening their comprehension and retention of knowledge. Verbal communication plays a crucial role in enhancing students' academic performance. Through direct interaction, teachers can provide immediate feedback, clarify doubts, and offer personalized guidance, fostering a better understanding of the subject matter.

Findings on the relationship between assertive communication style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between assertive communication style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The findings also showed that there is a significant relationship between assertive communication style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This results can be attributed to the respondents agreeing that their teachers always take the lead in a conversation in the class, always stand for what is right in school, clearly expresses a chain of thought during argument, always determine the direction of conversation in a

class among others. The findings are in consonance with the findings of Onofe-Overah et al. (2022). The finding showed that there is a positive relationship between teachers' verbal, writing and assertive communication styles and students' academic achievement. The findings also agreed with the finding of Nmecha and Abangowe (2022)that revealed that assertive communication style significantly predict students' academic achievement while passive communication style, aggressive communication style and passive-aggressive communication style does not significantly predict academic achievement. Nwosu (2021) also found out that a positive significant relationship between teachers' assertive communication and students' performance in secondary schools. The findings highlight the critical role of assertive communication styles in ensuring a positive and productive classroom environment, which significantly contributes to improved academic performance among students in public secondary schools.

Conclusion

Teachers' communication styles play an important role in ensuring students' academic performance. Schools should support students by providing an environment that encourages effective teacher-student interactions that enhance learning outcomes.Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that teachers' communication styles have positive and significant relationship with students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Schools should create professional development opportunities focused on improving teachers' verbal communication skills, to ensure that teachers are equipped to effectively convey instructions, provide feedback, and engage students in meaningful discussions, thereby promoting academic excellence.
2. Assertive communication which promotes clarity and respect, should be encouraged for all teacher as a key strategy for ensuring a positive classroom environment.

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