



School Characteristics and Secondary School Teachers' Work Effectiveness in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State

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Abstract: This study examined school characteristics and secondary school teachers' work effectiveness in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State. Specifically, the study examined the influence of school location, school population, and school ownership on secondary school teachers' work effectiveness respectively. Three research questions were posed and three null hypotheses were formulated accordingly to guide the study. The design adopted for the study was a descriptive survey research design. A purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample of 156 respondents out of a population of 549 teachers. A questionnaire titled "Teachers' work effectiveness questionnaire" (TWEQ) was used as an instrument for data collection. Collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while the null hypotheses were all tested at .05 level of significance using the independent t-test statistical technique. The results of the analysis revealed that school characteristics such as location, population, and ownership, influenced secondary school teachers' work effectiveness respectively. Based on these findings, it was recommended among others that; teachers should be motivated using intrinsic and extrinsic channels such as praises, rewards for outstanding performance, regular payment of salaries, promotion and other incentives such as improved working conditions, good classroom, and office environment, and so on, for improved work performance.

Keywords: School Characteristics, Secondary School, Teachers, School Population, School Location, Work Effectiveness, School Ownership

1. Introduction

The educational system is undoubtedly a system of production and could be viewed as a factory that requires men, money and material resources to aid production. For production to be effective and efficient, there is a strong for the manpower (entrepreneur) to plan, coordinate and perform other managerial duties. Teachers are the main drivers of any school system, and to achieve set goals, their attitude and commitment play an integral role.

It can be recalled that the secondary schools were

established for the society as a means of producing quality students and providing good inputs to the tertiary education setup. It was expected everybody in the secondary school system including the principals, teachers and non-teaching staff, will play active roles in modifying the behaviour of secondary school students through teaching and learning. In an ideal situation, teachers who are the main drivers of the curriculum implementation process, supposed to discharge their duties with all amount of effectiveness to achieve the goals of secondary education as well as that of education in general.

Unfortunately, many teachers have been found to be

ineffective as displayed in their poor attitude to work, poor record keeping, lateness to school, inconsistent attendance to lectures and classes, poor self-discipline, nonchalant attitude towards writing notes of lesson and marking attendance register and several other unacceptable behaviours which can contribute to attainment of set goals. This has been an issue of concern with the government, parents, and the general public pointing fingers of poor academic performance of students to teachers' effectiveness. This means that poor academic performance of students is related to teachers' effectiveness because it is believed that when teachers are effective, students should do better and vice versa. The poor performance of students in the classroom and standardized examinations such as WAEC, NECO, GCE, JAMB and so on, indicates that teachers' effectiveness needs to be scrutinized. The poor quality of graduates supplied by our secondary school system to the tertiary education system has also affected the quality of graduates produced from the tertiary institutions thereby causing further problems to the economy in general.

Studies on teachers' work performance have revealed several factors as correlates. A study revealed that school quality indicators such as quality of school facilities, leadership, and supervision jointly accounted for 90.6 percent of the total variance in teachers' job performance; have a significant composite influence on secondary school teachers' job performance [1]. Another study revealed that disciplinary management is significantly related to teachers' job effectiveness [2]. Studies have also shown that principals' administrative competence, human resource management, conflict management, school hazards management, teachers' motivation, teachers' involvement in decision making, and effective communication are significant correlates of teachers' effectiveness [3-7].

Despite the evidences provided by the findings in these studies presented above, it would have been interesting to see the work performance of teachers in public secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State, witnessed a dramatic improvement. The persistent, poor, negative, and ineffective attitudes displayed by the teachers in the area of study sparked the researchers' curiosity to explore further, other possible solutions to the problem of teachers' ineffectiveness. Consequently, the researchers are interested in ascertaining whether some characteristics of the school could be related to the work effectiveness of teachers.

The school characteristics of interest in this include school population, school ownership, and school leadership. The reason is that, while some teachers exhibited some level of ineffectiveness, there are yet other teachers that are working assiduously in discharging their routine duties of teaching and behavior modification. These differences in teachers' work effectiveness appear to also vary from one school to another and among schools with differences in their characteristics [8]. The focus of this study is therefore on the following characteristics of the school including location, population, and ownership.

School location refers to where a school is situated or sited,

it can be located in a rural location, urban location, and sub-urban regions [9]. Some studies indicated that there is a significant relationship between school location and teachers' job performance [10, 11]. The findings of another study showed that School type and school location did not have any effect on mathematics teachers' job performance even after being subjected to interactive analysis [12]. In a local study, it was revealed that mathematics teachers' effectiveness was significantly dependent on the treatment, school type, and school location but not on teachers' gender [13]. The results from the study of other scholars showed that there was a significant difference in teachers' role performance between rural and urban secondary schools' teachers in the discharge of their duties ($t=2.73$, $p<0.05$). The study further proved that teachers in urban areas had better role performance than their rural counterparts [14].

The next characteristics of schools considered in this study are school population which refers to the total elements (People and materials) in a school. School population refers to the total number of students and teachers that are available in a school at a given point in time [9]. A school can be said to have a large population or a small population depending on the number of observations that are present. It was maintained that schools with small populations are defined as having enrolments under 800 people, while large schools are those defined as having enrolments greater than 1,600 [15]. Some empirical pieces of evidence available in the literature have established various relationships between school population and teachers' work performance.

A study carried out in Rivers State of Nigeria revealed a significant relationship between school population and mathematics teachers' job effectiveness in Secondary school [16]. It was disclosed in other study that there is no causal relationship between school size and academic performance [17]. It was also shown by another study that school population, school type, and school location, all have an influence in the supervision of security in public secondary schools of Cross River State [9]. This finding was considered to be related to the present study because the security of students and properties in a school are also part of the duties of teachers as well as principals, and can be used as an indicator to assess their work performance. The results from an experiment also suggested that smaller schools have a positive influence on teachers' key area such as student engagement, teacher and parent relationship, and their social behaviour. The study also suggests that these positive influences are amplified to have an indirect effect on students' academic performance of students [15].

The third aspect of this study focused on school ownership as a characteristic of secondary schools. School ownership refers to the entity in charge of the administration, financing, supervision, and maintenance of a school. It also refers to the administrative and managerial system that established a school, oversees, fund, monitor/supervise the school, and engaging in other activities that are necessary for the smooth running of the school [18]. A school can be owned by the government (public schools), missionaries or individuals

(private schools). The ownership of schools in Nigeria which could be viewed as the controlling force in terms of the administration, could be divided into two broad ownership structure which is: public ownership and private ownership [8]. Schools that are established and run by governments are called public schools while those established by individuals, organizations, and mission bodies are referred to as private schools.

Studies related to school ownership has revealed that it has a significant relationship with the work performance of teachers. The findings from a study uncovered that school size, ownership, structure, type, and location were statistically significant in relation to teachers' work performance [8]. A study argued by showing that the level of teachers' work performance was low and that, school type, sex, and location had no significant influence on teachers' work performance [19]. Another study also found that mathematics teachers of central government schools were more effective than those from privately managed schools [20]. In a similar study, it was discovered that there is no significant difference in the performance of teachers in the two types of secondary schools [21].

It can be said from the foregoing that given the importance of these school variables to the school, there is a need for a study to be conducted that will examine their relationship on teachers' work effectiveness. From the literature, the position of various studies suggests that there are ongoing arguments amongst scholars regarding the relationship between the independent and dependent variables of this study. For instance, in terms of school location, several studies have reported that it has a significant relationship on teachers' performance, while some other studies maintain that it does not relate to teachers' work effectiveness. Also, a certain distinction has been made with respect to urban and rural teachers' job performance, with some researches revealing that there is a difference in the work effectiveness between Urban and Rural school teachers.

School population has also been explored variously by scholars. Some researches view teachers from small school population to be more effective than those in largely populated schools, and vice versa. Similarly, some studies discovered that teachers in private schools are better than their counterparts in public schools, and vice versa in terms of work effectiveness, with others indicating that there is no significant difference in the work effectiveness of teachers in either private or public schools.

Given all the empirical pieces of evidence gathered and presented above, including the various positions held by the findings of the different studies as reviewed, it can be inferred that there are still some gaps which this study was anticipated to fill. One of such gaps is based on the evidence that the majority of the studies were conducted in foreign countries. Only a handful of studies in related were conducted in Cross River State. In the area of study (Abi Local Government Area), there is no such study that investigated school characteristics and secondary school teachers' work performance, with a specific focus on the same sub-variables

as those of this study. With these few gaps identified, this study is considered unique and different from the studies conducted by other scholars. Thus, this study will also contribute to the arguments currently in the literature by providing results from an untapped area of study.

2. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine school characteristics and secondary school teachers' work effectiveness in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State. Specifically, the study sought to examine the influence of:

- i. School location on secondary school teachers' work effectiveness;
- ii. School population on secondary school teachers' work effectiveness;
- iii. School ownership on secondary school teachers' work effectiveness.

3. Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide this study.

- i. School location has no significant influence on secondary school teachers' work effectiveness.
- ii. School population has no significant influence on teachers' work effectiveness.
- iii. School ownership has no significant influence on secondary school teachers' work effectiveness.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

The design adopted for the study was a descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey research design is used to find out what situations, events attitudes or opinions are occurring in a population. It tries to address issues of distribution of some phenomena in a population or among subgroups of a population [22]. This design was considered appropriate because, the study purports to use the information obtained through questionnaires, in describing observed phenomena.

4.2. Area of the Study

This study was conducted in Abi Local Government Area. Abi is a Local Government Area in Cross River State, Nigeria. The Local Government headquarters of Abi is in the town of Itigidi. It has a Population of about 144,802 (2006 census data) with a land mass of 282km², and population density of 684.0/km². The area is bounded to the West by Afikpo North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State; to the East and South, by Yakurr and Biase Local Government Areas of Cross River State respectively; and to the North by Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State. The area of study contains several Igbo villages and is home to an annual cultural festival.

4.3. Population of the Study and Sample

The population of the study comprised 549 teachers, distributed across 12 public and 21 private secondary schools in the area of study. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select four public and four 4 private secondary schools respectively, resulting in a total of eight selected secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State. A purposive sampling technique was used to select all the available 156 teachers in the eight selected schools.

4.4. Instrumentation

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Teachers' work effectiveness questionnaire" (TWEQ). The instrument was divided into two parts. Part A elicited demographic information of the respondents, while part B was made of 15 items organized on the 4-point Likert scale which was used to elicit information with respect to teachers' work effectiveness. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha technique with a coefficient of .834 providing sufficient evidence that the instrument was internally consistent for measurement.

4.5. Procedure for Data Collection

The instruments were administered to the respondents in their respective schools by the researchers on different occasion. On arrival at the various sampled schools, permission was obtained from the school principals before the administration of the instruments. The respondents were duly informed of the importance of the exercise and were requested to provide honest responses to the instruments.

They were also assured that the data requested from them would be treated with utmost confidence. At the end of the process, copies of the instruments were retrieved from the respondents without any loss. This represented a 100 percent rate of return of the administered instrument.

4.6. Procedure for Data Preparation and Analysis

To ease the process of data preparation, a person-by-item matrix was constructed. Each copy of the instruments was assigned a numerical value for each rater, then a key was developed to guide the coding process of data collected from the respondent. The statements on the instruments were sorted out based on the variables they were purported to measure. The data were scored accordingly for positively and negatively worded items. Independent t-test statistical technique was employed for the analysis of data and hypothesis. All the null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance.

5. Results

5.1. Presentation of Results

The results of the study were presented based on the hypotheses that were formulated to guide the study. The following tables, present the results of the study.

Hypothesis 1

School location has no significant influence on secondary school teachers' work effectiveness. In testing this hypothesis, school location was divided into urban schools and rural schools with independent t-test used as the statistical tool. The result of the analysis of data is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of t-test analysis of the influence of school location on secondary school teachers' work effectiveness.

| Variable | School location | N | Mean | S ² | t-cal. | μ | p-value |
|----------------------------|-----------------|----|-------|----------------|--------|------|---------|
| Teachers' work performance | Urban Schools | 89 | 38.22 | 184.80 | 21.31 | 37.5 | .000* |
| | Rural schools | 67 | 27.67 | 64.60 | | | |

*p < 0.05; df = 154; t-Crit. = 1.976; μ = hypothesized mean.

The results presented in Table 1 revealed that the p-value is less than the level of significance (.000 < .05). With this result, the null hypothesis is rejected implying that, school location has a significant influence on secondary school teachers' work effectiveness. The mean of urban schools (X = 38.22) is greater than the hypothesized mean (μ = 37.5) which implies teachers work effectiveness in urban schools was significantly high; while teachers' work effectiveness in rural secondary schools was significantly low because the mean of rural schools (X = 27.67) is lower than the

hypothesized mean (μ = 37.5). This implies further that, teachers in urban secondary schools were more effective than their counterparts in rural secondary schools.

Hypothesis 2

School population has no significant influence on teachers' work effectiveness. This hypothesis was tested using independent t-test as statistical technique after dividing the independent variable (school population) into high and low. The result of the analysis of data is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of t-test analysis of the influence of school population on secondary school teachers' work effectiveness.

| Variables | School population | N | Mean | S ² | T | μ | p-value |
|------------------------------|-------------------|----|-------|----------------|-------|------|---------|
| Teachers' work effectiveness | High | 98 | 28.92 | 162.85 | 31.28 | 37.5 | .000* |
| | Low | 58 | 37.65 | 177.88 | | | |

*p < 0.05; df = 154; t-Crit. = 1.976; μ = hypothesized mean.

The results presented in Table 2 revealed that $p = .000$ is less than .05 level of significance. With this result, the null hypothesis is rejected implying that, school population has a significant influence on teachers' work effectiveness. The results further revealed that teachers' work effectiveness in highly populated schools was significantly low, while it was significantly high in schools with low populations (i.e. Mean for highly populated schools = $28.9 < \mu = 37.5$; and Mean for less populated = $37.65 > \mu = 37.5$). This also implies that

teachers in less populated schools were more effective than those in highly populated schools.

Hypothesis 3

School ownership has no significant influence on secondary school teachers' work effectiveness. In testing, this null hypothesis school ownership was categorized into private and public schools. The result of the analysis of data is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of t-test analysis of the influence of school ownership on secondary school teachers' work effectiveness.

| Variables | School ownership | N | Mean | S ² | T | μ | p-value |
|------------------------------|------------------|----|-------|----------------|-------|-------|---------|
| Teachers' work effectiveness | Public Schools | 83 | 28.01 | 70.03 | 35.66 | 37.5 | .000* |
| | Private Schools | 73 | 37.01 | 195.82 | | | |

* $p < 0.05$; $df = 154$; $t\text{-Crit.} = 1.976$; $\mu =$ hypothesized mean.

It can be inferred from the results presented in Table 3 that, the p-value is less than .05 level of significance (i.e. $p = .000 < \alpha = .05$). With this result, the null hypothesis is rejected and the implication is that school ownership has a significant influence on secondary school teachers' work effectiveness. The results also indicate that teachers' work effectiveness is significantly low for both private and public secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area (Means 28.01 and 37.01 for public and rural secondary schools respectively, are less than $\mu = 37.5$). However, the results further revealed that secondary school teachers in private schools were more effective than their colleagues in public secondary schools ($37.01 > 28.01$).

5.2. Discussion of Results

This study established through its first finding that school location has a significant influence on secondary school teachers' work effectiveness. Teachers work effectiveness in urban schools was significantly higher than in rural secondary schools was significantly low. The finding supports the findings of a study which showed that mathematics teachers' effectiveness was significantly dependent on the treatment, school type and school location but not on teachers' gender [13]. The finding of this study also aligns with the results of another study which showed that there is a significant difference in teachers' role performance between rural and urban secondary school teachers in the discharge of their duties ($t=2.73$, $p<0.05$). The study proved that teachers in urban areas had better role performance than their rural counterpart in rural areas [14]. This study also aligns with the results of other studies which all indicated that there is a significant relationship between school location and teachers job performance [10, 11]. This finding however, does not agree with the results of a study which showed that school type and school location did not have any effect on mathematics teachers' job performance even after being subjected to interactive analysis [12].

The second finding of this study established that school population has a significant influence on teachers' work effectiveness. Teachers' work effectiveness in highly

populated schools was significantly low, while it was significantly high in schools with low populations. The finding also revealed that teachers in less populated schools were more effective than those in highly populated schools. This finding corroborates the finding of an earlier studies which suggested that smaller schools have a positive influence on teachers' key area such as student engagement, teacher and parent relationship, and their social behaviour, indicating that there is a significant relationship between school population and mathematics teachers job effectiveness in Secondary school [15, 16]. This study is not in alignment with one study which opposed that there is no causal relationship between school size and academic performance the study of teachers [17].

It was established through the third finding of this study that school ownership has a significant influence on secondary school teachers' work effectiveness. Teachers' work effectiveness is significantly low for both private and public secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area. The findings further revealed that teachers in private secondary schools were more effective than their colleagues in public secondary schools. This study supports the finding of a study which discovered that school size, ownership, structure, type, and location were statistically significant to teachers' work performance [8]. One study also found that mathematics teachers of central government schools were more effective than those from privately managed schools [20]. The finding of this study, however, disagrees with the findings from some studies which showed contrasting findings that the level of teachers' work performance was low and that, school type, sex, and location had no significant influence on teachers' work performance [19, 21].

6. Conclusion

Generally, it was concluded based on the findings of this study that, the characteristics of a school has a contributory role to play in teachers' work effectiveness. Schools which possess supportive characteristics are able to monitor the activities and progress of teachers, and provide room for

discipline where inconsistencies are found among teachers. Specifically, it was concluded that the location, population, ownership, and leadership in a school, has a significant influence on secondary school teachers' work effectiveness in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State. It was also concluded that teachers work effectiveness is higher in urban, less populated and, private schools than in rural, highly populated, and public schools respectively.

7. Recommendations

It was recommended based on the conclusion of this study that:

- i. Secondary schools in rural settings should be sited in good locations that can be easily accessed by external supervisors. This will help eliminate the level of truancy among teachers in rural schools and promote effectiveness consequently.
- ii. Secondary school principals should also adopt good disciplinary measures in bringing to book, any teacher discharging duties below expected standards.
- iii. Regular classroom visitation as a supervisory technique should be adopted by secondary school principals in order to monitor how teaching actually takes place within each classroom and to promote effective teaching and learning.
- iv. Teachers should be motivated using intrinsic and extrinsic channels such as praises, rewards for outstanding performance, regular payment of salaries, promotion and other incentives such as improved working conditions, good classroom and office environment, and so on.
- v. Conferences on teachers work effectiveness should also be organised for secondary school teachers so as to enable them to understand the need to discharge their duties optimally according to global best practices.

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