TEACHERS' CHARACTERISTICS AS PREDICTORS OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

The study examined teachers' characteristics as predictors of students' academic engagement 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 was a correlational research design. The population of the study consisted of 24,933 SS2 students comprising 11,359 males and 13,574 females in 267 public secondary schools in the six education zones in Anambra State. The sample of 1,247 SS2 students was used for the study. Multistage sampling procedure comprising proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used for the study. The instruments Teachers' Characteristics Questionnaire (TCQ) and Students' Academic Engagement Questionnaire (SAEQ) were used for data collection. The instruments were subjected to face and construct validation. Face validation was done by three experts while construct validation was carried out with Principal Component Analysis approach using SSPS vol.26 and the results showed that the construct validity was met. The reliability of the instrument was done using Cronbach Alpha technique and the average coefficient value of 0.83 for TCQ and 0.86 for SAEQ were obtained and considered highly reliable and suitable for the study. The researcher visited the public secondary schools with the help of three research assistants. Out of 1,247 copies of the instrument administered, 1,024 copies representing 82% of the instrument were correctly completed. Simple linear regression statistical tool was used to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that teacher-student classroom interaction and teachers' classroom mentorship were high positive and significant predictors of students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The study concluded that teachers' characteristics are positive and significant predictors of students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Based on the findings, the study recommended that public secondary school teachers should builds stronger classroom relationships with their students by showing a genuine care for their students' well-being. This will create a more supportive and trusting learning environment. This emotional connection between teacher and student is a critical factor for academic engagement and success.

Keyword: Teachers' characteristics, students' academic engagement, public secondary schools

Introduction

For students to be adequately prepared for useful living within the society and also for the secondary school students to advance into institutions of higher learning, there has to be an acceptable level of academic performance on the part of these students. For there to be an acceptable level of academic performance, there has to be meaningful learning and for meaningful learning to take place, the students have to be fully engaged. In other words, if students are to live happy and productive lives in the complex world of the 21st century, students need to achieve a wide range of schooling outcomes. Thus, students' performance is more likely to be enhanced if students are motivated to academically engaged in their classroom activities.

Concerns regarding the academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State are arising among education stakeholders, who emphasize that the exposure to the curriculum would be futile if students do not actively participate in the learning process. Okaforcha (2024) argued that students who do not participate sufficiently in academic activities may suffer crippling effects that affect society generally, in addition to the individual students. For example, Anierobi et al. (2024) noted that low academic engagement, which raises the risk of low academic performance and failures among students may have a trickle-down effect that lower students' literacy and dropout rates. It is expected of students at secondary education level to gain the skills and information required to equip them for both further education and a productive life in society. Adinna and Anene (2024) noted that teachers are responsible for making sure that students are participating actively in their academic work and quickly following directions. Mmonwuba and Adinna (2025) asserted that teachers use strategies like assigning take-home projects and using stimulus modification during curricular presentations to students to make sure they are actively engaged.

Academic engagement refers to the extent and intensity with which students participate in and apply them to learning and other school activities, as well as the supportive relationships and structures that exist to support student engagement. Okeoma et al. (2024) defined academic engagement as the extent to which a student participated in academic and non-academic-related activities as well as identified with and values for the goal of studying. Okeoma et al. further described academic engagement as the quality of students' participation or conception with the schooling endeavour. They classified academic engagement into six dimensions such as; cognitive, behavioural, emotional, psychological and social engagement. In general, students who are effectively engaged in learning perform better in school and on standardized tests, and they are more likely to persist in school than students who are less engaged (Adinna et al., 2025). Students who are engaged in school activities report more positive attitudes toward school and improved performance.

In the light of the foregoing, academic engagement could thus be said to be of great essence to students especially in the attainment of educational objectives. Students' academic engagement is necessary for learning, maximal performance and academic success, which is the desire of

educational stakeholders. This implies that academically engaged students would fully concentrate on their studies, be enthusiastic in academic learning, and persist when encountering obstacles and challenges. Academic engagement is by this considered the hallmark for academic success among students. Consequently, teachers make efforts to ensure students' active engagement in their studies by deploying pedagogical strategies such as take-home assignment, use of stimulus variation, instructional materials and question and answer method for maximal success.

Contextually, students' academic engagement is when students are fully involved in their learning, rather than just memorizing and completing tasks to pass a course. Students who are academically engaged are drawn to think in-depth, understand the material, and even discuss it with their peers. Academic engagement is ideally holistic, where it aims to address learning in the classroom. Students' engagement not only predicts grades, achievement test scores, and learning; it also predicts attendance, retention, school completion and academic resilience. Essentially, students' academic engagement could largely depend on teachers' characteristics.

Teachers' characteristics can be described as those observable or actions or quality exhibited by teachers in the course of carrying out different activities during teaching and learning. These observable qualities possess by teacher are tailored toward effective classroom teaching to increase students' academic performance. That quality may be positive or negative and effective or ineffective (Siemo, 2022). Thus, teacher is said to be effective in classroom teaching, if he/she produces the requisite results. Ezeaku and Obunike (2024) noted that teachers' characteristics is seen as key determinant of students' academic performance in school. Often time, the teacher is usually held accountable for students' failure. This is because, academic engagement or motivation for learning, is intensively under the control of teachers and schools. Teachers are the major factors in a learning process that involves many others. Yet, in the words of Meremikwu et al. (2022), teachers have been largely blamed or held responsible in cases of students' low performance even where there is no scientific justification for such blames. Meremikwu et al. added that these blames lies on the characteristics of the teacher including their age, gender, marital state, experiences, academic qualifications, classroom interaction, use of instructional materials, communication skills, mentoring, arrangement and class reinforcement.

Teachers' characteristics describe the demographic variables which comprises the training and the attributes of teachers. In line with the assertion, Onyejekwe et al. (2025) considered teachers' characteristics to include the mentoring, passion, interpersonal skills, class management, use of instructional materials, communication skills, classroom reinforcement, arrangement, teacher-student classroom interaction, training and continuous professional development which determine students' outcome. Okeke and Adinna (2025) opted that teachers' characteristics is the specific qualities required for effective teaching by teachers in the classroom. Teachers who are intrinsically motivated to teach and who have positive attitudes toward teaching tend to be more effective in promoting students' learning and achievement. Okeke and Adinna added that qualities of a good teacher include communication skills, patience, class mentoring, teacher-student

classroom interaction, reinforcement, adaptability, along with empathy, strong subject knowledge and a passion for teaching. Effective teachers are also good listeners, organized, collaborative and able to motivate students and manage a classroom effectively.

The quality of teachers serves as a great source of input in the educational system because without it teaching and learning will be ineffective. In the colonial era only teachers who were professionally qualified were engaged to teach in schools. Okaforcha and Nwafor (2024) referred to teachers' characteristics as all teacher-related qualities that produce favourable educational outcome such as students' performance on standardized tests or supervisor rating. Teachers' quality according to Okaforcha and Nwafor include empathy, mentoring, passion, class management, communication, interpersonal skills, use of instructional materials, classroom reinforcement, teacher-student classroom interaction, pedagogical competency, creativity, among others. The teachers play a crucial role in the educational attainment of students and are ultimately responsible for translating policies and principles to implementation modules for achieving school goals. The ways teachers present themselves create an impression on the administrator, colleagues, parents and the students. Most times, Mmor and Adinna (2025) asserted that students link their interest in a particular subject to a teachers' personality, value and how the subject was taught. A teacher who is enthusiastic and shows competence in content knowledge in a specialized subject area may transfer those skills to students.

Contextually, teachers' characteristics are those attributes, characters and behaviours exhibited by teachers in the classroom and during teaching and learning process. It is the personal attributes of a teacher that make him or her distinct from one another to excel in his or her chosen career. In this study, teachers' characteristics were delimited to teacher-student classroom interaction and teachers' classroom mentorship.

Teacher-student classroom interaction occurs in the learning process involving teachers and students in the classroom. Classroom interaction is about class interaction as a two-way process between teachers and students in the learning process in the classroom. Anakwue (2024) stated that interaction involving teachers and students in the classroom has the potential for positive cooperation or conflict. This happens because of the collaboration between the two parties, teachers and students. Communication can take place properly and effectively so that the learning process occurs. Classroom interaction is an important part of the teaching and learning process. Ughamadu et al. (2025) noted that it is in the classroom that the mindset is set, attitudes will be formed, and process participation can affect students' confidence in learning. Thus, teachers and students must build interactions well to create a good learning process. Moreover, Obikeze and Ezeanowai (2025) stated that the essence of interaction is communication, where communication is all about everything. Okaforcha and Aniefuna-Mokwugwo (2025) maintained that classroom interactions include class behaviour such as taking turns, questions and answers, negotiation and feedback. Based on the description, it can be concluded that classroom interactions that occur in the learning process involving teachers and students have reciprocity in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Good teacher-student classroom interaction is a good engagement

strategy between students and teachers in the classroom especially with proper flow of information from teachers to students leads to positive classroom mentorship.

Teachers' classroom mentorship is another characteristic of a teacher. Nkem and Osuafor (2022) affirmed that class monitoring involves moving around the classroom to observe students closely, engaging students in academic activities, asking questions and practicing both verbal and non-verbal teaching methods to ensure that students are paying undivided attention and taking more from the lesson than simple facts. Obiekwe et al. (2025) point out that instructional class mentoring is the act of observing the activities of students in the classroom. Okaforcha and Aniefuna-Mokwugwo (2025) noted that classroom mentoring provides opportunity for teachers to ascertain the challenges students encountered during instructional delivery. Thus, the way teachers monitor, control and motivate students in the classroom would determine their level of academic engagement.

Achieving academic engagement of students has been the desire of educational stakeholders in secondary education. The importance of academic engagement cannot be overlooked. Emesi and Anyanwu (2024) opted that academic engagement is useful in enhancing school activities towards achieving positive academic outcomes and as well, decreases students' decision to drop out of school due to a long-term process of disengagement from school, among others. Anierobi et al. (2024) noted that there are many potential causes of students' disengagement, including a lack of interest in the material, lack of personal relevance, lack of motivation, poor classroom management, and lack of support from teachers and peers. More so, Onyejekwe et al. (2025) fingered among others that students who are disengaged in the classroom exhibit behaviours like low participation in class, low test scores, poor attendance, lack of homework completion, and disruptive behaviour. However, the unsatisfactory engagement of some students often experienced in some public secondary schools in Anambra State is often attributed not only to the incompetencies of some teachers but also teachers' variables in effective management of the affairs of students in their school. Despite the fact that secondary school students in Anambra State are taught by the same teachers with the same syllabus, their academic engagement level differ from one individual to another which might be pointing accusing fingers to teachers' competencies and characteristics. Given the foregoing, the researcher therefore deemed it crucial to examine the predictive value of teachers' characteristics on students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine teachers' characteristics as predictors of students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. find out the predictive value of teacher-student classroom interaction on students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

2. determine the predictive value of teachers' classroom mentorship on students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the predictive value of teacher-student classroom interaction on students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

2. What is the predictive value of teachers' classroom mentorship on students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Teacher-student classroom interaction is not a significant predictor of students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

2. Teachers' classroom mentorship is not a significant predictor of students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Methods

The study was carried out 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 was a correlational research design. The population of the study consisted of 24,933 SS2 students comprising 11,359 males and 13,574 females in 267 public secondary schools in the six education zones in Anambra State. The sample of 1,247 SS2 students was used for the study. Multistage sampling procedure comprising proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used for the study. The instruments Teachers' Characteristics Questionnaire (TCQ) and Students' Academic Engagement Questionnaire (SAEQ) were used for data collection. The instruments were subjected to face and construct validation. Face validation was done by three experts, two in Educational Management and one in Measurement and Evaluation, all in the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus. The construct validation was carried out with Principal Component Analysis approach using SSPS vol.26 and the results showed that the construct validity was met. The reliability of the instrument was done using Cronbach Alpha technique and the average coefficient value of 0.83 for TCQ and 0.86 for SAEQ were obtained and considered highly reliable and suitable for the study. The researcher visited the public secondary schools with the help of three research assistants. Out of 1,247 copies of the instrument administered, 1,024 copies representing 82% of the instrument were correctly completed. Simple linear regression

statistical tool was used to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One: What is the predictive value of teacher-student classroom interaction on students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on the Predictive Value of Teacher-Student Classroom Interaction on Students' Academic Engagement in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

	Unstandardized β	Std. Dev. β	Standardized β
Constant	33.512	4.116	
teacher-student classroom interaction	0.691	0.285	0.648
R	0.648		
R^2	0.609		
Adj. R^2	0.576		

The summary of the simple regression analysis as shown in Table 1 indicated that the regression line has a positive intercept as presented by the constant value of 33.512. This means that if all the variables are held constant or fixed (zero) at the expense of teacher-student classroom interaction, students' academic engagement will be valued at 34%. The analysis showed that teacher-student classroom interaction positively predict students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State as shown by the regression coefficient (R = 0.648). Additionally, the standardized beta is also values at $\beta = 0.648$ which revealed that teacher-student classroom interaction is a positive predictor of students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This implies that a unit rise in teacher-student classroom interaction led to 0.648(65%) rise in students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.609 indicated that the explanatory power of the variable was highly strong. This implies that 61% of the variations in students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State were accounted for by the variations in teacher-student classroom interaction. The adjusted R^2 supported the claim of the R^2 with a value of 0.576 indicating that 58% of the total variation in students' academic engagement was explained by teacher-student classroom interaction. Thus, adjusted R^2 supports

the statement that the explanatory power of students' academic engagement highly depends on teacher-student classroom interaction in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question Two: What is the predictive value of teachers' classroom mentorship on students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 2: Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on the Predictive Value of Teachers' Classroom Mentorship on Students' Academic Engagement in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

		Unstandardized β	**Std. Dev.** β	**Standardized** β
Constant		32.148	4.275	
teachers' classroom mentorship		0.652	0.304	0.647
R	0.647			
R^2	0.538			
Adj. R^2	0.496			

The summary of the simple regression analysis as shown in Table 2 indicated that the regression line has a positive intercept as presented by the constant value of 32.148. This means that if all the variables are held constant or fixed (zero) at the expense of teachers' instructional class mentoring, students' academic achievement will be valued at 32%. The analysis showed that teachers' classroom mentorship positively predict students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State as shown by the regression coefficient (R = 0.647). Furthermore, the standardized beta is also values at β = 0.647 which revealed that teachers' classroom mentorship is a high positive predictor of students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This implies that a unit increase in teachers' classroom mentorship led to 0.647(65%) improvement in students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.538 indicated that the explanatory power of the variable was high. This implies that 54% of the variations in students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State were accounted for by the variations in teachers' classroom mentorship. The adjusted R^2 supported the claim of the R^2 with a value of 0.496 indicating that 50% of the total variation in students' academic engagement was explained by teachers' classroom mentorship. Thus, adjusted R^2 supports the statement that the explanatory power of students' academic engagement highly depends on teachers' classroom mentorship in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H$_{01}$: Teacher-student classroom interaction is not a significant predictor of students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 3: Test of Significance on the Simple Regression Analysis on Significant Predication of Teacher-Student Classroom Interaction on Students' Academic Achievement in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

	Unstandardized β	Std. Dev. β	Standardized β	t-value	p-value
Constant	33.512	4.116		27.531	0.000
teacher-student classroom interaction	0.691	0.275	0.648	24.832	0.000
R	0.648				
R^2	0.609				
Adj. R^2	0.576				
F	42.584				0.000

The summary of the test of significance of simple regression analysis as shown in Table 3 showed that the simple regression coefficient (R) is 0.648 while the R^2 is 0.609 and Adjust R^2 is 0.576. The F-ratio associated with regression is 42.584, the t-test is 24.832 and the p-value = 0.000. Since p-value (0.000) is less than the specified level of significance 0.05, the study therefore rejected the null hypothesis that teacher-student classroom interaction is not a significant predictor of students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State and accepted the alternative hypothesis that teacher-student classroom interaction is a significant predictor of students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Hypothesis Two

H$_{02}$: Teachers' classroom mentorship is not a significant predictor of students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 4: Test of Significance on the Simple Regression Analysis on Significant Predication of Teachers' Classroom Mentorship on Students' Academic Engagement in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

		Unstandardized β	Std. Dev. β	Standardized β	t-value	p-value
Constant		32.148	4.275		26.532	0.000
teachers' classroom mentorship		0.652	0.237	0.647	23.486	0.000
R	0.647					
R^2	0.538					
Adj. R^2	0.496					
F	43.375					0.000

The summary of the test of significance of simple regression analysis as shown in Table 4 showed that the simple regression coefficient (R) is 0.647 while the R^2 is 0.538 and Adjust R^2 is 0.496. The F-ratio associated with regression is 43.375, the t-test is 23.486 and the P-value = 0.000. Since p-value (0.000) is less than the specified level of significance 0.05, the study therefore rejected the null hypothesis that teachers' classroom mentorship is not a significant predictor of students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State and accepted the alternative hypothesis that teachers' classroom mentorship is a significant predictor of students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Discussion of Findings

Findings on the predictive value of teacher-student classroom interaction on students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State revealed that teacher-student classroom interaction has a high positive predictive value of 0.648(65%) on students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This means that improvement in teacher-student classroom interaction will bring about 65% improvements in students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The study also showed that teacher-student classroom interaction is a significant predictor of students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The positive and significant findings are as a result of the fact that teacher-student classroom interaction is crucial for academic and social-emotional development, leading to higher academic engagement, increased motivation and better behaviour. The finding is in consonance with the findings of Onyejekwe et al. (2025) that strong teacher-

student relationships are linked to higher academic achievement and fewer disciplinary issues. Okaforcha and Aniefuna-Mokwugwo (2025) findings showed that classroom interaction makes students more active participants in the learning process, rather than passive recipients of information. In the findings of Ughamadu et al. (2025), a caring and well-structured environment, fostered through positive classroom interaction, is associated with better students' behaviour. Thus, teachers who show care and respect for individual students' interests can bolster their feelings of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Similarly, the findings of Oguejiofor and Obigwe (2025) affirmed that teachers who are not rigid and are friendly in their approach help students understand concepts better and reduce stress. Obikeze and Ezeanowai (2025) findings indicated that classroom interaction is a key tool for improving both language and social skills, allowing students to practice communication in real-time. The similarities found in these studies are as a result of the fact that positive classroom interactions build students' confidence and make them feel more secure in their studies. It fosters a more supportive learning environment by boosting students' confidence, engagement and self-efficacy, while also helping students develop essential communication skills.

Findings on the predictive value of teachers' classroom mentorship on students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State revealed that teachers' classroom mentorship has a high positive predictive value of 0.647(65%) on students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This means that a high improvement in teachers' classroom mentorship will bring about 65% improvements in students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The study also showed that teachers' classroom mentorship is a significant predictor of students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The positive and significant findings are as a result of the fact that teachers' classroom mentorship is crucial for accelerating professional growth, improving teaching quality and significantly impacting students' outcomes. The findings of the study is in agreement with the findings of Emesi and Anyanwu (2024) that mentors, who are often subject experts, guide teachers in implementing evidence-based instructional strategies and help them with core skills like lesson planning, content delivery, and classroom management. Through observation, modeling, and targeted feedback, teachers can refine their techniques and adopt new, more effective habits in a low-stakes environment. Okaforcha and Nwafor (2024) affirmed that mentoring programs foster a culture of collaboration and shared problem-solving among staff, breaking down isolation and improving professional relationships across the school. The findings of the study is in line with the findings of Ohamobi et al. (2025) that mentoring provides emotional and psychological support, helping new or struggling teachers manage workload, reduce isolation, and build self-confidence and resilience. This supportive relationship is vital for improving students' academic achievement. Obiekwe et al. (2025) established that mentoring encourages teachers to reflect meaningfully on their experiences and practice, identify areas for improvement, and set clear, actionable goals. Ughamadu et al. (2025) findings revealed that, when teachers are well-supported and effective in their roles, it directly benefits students. Improved instruction, better classroom management, and more engaging learning environments lead to enhanced students' engagement, motivation, and academic achievement. The positive impact on teachers

trickles down to the students they teach. The similarities found in these studies are as a result of the fact that classroom mentorship is a high-impact, individualized approach that empowers teachers to become more effective, confident and reflective practitioners, ultimately leading to a stronger, more stable school environment and better educational experiences for all students.

Conclusion

From the results of this study, teachers' characteristics are driving forces that determine the academic engagement of students. Hence, the study concluded that teachers' characteristics are positive and significant predictors of students' academic engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Recommendations

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

1. Teachers should continually utilize relevant instructional class mentoring practices in order to make learning more meaningful and enjoyable to students. This will help to promote quality teaching and learning in the classroom leading to students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Anambra State

2. Public secondary school teachers should builds stronger classroom relationships with their students by showing a genuine care for their students' well-being. This will create a more supportive and trusting learning environment. This emotional connection between teacher and student is a critical factor for academic engagement and success.

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