

Teachers' Support and Classroom Engagement as Correlates of Academic Adjustment of Upper Basic Secondary School Students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated Teachers' support and classroom engagement as correlate of academic adjustment of Upper Basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The study was guided by two objectives, two research questions and corresponding null hypotheses. The study adopted a correlational research design and the population of the study comprised 127, 405 JSSI students from one hundred and sixty- nine (169) Junior Secondary Schools in the state out of which a sample size of 384 respondents was obtained using multi stage sampling procedure. Two instruments were used to obtain data for the study. These instruments are Teachers-Students Relationship Questionnaire (TSRQ) and Students' Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (SAAQ). The instruments were validated by three experts from Measurement and Evaluation Department and the Department of Educational Foundations for content and construct validity. The instruments were also validated using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient, which yielded reliability indexes of 0.89 and 0.83 for Teachers-Students Relationship Questionnaire (TSRQ) and Students Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (SAAQ), respectively. Mean and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions, while the formulated hypotheses were, however, tested at 0.05 level of significance using Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC). Findings from the study revealed a significant positive relationship between teacher support and academic adjustment of upper basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The results also showed a significant positive relationship between teachers' classroom engagement and academic adjustment of upper basic secondary school students in the area. The study concluded that teachers' support and teachers' classroom engagement have significant positive relationship with upper basic secondary school students' academic adjustment in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The study therefore recommended, among others, that the Nasarawa State Government should prioritize initiatives that enhance teacher support systems in schools. By reinforcing policies that encourage teachers to provide academic and emotional support to students, the government can contribute significantly to the academic adjustment and overall success of upper basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Keyword: Teacher support, classroom management, academic adjustment, upper basic secondary schools

INTRODUCTION

Academic adjustment is seen as how well students adapt to the academic demands and environment of their educational institutions. It encompasses various aspects such as coping with academic workload, meeting academic expectations, managing time effectively and developing effective study habits. Good academic adjustment is often linked to higher academic achievement, better mental health and overall student well-being. Factors influencing academic adjustment include inadequate guidance, encouragement, emotional backing needed, lack of timely feedback, motivation, and social support. Effective adjustment strategies will include putting up measures of effective perceived teacher support, classroom engagement, teacher-students' communication and Teacher-students' rapport (Duan & Li, 2021).

Upper Basic students' academic adjustment involves the adaptation of younger students, typically in primary school to Upper Basic school with the academic challenges and expectations within the educational setting. It encompasses various facets such as managing increased academic responsibilities, understanding coursework and developing effective learning strategies (Brown & Johnson, 2022). Successful adjustment is crucial for their academic success, psychological well-being and overall development. Factors influencing this adjustment include individual characteristics like motivation and resilience, family support, peer relationships, and the quality of school resources and support systems (Chen & Chen, 2021). The researcher observed that Upper Basic secondary school students in Nasarawa state often encounter challenges of academic adjustment as they transfer from primary education. Some of these problems includes: anxiety and stress due to increased academic demands and social pressures, difficulty involved in navigating new social dynamics, forming friendships, and managing peer relationship, difficulties in adhering to new rules, managing time, and balancing schoolwork. This challenge stems from strained teachers-students' relationships. Addressing these challenges required initiatives to improve teacher-student interactions through effective teacher support, classroom engagement, teacher-students' communication and teacher-student rapport. Enhancing these relationships can foster a supportive learning environment, promote student engagement, and mitigate barriers to academic adjustment, thereby improving educational outcomes for Upper Basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State (Gomez & Gomez, 2018).

Teachers-students' relationships encompass the interactions, dynamics, and connections formed between teachers and Upper Basic secondary school students within educational settings. These

relationships are pivotal for fostering a supportive learning environment where students feel valued, understood, and motivated to engage academically. Positive relationships are characterized by mutual respect, trust, empathy, and effective communication. They enabled teachers to better understand students' individual needs, learning styles, and challenges, thereby tailoring their instruction and support accordingly. Students, in turn, benefit from feeling supported, encouraged to participate, and more likely to seek help when needed (Hsieh, 2017). Effective teachers-students' relationships are associated with improved academic performance, higher levels of student engagement, and positive socio-emotional development. They contribute significantly to a conducive classroom climate, where learning is not only effective but also enjoyable and inclusive (Jackson & Smith, 2023).

Teacher support refers to students' beliefs and feelings about the assistance, encouragement, and care they receive from their teachers. It encompasses various aspects, including emotional support, academic guidance, and the provision of a positive learning environment. Emotional support involves teachers showing empathy, understanding, and concern for students' well-being. Academic guidance includes offering constructive feedback, clarifying concepts, and helping students achieve their educational goals (Santos & Santos, 2023). A positive learning environment is one where teachers foster a sense of belonging, respect, and encouragement, making students feel valued and motivated. Research indicates that perceived teacher support significantly influences students' academic performance, motivation, and overall school experience. It enhances students' self-esteem, engagement, and resilience, helping them navigate academic challenges more effectively. Also, students who perceive high levels of support from their teachers are more likely to develop positive attitudes towards learning and exhibit better behavioral outcomes (Qin & Chen, 2017). Therefore, perceived teacher support is a crucial component of the educational experience, impacting both academic success and personal development.

Teacher support in Nasarawa State, Nigeria is crucial for the academic adjustment of Upper Basic secondary school students. It include emotional support, guidance, and fostering a positive learning environment. This support helps students navigate academic challenges, boosting their motivation and engagement. However, teachers in the region face challenges such as inadequate training, large class sizes, and limited resources, which hinder their ability to provide effective support that could help Upper Basic secondary school students adjust to the school environment.

Teachers' classroom engagement is seen as a teacher's ability to actively involve students in learning activities, fostering participation, motivation, and a positive learning atmosphere. It encompasses strategies that capture students' attention, promote active participation, and maintain their interest throughout lessons (Li & Zhou, 2022). Effective classroom engagement techniques include using varied instructional methods, such as group discussions, hands-on activities, and multimedia resources, to cater to diverse learning styles. Teachers also facilitate meaningful interactions among students, encouraging collaboration and critical thinking (Li & Zhou, 2022). Moreover, teachers' enthusiasm, clarity in instruction, and responsiveness to students' questions and feedback play crucial roles in sustaining engagement. By creating a supportive and stimulating classroom environment, teachers can inspire curiosity, promote deeper learning, and motivate students to take ownership of their educational journey. Classroom engagement is about imparting knowledge and fostering a sense of curiosity, creativity, and confidence in students, empowering them to become active learners and contributors to their learning process (Li & Zhou, 2022).

Teachers' classroom engagement is vital for student learning and motivation. In Upper Basic Secondary Schools in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, effective engagement includes creating interactive lessons and providing individualized support. However, teachers are faced with the challenges of being unable to assist students with new social dynamics, forming friendships, and managing peer relationships. These social issues distract students and affect their focus and academic performance. Teachers must balance classroom instruction with addressing these social challenges, requiring them to be observant and responsive to students' social needs while maintaining an engaging and supportive learning environment.

The relationship between teachers and students may play a pivotal role in the academic adjustment of Upper Basic Secondary School students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. As students transition from primary education, they face numerous academic and social challenges. The shift to a more demanding curriculum often induces anxiety and stress due to heightened academic expectations and social pressures. Students struggle with adapting to new social dynamics, including forming friendships and managing peer relationships. Additionally, they encounter difficulties in adhering to new school rules, managing their time effectively, and balancing schoolwork with other responsibilities. A supportive teacher-students' relationship can significantly ease this transition by providing emotional support, guidance, and creating a positive learning environment.

Teachers who actively engage with students and address their concerns help mitigate anxiety and foster a sense of belonging. By understanding and responding to the individual needs of students, teachers can facilitate smoother adjustments, improve academic performance, and enhance overall well-being

Statement of the Problem

Despite government efforts to enhance educational outcomes in Nasarawa State, the researcher has observed that Upper Basic Secondary School (JSS) students continue to face challenges in academic adjustment, particularly related to teachers- students' relationships. Many students experience insufficient teacher support, feeling that their teachers do not provide the necessary guidance, encouragement and emotional backing needed for a smooth transition to secondary education. This lack of support undermines students' confidence and academic performance, making adjustment more difficult. Also, Teachers' classroom engagement is often insufficient, leading to reduced student effort for academic success. This disengagement exacerbates the difficulties students face in adjusting to their new academic environment. More so, ineffective teacher-students' communication further complicates the adjustment process, as students frequently do not receive timely feedback or necessary clarification on academic concerns. This communication gap hinders their ability to resolve problems and make progress in their studies. Additionally, weak teacher-students' rapport creates a sense of disconnect and a lack of support among students, contributing to disengagement and negatively impacting their academic adjustment. It is against this background that this study seeks to examine teachers' support and classroom engagement as correlates of academic adjustment of Upper Basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

The main objective of this study was to examine teachers' support and classroom engagement as correlates of academic adjustment of Upper Basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to;

1. determine how teachers' supports relate to the academic adjustment of Upper Basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria;
2. evaluate the relationship between teachers' classroom engagement and academic adjustment of Upper Basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between teacher support and the academic adjustment of Upper Basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between teachers' classroom engagement and the academic adjustment of Upper Basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria?

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

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between teacher's supports and the academic adjustment of Upper Basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between teachers' classroom engagement and the academic adjustment of Upper Basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a correlational research design, which according to (Creswell, 2019) is a design that is used to examine the relationship between two or more variables to determine if and how they change together. It aims to establish the degree and direction of association between variables. This design is used to identify patterns, predict outcomes, and understand the connections between different phenomena in fields such as educational psychology and sociology. The direction of a correlation can be either positive or negative, revealing the statistics on Teachers-Students Relationship on the Academic Adjustment of Junior Secondary School Students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Population of the Study

The population of the study is 127,405 JSS1 students from 169 Junior Secondary Schools in Nasarawa State. There are thirteen (13) Local Government Areas spread across the three Senatorial Districts of the state. The distribution of the population is shown in Table 1. (Ministry of Education, Nasarawa State (2025)).

Table 1: Population Distribution of the Study

S/N	LGA	Number of Schools	Number of students
1	Akwanga	15	12,388
2	Awe	10	8,856
3	Doma	12	9,622
4	Karu	20	11,981
5	Keana	8	6,586
6	Keffi	18	9,213
7	Kokona	10	7,543
8	Lafia	25	10,764
9	Nasarawa	14	11,321
10	Nasarawa Eggon	9	6,121
11	Obi	11	9,213
12	Toto	10	8,123
13	Wamba	7	5,213
	TOTAL	169	127,405

Source: Ministry of Education, Nasarawa (2024)

Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 384 JSS1 students was drawn for this study. Krejcie and Morgan's table was used to determine the sample size for the respondents. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select respondents for the study. The first stage was the use of the already existing Local Government Areas (LGAs) that were treated as clusters. Simple random sampling techniques were used to select 26 schools from the 13 Local Government Areas of Nasarawa state. A proportionate random sampling technique was further used to distribute the samples proportionately to the total population in that local government area.

Table 2: Sample of the Study

S/N	LGA	Names of Sch	Sample Distribution
1	Obi	Government College, Obi	60
		Government Sec. Secondary, Daddere	68
		Government College, Keffi	50
2	Keffi	Government Secondary School, Keffi South	78
		Government Sec. School, Akwanga	61
3	Akwanga	Government Secondary School, Akwanga South	67
		TOTAL	384

Method of Data Collection

Here, the researcher outlined the methods of data collection, validation, reliability, and administration of the research instrument.

Instrumentation

For data collection, two instruments were used to obtain information for the study. These instruments are the Teachers-Students Relationship Questionnaire (TSRQ) and Students Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (SAAQ). It contained 20 items, each based on a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

Administration of the Instrument

The questionnaires were administered by the researcher and a trained assistant; with prior arrangement with the public Junior secondary schools concerned using researcher introductory letter obtained from the department of educational foundations, Nasarawa State University, Keffi. The privacy of information and other ethical sureties were guaranteed. Immediately after the permission was granted, the researcher proceeded to administer the instruments to the selected respondents. Freedom to ask questions for clarification was equally be granted.

Procedure for Data Analysis

The research questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. A cut-off points of 2.50 and above was taken as a positive response while less than 2.50 was considered a negative response. The hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between teacher support and the academic adjustment of Junior secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of the relationship between teacher support and the academic adjustment of Upper basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

S/N	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	X	STD	Decision
1	My teachers provide me with helpful guidance to understand difficult topics.	239	127	10	8	3.6	1.89	Above
2	I don't feel supported by my teachers to participate actively in class activities.	7	1	249	127	1.7	1.31	Below
3	Teachers in my school encourage me to ask questions when I don't understand something.	246	130	5	3	3.6	1.9	Above
4	My teachers show interest in my academic progress and success.	257	110	10	7	3.6	1.9	Above
5	I don't believe that my teachers care about my overall well-being as a student.	0	0	260	124	1.7	1.3	Below
Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation.						2.8	1.68	Above

Scale Mean =2.50

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Data presented in table 4.1 shows the relationship between teacher support and the academic adjustment of upper basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The result shows that, items 1-5 had mean scores of 3.6, 1.7, 3.6, 3.6 and 1.7 with corresponding standard deviations of 1.89, 1.31, 1.9, 1.9 and 1.3 respectively. Based on the set criteria for decision making, it shows that the majority of the items were rated above the mean cut-off point of 2.50. The cluster means of 2.80 was also found to be above the cut-off point of 2.50; which implies that there is strong relationship between teacher support and the academic adjustment of upper basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between teachers' classroom engagement and the academic adjustment of upper basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria?

Table 4: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of the relationship between teachers' classroom engagement and the academic adjustment of upper basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

S/N	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	X	STD	Decision
6	My teachers create a stimulating learning environment that encourages my participation	235	139	5	5	3.57	1.89	Above
7	During lessons, my teachers use engaging teaching methods that help me understand the subject better.	249	135	0	0	3.65	1.91	Above
8	Teachers in my school don't involve students in discussions and activities.	0	9	258	117	1.72	1.31	Below
9	I feel motivated to learn because of my teachers' enthusiasm and passion for teaching	220	145	9	10	3.5	1.87	Above
10	My teachers effectively manage classroom activities and maintain a positive learning atmosphere.	243	129	11	1	3.6	1.9	Above
Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation.						3.21	1.79	Above

Scale Mean =2.50

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Data presented in table 4.2 shows the relationship between teachers' classroom engagement and the academic adjustment of upper basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The result showed that, item 1-10 had mean scores of 3.57, 3.65, 1.72, 3.5 and 3.6 with corresponding standard deviation of 1.89, 1.91, 1.31, 1.87 and 1.9, respectively. Based on the set criteria for decision making, it means that almost all the items were rated above the mean cut-off point of 2.50. The cluster means of 3.21 was also found to be above the cut-off point of 2.50; which implies that there is a strong relationship between teachers' classroom engagement and the academic adjustment of upper basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between teacher support and the academic adjustment of upper basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Table 5: Pearson’s Moment Correlation Showing the relationship between teacher support and the academic adjustment of upper basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

S/N	Item	r-cal	r-tab	Asymptotic Significant	D/f	Alpha level	Decision
1	Teacher-Supports	0.702	0.666	0.03	383	0.05	Rejected
2	Academic Adjustment	0.702					

Scale: 0.05

The analysis in Table 4.7 Hypotheses one shows that the mean calculated value of 0.702 is higher than the r-table value of 0.666 determined at a 0.05 alpha level of significance in 383 degrees of freedom. The p-value of 0.03 is also lower than the alpha level of 0.05, which serves as a determinant factor for the interpretation of the alpha level. Therefore, the null hypothesis tested was rejected; which implies that there is a significant positive relationship between teacher-supports and the academic adjustment of upper basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between teachers’ classroom engagement and the academic adjustment of upper basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Table 6: Pearson’s Moment Correlation Showing the relationship between teachers’ classroom engagement and the academic adjustment of upper basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

S/N	Item	r-cal	r-tab	Asymptotic Significant	df	Alpha level	Decision
1	Teachers’ Classroom Engagement	0.756	0.666	0.03	383	0.05	Reject
2	Academic Adjustment	0.756					

Scale: 0.05

The analysis in table 4.8 Hypotheses two shows that the mean calculated value of 0.756 is higher than the r-table value of 0.666 determined at a 0.05 alpha level of significance in 383 degrees of freedom. The p-value of 0.03 is also lower than the alpha level of 0.05 significant which serves as a determinant factor for the interpretation of the alpha level. Therefore, the null hypotheses tested were rejected; which implies that there is a significant positive relationship between teachers’ classroom engagement and the academic adjustment of upper secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the analysis of the research questions and testing of the hypotheses, the following findings were organized and discussed here for ease of understanding.

The first finding of the study revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between teacher support and the academic adjustment of upper basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. This agrees with the findings of Santos and Santos (2023), which showed that teachers' support involves teachers showing empathy, understanding, and concern for students' well-being. A positive learning environment is one where teachers foster a sense of belonging, respect, and encouragement, making students feel valued and motivated. Research indicates that perceived teacher support significantly influences students' academic performance, motivation, and overall school experience. It enhances students' self-esteem, engagement, and resilience, helping them navigate academic challenges more effectively. Also, students who perceive high levels of support from their teachers are more likely to develop positive attitudes towards learning and exhibit better behavioral outcomes (Qin & Chen, 2017). Therefore, perceived teacher support is a crucial component of the educational experience, impacting both academic success and personal development.

The second finding of the study also revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between teachers' classroom engagement and the academic adjustment of upper basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. This agrees with the findings of Li and Zhou (2022), which revealed that effective classroom engagement techniques include using varied instructional methods, such as group discussions, hands-on activities, and multimedia resources, to cater to diverse learning styles. Teachers also facilitate meaningful interactions among students, encouraging collaboration and critical thinking. Moreover, teachers' enthusiasm, clarity in instruction, and responsiveness to students' questions and feedback play crucial roles in sustaining engagement. By creating a supportive and stimulating classroom environment, teachers can inspire curiosity, promote deeper learning, and motivate students to take ownership of their educational journey. Classroom engagement is about imparting knowledge and fostering a sense of curiosity, creativity, and confidence in students, empowering them to become active learners and contributors to their learning process (Li & Zhou, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that students' academic adjustment depends on the emotional support, encouragement, academic guidance and care they receive from their teachers as well as the provision of a positive learning environment. It also depends on the

strategies or approaches adopted by the teachers in their classrooms in order to capture students' attention, promote their active participation, and maintain students' interest throughout lessons.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study made the following recommendations:

1. The government should prioritize initiatives that enhance teacher support systems in schools. By reinforcing policies that encourage teachers to provide academic and emotional support to students, the government can contribute significantly to the academic adjustment and overall success of upper basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.
2. Government, including school administrators and educational planners, should promote and incentivize active classroom engagement among teachers. This approach will strengthen the positive impact of teacher-student interactions, thereby fostering better academic adjustment for upper basic secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

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