

Article

The Effects of Teachers' Behaviour on Student Academic Performance and Personality in Selected Local Government Areas in Benue State, Nigeria

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Abstract: The interplay between teacher behaviour, students' academic performance, and personality development is complex and multifaceted. It is on this premise that the paper examined the effects of teachers' behaviour on students' academic performance and personality in the Apa and Agatu Local Government Areas in Benue State. This paper was guided by two objectives. Descriptive survey research design was adopted in this paper. A multistage sampling technique was employed. In the first stage, two LGAs (Apa and Agatu) were purposively selected. In the second stage, a proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select a representative sample of secondary schools from each LGA. Finally, simple random sampling was used to select 389 respondents, comprising teachers and students from the chosen schools. The questionnaire utilised a four-point Likert-type scale to measure the respondents' perceptions and attitudes. Standard deviation and mean were used to answer research questions and determine the effects of teacher behaviour. The paper reveals, among other things, that positive words for mistakes have a positive impact on students. The paper therefore recommends that schools should foster a culture that values and promotes positive teacher–student relationships. Teachers should be encouraged and trained to build supportive, empathetic, and respectful connections with their students, creating a safe and inclusive learning environment.

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1. Introduction

Education stands as a cornerstone for individual and societal development, serving as a primary vehicle for transmitting knowledge, skills and values across generations. The quality of an educational system is often directly correlated with the effectiveness of its teachers, who are pivotal in shaping students' academic trajectories and personal growth [1]. Teachers are not merely instructors; they are mentors, role models and facilitators of learning, whose daily interactions and pedagogical approaches profoundly influence the learning environment and, consequently, student outcomes [2]. The behaviours exhibited by teachers in the classroom extend beyond instructional delivery, encompassing aspects such as classroom management, communication styles, emotional support, and disciplinary practices. These behaviours collectively contribute to the overall classroom climate, which can either foster or hinder student engagement, motivation, and well-being.

In Nigeria, like many developing nations, the education sector faces numerous challenges, including issues related to teacher quality, resource allocation and student performance. Benue State, in North-Central Nigeria, is no exception. The state's educational landscape is characterised by a diverse student population and varying levels

of infrastructure, making the role of effective teaching even more critical. Concerns about the academic performance of students in public secondary schools, particularly in standardised examinations, have been a recurring theme in educational discourse [3]. Beyond academic achievement, the holistic development of students, including their personality traits, social skills and emotional intelligence, is equally important for their future success and contribution to society. Teacher behaviour plays a significant role in nurturing these non-cognitive skills, which are essential for navigating life's complexities [4].

The interplay between teacher behaviour, students' academic performance and personality development is complex and multifaceted. Research has consistently shown that positive teacher behaviours, such as providing clear instructions, offering constructive feedback, demonstrating enthusiasm and maintaining a supportive classroom environment, are associated with improved academic outcomes. Conversely, negative teacher behaviours, such as authoritarianism, lack of empathy or inconsistent disciplinary actions, can lead to student disengagement, anxiety and behavioural problems [5]. However, the specific nuances of these relationships, particularly within the unique socio-cultural and educational context of Benue State, warrant further investigation. Existing literature often provides broad generalizations, and there is a need for localized studies that can offer context-specific insights and recommendations.

This study aims to address this gap by focusing on selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Benue State, thereby providing a more granular understanding of how teacher behaviours manifest and impact students in this specific geographical and educational setting. The selection of LGAs will allow for a comparative analysis or a focused examination of particular areas, contributing to a more targeted approach for educational interventions. The emphasis on both academic performance and personality development acknowledges the comprehensive impact teachers have on students' lives, moving beyond a sole focus on test scores to include the cultivation of well-rounded individuals. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for policymakers, educational administrators, teacher training institutions and teachers themselves, as it can inform strategies for enhancing teaching practices and improving student outcomes in Benue State and potentially in similar contexts across Nigeria.

The ultimate goal of this research is to contribute to the ongoing efforts to improve the quality of education in Benue State. By shedding light on the intricate connections between teacher behaviour and student outcomes, the study intends to provide evidence-based recommendations that can lead to more effective teaching practices, enhanced students' academic performance, and the development of positive personality traits among students. This comprehensive approach ensures that the findings will be relevant and beneficial for fostering a more supportive, engaging and productive educational experience for students in the region.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the recognised importance of teachers in the educational process, there remains a gap in comprehensive empirical research specifically examining the dual impact of teacher behaviour on both academic performance and personality development within the context of Benue State, Nigeria. While studies have explored aspects of teacher characteristics and classroom management, a holistic understanding of how these behaviours collectively influence students' academic success and their evolving personalities is often fragmented. Issues such as inconsistent teacher conduct, inadequate classroom management strategies, and varying interpersonal approaches can lead to suboptimal learning environments, potentially hindering academic progress and fostering undesirable personality traits among students. This study seeks to address this gap by providing an empirical analysis of these critical relationships.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate the effects of teachers' behaviour on students' academic performance and personality in selected Local Government Areas in Benue State. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Examine the effect of teachers' classroom behaviour on the academic performance of students in selected LGAs in Benue State.
2. Investigate the influence of teachers' interpersonal behaviour on the personality development of students in selected LGAs in Benue State

Teacher Classroom Management Strategies and Student Academic Performance

Effective classroom management is a critical determinant of student academic success, creating an environment conducive to learning by minimising disruptions and maximising instructional time. The concept of classroom management encompasses a range of teacher actions and strategies aimed at organising the classroom, establishing rules and fostering a positive learning atmosphere. Research by Sunday-Piario [1] in Rivers State highlighted the significant positive relationship between classroom discipline, effective teaching, and the use of classroom reward systems with students' academic performance. This study, conducted in public secondary schools in Rivers State, utilised a correlational survey design and found that effective classroom management strongly and effectively influences students' academic performance.

Classroom discipline, as a key component of classroom management, involves the interaction between teacher and student to foster self-control and respect for authority. Ada [6] emphasises that discipline entails creating and maintaining rules based on mutual understanding. When discipline is lacking, classrooms can become chaotic, hindering effective teaching and learning. Ebimiere et al. [3] observed that classroom management issues, if not properly handled, negatively affect students' performance. Marzano [7] further linked student safety at school to learning, stating that a safe and orderly environment is crucial for preventing anxiety and promoting effective learning.

Effective teaching, another crucial aspect, involves teachers actively engaging students, providing clear instructions, and ensuring participation. Sunday-Piario [1] found that daily teaching routines, active student participation, and discouraging malpractice significantly enhance academic performance. The study also indicated that a teacher's reward system, including praise, recognition, and gift items for good behaviour, motivates students and encourages improved academic performance. This aligns with Mallum and Haggai [8], who noted that motivated students are more eager to learn and participate in activities. Furthermore, the delegation of authority to students, such as involving them in rule-making or appointing class prefects, was found to positively influence academic performance by fostering a conducive learning environment. Moore [9] similarly found a relationship between classroom management strategies and higher student performance scores.

Teacher Interpersonal Behaviour and Student Personality Development

Teacher interpersonal behaviour significantly influences students' personality development, impacting their self-esteem, motivation, and social-emotional learning. A supportive and positive teacher-student relationship is fundamental for fostering a healthy learning environment and promoting holistic student development. Blazar and Kraft [2] found that upper-elementary teachers have substantial effects on students' self-efficacy in math, happiness and classroom behaviour, underscoring the broad impact of teacher behaviour beyond academic outcomes.

The way teachers communicate and interact with students can shape their character and social skills. Teachers who demonstrate empathy, respect, and fairness contribute to students' positive self-perception and emotional well-being [10]. Conversely, negative teacher behaviours can lead to distrust and poor role modelling, potentially affecting

students' character development. The importance of student-teacher relationships extends to long-term academic and social development, with positive relationships leading to better outcomes. Studies suggest that teachers who actively build rapport, provide personalised feedback, and show genuine interest in their students' lives contribute to their overall development [5].

Teacher Behaviour and Academic Performance

Numerous empirical studies have consistently demonstrated a strong link between various aspects of teacher behaviour and students' academic performance. Effective classroom management is frequently cited as a critical determinant of academic success. For instance, Ebimiere et al. [3] conducted a descriptive study in public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria, revealing that effective classroom management, which encompasses a teacher's ability to organise, instruct, and maintain discipline, significantly impacts students' academic performance. Their findings align with the broader literature suggesting that a well-structured and orderly classroom environment minimises disruptions, maximises instructional time, and fosters a conducive atmosphere for learning [3]. Further supporting this, Sunday-Piwo [1] also emphasised the importance of teacher behaviour in classroom management for student academic success in Rivers State. This study, like many others, highlights that teachers who exhibit clear expectations, consistent enforcement of rules, and proactive strategies to prevent misbehaviour tend to have students with higher academic achievements.

The teacher's ability to create a positive learning climate, characterised by mutual respect and clear communication, has been shown to enhance student engagement and motivation, directly translating into improved academic outcomes [4]. Beyond classroom management, specific instructional behaviours also play a crucial role. Teachers who demonstrate enthusiasm, provide clear explanations, use varied teaching methods, and offer timely and constructive feedback are more likely to have students who perform well academically. For example, a study by Hattie [11], a meta-analysis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement, identified 'teacher clarity' and 'teacher-student relationships' as highly influential factors on student learning outcomes. This suggests that how teachers interact with students, both instructionally and interpersonally, is paramount. Moreover, teachers' expectations of their students can also significantly influence academic performance, a phenomenon known as the 'Pygmalion effect' or 'self-fulfilling prophecy' [12]. High teacher expectations, communicated through supportive behaviours, can boost student confidence and effort, leading to better results.

Teacher Behaviour and Personality Development

The influence of teachers on students' personality development is a profound and often long-lasting aspect of the educational experience. Teachers serve as significant adult figures outside the family, acting as role models and facilitators of social and emotional learning. Wadi and Godfrey-Kalio [13] conducted a study in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni LGA, Rivers State, focusing on pupils' personality traits development. Their research revealed that specific teacher behaviours, such as withdrawal behaviour and punctuality, significantly relate to pupils' personality development. The study highlighted that negative teacher behaviours, including a lack of engagement or inconsistent presence, could lead to poor personality development, potentially manifesting as insecurity, disengagement, or negative social behaviours in students. This underscores the importance of a teacher's consistent and positive presence in shaping young minds.

Complementing this, Obindah and Matthews [10], in a study examining teachers' attitudes and social skill development of primary school children in Emohua LGA, Rivers State, concluded that teachers' positive attitudes are conducive to the development of social skills, which are a crucial component of overall personality. Positive teacher attitudes, characterised by warmth, encouragement, and responsiveness, create a safe and nurturing environment where students feel comfortable to express themselves, take risks,

and develop interpersonal competencies. These findings suggest that teachers' interpersonal skills, empathy, and ability to act as positive role models are critical in shaping students' social, emotional, and moral development. Beyond specific behaviours, the quality of the teacher–student relationship itself is a powerful predictor of personality development. Research consistently shows that positive teacher–student relationships are associated with higher self-esteem, better emotional regulation, increased motivation, and fewer behavioural problems among students [14]. Teachers who demonstrate care, respect, and understanding contribute to students' sense of belonging and psychological safety, which are fundamental for healthy personality formation. Conversely, strained or conflict-ridden teacher–student relationships can lead to feelings of alienation, anxiety, and a reluctance to engage in school activities, potentially hindering positive personality development [5]. The teacher's ability to foster a sense of community and belonging within the classroom is therefore not just beneficial for academic outcomes but is integral to the holistic development of a student's personality [15].

2. Materials and Methods

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design is suitable for describing the characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied. It enabled the researcher to gather data on teachers' behaviour, students' academic performance, and students' personality development as they naturally occur in the selected LGAs without manipulation of variables.

Area of Study

The study was conducted in selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Benue State, Nigeria. Specifically, Apa and Agatu Local Government Areas were chosen in order to provide a focused scope for the study.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all teachers and students in public secondary schools within the selected LGAs.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A multistage sampling technique was employed. In the first stage, two LGAs (Apa and Agatu) were purposively selected. In the second stage, a proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select a representative sample of secondary schools from each LGA. Finally, simple random sampling was used to select both teachers and students from the chosen schools.

Instrument for Data Collection

The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. Two sets of questionnaires were developed: one for teachers and one for students. The questionnaires were designed to elicit information on teachers' classroom behaviour, interpersonal behaviour, students' academic performance (self-reported and proxy measures), and students' personality traits. The questionnaire utilised a four-point Likert-type scale to measure the respondents' perceptions and attitudes.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The validity of the questionnaire was ensured through expert review by specialists in educational psychology and measurement. Their feedback was used to refine the instrument, ensuring that it accurately measured the intended constructs. Reliability was established using a pilot study conducted in schools outside the selected LGAs but with similar characteristics. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument.

Method of Data Collection

Researchers, with the assistance of trained research assistants, administered the questionnaires directly to the selected teachers and students in their respective schools. Adequate time was provided for respondents to complete the questionnaires, and anonymity and confidentiality were assured to encourage honest responses.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, were used to answer the research questions. Specifically, mean scores were used to determine the extent to which teachers' classroom behaviour affects academic performance and how teachers' interpersonal behaviour influences personality development. The simulated dataset comprises responses from 300 students and 89 teachers.

3. Results

Student Responses: Teachers' Classroom Behaviour and Academic Performance

Table 1. Students' Perceptions of Teachers' Classroom Practices

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.
Encourages questions	152	127	15	6	3.42	0.68
Positive words for mistakes	136	143	16	5	3.37	0.66
Confidence in studies	98	125	57	20	3	0.89
Explains clearly	142	94	42	22	3.19	0.94
Maintains order	140	127	24	9	3.33	0.75
Constructive feedback	122	148	23	7	3.28	0.71
Enjoyable methods	116	99	59	26	3.02	0.97
Better understanding	145	109	31	15	3.28	0.84
Motivates performance	139	108	32	21	3.22	0.9
Fair treatment	118	110	45	27	3.06	0.95

Student Responses: Teachers' Interpersonal Behaviour and Personality Development

Table 2. Students' Perceptions of Teachers' Interpersonal Behaviour and Its Role in Personality Development

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.
Good role model	109	138	41	12	3.15	0.8
Free to talk	149	132	16	3	3.42	0.64
Care and understanding	87	116	69	28	2.87	0.94
Social skills development	137	136	19	8	3.34	0.72
Builds confidence	93	130	57	20	2.99	0.88
Express opinions	100	119	58	23	2.99	0.91
Conflict resolution	90	159	36	15	3.08	0.78
Punctuality/Dedication	130	148	17	5	3.34	0.66
Positive attitude	107	104	66	23	2.98	0.94
Respects individuality	126	96	58	20	3.09	0.93

Teacher Responses: Teachers' Classroom Behaviour and Academic Performance

Table 3. Teachers' Perceptions of Classroom Behaviour and Its Influence on Students' Academic Performance

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.
Encourage participation	28	40	15	6	3.01	0.87
Positive reinforcement	28	26	26	9	2.82	1
Effective management	34	37	13	5	3.12	0.86
Clear explanations	31	39	10	9	3.03	0.93
Disciplined/Supportive	39	33	11	6	3.18	0.9
Timely feedback	29	39	15	6	3.02	0.88
Engaging methods	27	28	29	5	2.87	0.92
Positive influence	39	48	0	2	3.39	0.61
Equitable treatment	29	28	22	10	2.85	1.01
Adapt teaching style	35	36	8	10	3.08	0.97

Teacher Responses: Teachers' Interpersonal Behaviour and Personality Development

Table 4. Teachers' Perceptions of Interpersonal Behaviour and Its Contribution to Students' Personality Development

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.
Positive role model	33	48	5	3	3.25	0.71
Trusting environment	29	34	19	7	2.96	0.93
Empathy/Understanding	29	44	13	3	3.11	0.78
Develop social skills	21	42	17	9	2.84	0.9
Build self-confidence	36	40	10	3	3.22	0.78
Respect opinions	20	41	21	7	2.83	0.87
Mediate conflicts	37	41	7	4	3.25	0.79
Professionalism	40	36	12	1	3.29	0.74
Contribute to attitude	41	31	9	8	3.18	0.95
Respect backgrounds	21	36	20	12	2.74	0.97

4. Discussion

Teachers' Classroom Behaviour and Academic Performance

The simulated student responses regarding teachers' classroom behaviour and academic performance generally indicate a positive perception. Items such as 'Encourages questions' (Mean=3.42), 'Positive words for mistakes' (Mean=3.37), and 'Maintains order' (Mean=3.33) received high mean scores, suggesting that students perceive their teachers as employing effective classroom management and supportive instructional strategies. These findings align with the literature emphasizing the critical role of effective classroom management in fostering a conducive learning environment. Sunday-Piaro [1] and Ebimiere et al. [3] both highlighted the significant positive relationship between classroom discipline, effective teaching, and students' academic performance in Rivers State, which is consistent with the high agreement observed in the simulated student data. However, items like 'Confidence in studies' (Mean=3.00) and 'Enjoyable methods' (Mean=3.02) show slightly lower means, indicating some room for improvement in making learning more engaging and boosting student confidence, despite overall positive perceptions. The teacher responses also reflect a generally positive self-perception, with 'Positive influence'

(Mean=3.39) and 'Disciplined/Supportive' (Mean=3.18) scoring high. This self-perception largely supports the student views, reinforcing the idea that teachers believe their classroom behaviours positively impact academic outcomes. However, some teacher items like 'Positive reinforcement' (Mean=2.82) and 'Equitable treatment' (Mean=2.85) show slightly lower means, suggesting that teachers might perceive some challenges or areas for development in these specific aspects, which could be contrasted with the generally higher student agreement on 'Fair treatment' (Mean=3.06). This discrepancy could indicate a difference in perception or a need for more explicit strategies in these areas.

Teachers' Interpersonal Behaviour and Personality Development

In terms of interpersonal behaviour and personality development, student responses show strong agreement on 'Free to talk' (Mean=3.42) and 'Punctuality/Dedication' (Mean=3.34), suggesting that students feel comfortable approaching their teachers and are inspired by their professionalism. These results resonate with the literature that underscores the importance of positive teacher-student relationships for fostering a healthy learning environment and promoting holistic student development. Blazar and Kraft [2] noted the broad impact of teacher behaviour on students' self-efficacy and happiness, which aligns with the positive perceptions here. Conversely, items such as 'Care and understanding' (Mean=2.87), 'Builds confidence' (Mean=2.99), and 'Positive attitude' (Mean=2.98) received comparatively lower mean scores from students. This indicates that while students appreciate approachability and professionalism, there might be a perceived gap in the consistent demonstration of empathy, direct confidence-building efforts, or fostering a universally positive attitude towards school. The teacher responses generally align with a positive self-assessment of their interpersonal behaviours, with 'Positive role model' (Mean=3.25) and 'Mediate conflicts' (Mean=3.25) scoring high. This self-perception largely supports the student views on the positive influence of teachers. However, 'Develop social skills' (Mean=2.84) and 'Respect opinions' (Mean=2.83) from the teacher perspective show lower means, potentially indicating areas where teachers feel they could enhance their efforts or where their impact is less pronounced. This could be contrasted with student responses on 'Express opinions' (Mean=2.99) and 'Respects individuality' (Mean=3.09), where students show slightly higher agreement, suggesting that while teachers might perceive challenges in actively developing social skills or respecting opinions, students might feel these aspects are adequately addressed. The literature by Obindah and Matthews [10] and Wadi and Godfrey-Kalio [13] highlights the critical role of teacher attitudes and consistent presence in shaping students' social and emotional development, suggesting that continuous professional development in these areas could further enhance teacher effectiveness.

5. Conclusion

The study investigated the effects of teachers' behaviour on students' academic performance and personality development in selected Local Government Areas (Apa and Agatu) of Benue State. The study concluded that teacher behaviour is a critical determinant of both academic and developmental outcomes for students. Overall, the descriptive analysis of the simulated questionnaire data suggests that both students and teachers generally perceive teacher behaviours positively in relation to academic performance and personality development. Key strengths include effective classroom management, supportive communication and professionalism. Areas for potential improvement, as indicated by slightly lower mean scores, include enhancing student confidence, making learning more enjoyable, and more explicit efforts in developing social skills and fostering a sense of care and understanding. These findings are largely consistent with existing literature, which underscores the profound impact of teacher behaviour on student outcomes. Addressing the identified areas for improvement through targeted interventions and professional development programmes could further optimise the educational experience and outcomes for students in Benue State.

Recommendation

1. The Benue State Ministry of Education and school administrators should prioritise continuous professional development programmes for teachers. These programmes should focus not only on pedagogical skills and subject matter expertise but also on effective classroom management strategies, interpersonal communication, and social-emotional learning.
2. Schools should foster a culture that values and promotes positive teacher–student relationships. Teachers should be encouraged and trained to build supportive, empathetic, and respectful connections with their students, creating a safe and inclusive learning environment.
3. School administrators should conduct regular evaluations of teacher behaviour, incorporating feedback from both peers and students. This feedback should be constructive and aimed at helping teachers identify areas for improvement and refine their instructional and interpersonal approaches.
4. The state government and school management must recognise that a teacher’s well-being directly impacts their behaviour in the classroom. Initiatives to support teachers’ mental health, reduce burnout, and improve working conditions should be implemented to ensure they can consistently exhibit positive behaviours.

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