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IMPACT OF TEACHERS' COMMENTS ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN LAGOS MAINLAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF LAGOS STATE

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Abstract

The study examined the impact of teachers' comments on the academic performance of secondary school students in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State. To guide the study, two hypotheses were formulated and tested. The descriptive survey research design was used in the study. Two instruments were used to collect data for the study. The first was a self-structured questionnaire titled "Impact of Teachers' Positive and Negative Comments on the Academic Performance of Secondary School Students Questionnaire (ITPNCAPSSSQ)". The second instrument was Achievement Test in English Language and Mathematics. Two hundred (200) secondary school students comprising of 100 females and 100 males were selected through simple random sampling technique as sample. Independent t-test statistical tool was used to test the hypotheses formulated in this study at 0.05 level of significance. Findings from the study showed that there is a significant impact of teachers' positive comments on the academic performance of secondary school students and there is a significant impact of teachers' negative comments on the academic performance of secondary school students. Based on the findings, the researchers recommended among others that positive comments should be used by the teachers as a method of improving the students' academic performance; positive comments can come in form of "thank you", "well done", "impressive performance" among others.

Keywords: Impact, Positive and Negative Comments, Academic Performance, Motivation.

Introduction

The role of teachers in the education and development of students cannot be overemphasized. Teachers are not only responsible for imparting knowledge and skills to students but also play a crucial role in shaping their attitudes, values, and behaviors. One of the ways through which teachers influence students' academic performance is through their comments. Teachers' comments can have both positive

and negative effects on students' academic development. Teachers' comments are an essential aspect of the teaching-learning process. Teachers' comments have been found to have a significant impact on students' academic performance. Studies have shown that students who receive positive feedback from their teachers tend to perform better academically than those who receive negative feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Positive feedback can include praise for good work, recognition of effort, and encouragement to do better. Positive feedback can boost students' confidence, self-esteem, and motivation to learn. It can also increase their engagement in the learning process and their willingness to take risks and explore new ideas. They are feedback provided by teachers to students on their academic performance, behaviour, and overall progress. Teachers' comments can have a significant impact on students' academic development.

When teachers provide positive feedback to students, it can enhance their self-esteem, which, in turn, can lead to increased academic achievement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Similarly, when teachers provide negative feedback to students, it can damage their self-esteem, which can lead to decreased academic achievement. Another way through which teachers' comments affect students' academic performance is through their impact on students' motivation. Teachers' constructive, evaluative, and corrective feedback components enhance students' self-efficacy and academic performance in the field of education (Donche, Coertjens, Vanthournout, Petegem, 2012; Chandler, 2003; Oluwatayo and Fatoba, 2010). Constructive feedback for example is considered a contributing factor towards students' academic improvement (Toit, 2012), essential factor for effective learning (Omer & Abularhim, 2017), and a meaningful tool for academic performance that increases the students' self-efficacy (Donche, et al. (2012). Duffy (2013) explains that students often feel difficulties in getting constructive feedback from their teachers due to the inconsistency of the amount of feedback, feedback type and its given timing. Aston and Hallam (2011) assert that providing effective constructive feedback needs consideration, deep insight, and delicacy. Evaluative feedback in summative or formative form has a significant influence on the students' sense of self- efficacy (Chan and Lam, 2010) and can boost students' academic performance (Oluwatayo & Fatoba, 2017).

Regarding the corrective feedback, Ahmed, Saeed, and Salam (2013) explains that students who receive corrective feedback from their teachers, secure high scores in the exams, get better understanding of the concepts, participate actively, and perform well in the classroom activities. They further assert that students who receive corrective feedback from their teachers may also do the classroom assignment on time, communicate more effectively and share their views easily in

the class discussions. Corrective feedback is one of the most widely used feedbacks all over the world that plays a vital role in enhancing students' academic performance.

Through corrective feedback, teachers provide opportunities to their students to avoid repeating mistakes (Li, Schwabe, Yang and Chen, 2015). Wang and Wu (2017) believe that corrective feedback plays a crucial and beneficial role in contributing for the students' performance in the field of education. Similarly, according to Aravena (2015), providing corrective feedback to the students remains an essential part of the teachers' assessment procedure and students' learning always depends on corrective feedback from their teachers. In addition, Meral, Colak, Zereyak (2012) found a significant relationship between self-efficacy and the students' academic performance. Ahmed and Safaria (2013) claim that students with high self-efficacy score higher marks in their tests and exams and may choose complex courses to study in the future.
Furthermore, in a study conducted by Honicke and Broadbent (2016), it is proved that self-efficacy is moderately correlated with academic performance in higher education level.

In addition to academic performance, teachers' comments can also have an impact on students' social development. Positive comments have been found to enhance students' social skills, relationships, and behaviour (Butler & McMunn, 2016). On the other hand, negative comments can have detrimental effects on students' social development. Negative comments can lead to a decrease in students' social skills, relationships, and behaviour.

Negative feedback can lower students' confidence, self-esteem, and motivation to learn. It can also decrease their engagement in the learning process and their willingness to take risks and explore new ideas. Therefore, teachers need to provide constructive feedback that balances positive and negative feedback. This can be achieved through the use of the "sandwich technique" where positive feedback is sandwiched between negative feedback (Carr & Clavering, 2016). For instance, a teacher can start by acknowledging the student's effort, provide constructive feedback on the areas that need improvement, and end with positive feedback on what the student did well.

Negative comments can also damage students' relationships with teachers, which can create a hostile and unsupportive learning environment. Therefore, teachers need to provide feedback that enhances students' socio-academic performance and emotional development. This can be achieved through the use of positive feedback,

recognition of effort, and constructive feedback that highlights areas for improvement without criticizing the student.

The theoretical framework for this study is based on two main theories: self-efficacy theory and attribution theory. According to self-efficacy theory, an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in a particular task or situation influences their motivation and behaviour (Bandura, 1977) in Butler & McMunn (2016). Attribution theory, on the other hand, focuses on how individuals explain the causes of their success or failure (Weiner, (1985) in Jones, Greenberg & Crowley, 2014).

Self-efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief in their ability to perform a specific task or achieve a particular goal (Bandura, 1997) in Butler & McMunn (2016). Self-efficacy theory suggests that individuals who have high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to engage in behaviours that lead to successful outcomes, while individuals with low levels of self-efficacy are more likely to avoid tasks or situations that they perceive as challenging or difficult. Teachers' comments can impact students' self-efficacy by either enhancing or diminishing their belief in their ability to succeed. Positive comments such as "you did a great job" or "you're really good at this" can boost students' self-efficacy, while negative comments such as "you're not trying hard enough" or "you're not good at this" can lower their self-efficacy. For example, if a teacher praises a student for their ability to solve a difficult Mathematics problem, the student is likely to feel more confident in their math abilities and be more motivated to engage in future math-related tasks. Conversely, if a teacher tells a student that they are not good at Mathematics the student may feel discouraged and avoid maths-related tasks in the future.

Attribution Theory

Attribution theory suggests that individuals make attributions or judgments about the causes of their success or failure (Weiner, 1985) in Butler & McMunn (2016). The theory identifies three dimensions of attribution: locus of control, stability, and controllability. Locus of control refers to whether the individual attributes their success or failure to internal factors (such as ability or effort) or external factors (such as luck or task difficulty). Stability refers to whether the cause of the success or failure is likely to remain consistent over time. Controllability refers to whether the cause of the success or failure is within the individual's control. Teachers' comments can impact students' attributions about the causes of their success or failure. For example, if a teacher praises a student for their effort on an assignment, the student is likely to attribute their success to their own effort and feel more motivated to work hard in the future. Conversely, if a teacher criticizes a student for

their lack of effort, the student may attribute their failure to a lack of ability and feel discouraged. This can lead to a belief that their success or failure is beyond their control, and they may be less motivated to engage in future tasks.

Interaction between Self-efficacy and Attribution Theories

Self-efficacy and attribution theories are interrelated. Students' attributions about the causes of their success or failure can impact their self-efficacy beliefs, and vice versa. For example, if a student attributes their success to their own effort (an internal factor), they are likely to feel more confident in their abilities (higher self-efficacy). Conversely, if a student attributes their failure to external factors (such as a difficult task), they may feel less confident in their abilities (lower self-efficacy). Teachers' comments can impact both self-efficacy and attributional beliefs. For example, if a teacher praises a student for their effort and attributes their success to their own hard work, the student is likely to feel more confident in their abilities (higher self-efficacy) and attribute their success to internal factors (such as their effort). Conversely, if a teacher criticizes a student for their lack of effort and attributes their failure to a lack of ability, the student may feel less confident in their abilities (lower self-efficacy) and attribute their failure to external factors (such as the task being too difficult).

The impact of teachers' comments on the socio-academic performance of secondary school students can also be understood through the lens of social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory suggests that individuals learn by observing others and the consequences of their actions (Bandura, 1977) in Butler & McMunn (2016). In the context of education, this theory suggests that students learn from their teachers' feedback and the consequences of their academic performance. Teachers' comments can serve as models for students' behavior and beliefs. If a teacher consistently praises students for their effort and attributes their success to internal factors, students are likely to adopt a similar mindset and attribute their own success to internal factors such as their effort. This can lead to an increase in their self-efficacy and motivation to engage in future tasks. On the other hand, if a teacher consistently criticizes students for their lack of effort and attributes their failure to external factors, students may adopt a similar mindset and attribute their own failure to external factors beyond their control. This can lead to a decrease in their self-efficacy and motivation to engage in future tasks.

Additionally, teachers' comments can impact the students' social and emotional development. Social-emotional learning (SEL) refers to the process through which individuals acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to understand and manage their emotions, establish and maintain positive relationships,

and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2020). Teachers' comments can impact students' social-emotional development by influencing their self-esteem, resilience, and sense of belonging. Positive comments from teachers can enhance students' self-esteem and sense of belonging. For example, if a teacher praises a student for their creativity or unique perspective, the student is likely to feel valued and appreciated, which can lead to an increase in their self-esteem and motivation to engage in future tasks. On the other hand, negative comments from teachers can lower students' self-esteem and sense of belonging. For example, if a teacher criticizes a student for their behavior or attitude, the student may feel ashamed or embarrassed, which can lead to a decrease in their self-esteem and motivation to engage in future tasks. Resilience is another important aspect of social-emotional learning. Resilience refers to the ability to bounce back from adversity and overcome challenges (Masten & Wright, 2010). Teachers' comments can impact students' resilience by influencing their beliefs about their ability to overcome challenges.

1.1 Statement of Problem

Effective teaching involves providing feedback to students on their academic performance. This feedback can either motivate or demotivate students, affecting their academic performance. Many teachers in Lagos Metropolis give comments that are not specific, actionable, or timely, as well, they give comments that can have a profound impact on students' motivation, self-esteem and overall academic performance. However, the nature and tone of these comments can vary widely and some comments have unintended negative consequences. This is a problem because these students are fixated, confused, troubled and indulged in different ways along their developmental stages which affects their school performances.

Teachers' comments can either motivate or discourage students, influencing their willingness to learn and engage with academic material. Comments that are overly critical or negative can damage students' esteem leading to decreased confidence and academic performance. This study therefore examined the impact of teachers' comments on the academic performance of secondary school students in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How do teachers' positive comments impact the academic performance of secondary school students in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area?
2. Hoes does teachers' negative comments impact the academic performance of secondary school students in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area?

1.3 Research Hypotheses

i. There is no significant impact of teachers' positive comments on the academic performance of secondary school students in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area.
ii. There is no significant impact of teachers' negative comments on the academic performance of secondary school students in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area.

Methods

The descriptive survey design was used in this study to investigate the Impact of Teachers Positive and Negative Comments on Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State. The opinions of the selected student respondents were considered using questionnaire as the data collection instrument. The population of the study consists of senior secondary schools in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State, Nigeria. There are 9 Senior Secondary Schools and a total of 6768 students enrollment in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State according to the Lagos State School Census Report 2018-2019. The simple random sampling technique was employed in the selection of two hundred (200) respondents for this study from the total population of students in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State. From the nine (9) secondary schools in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State, five (5) secondary schools were selected using the stratified random sampling method.

The researcher uses the simple random sampling technique to select forty (40) students from each school respectively totaling two hundred (200) respondents made up of one hundred (100) male and one hundred (100) female students randomly selected as sample for this study from the five (5) schools.
The instrument used for data collection from respondents is a researcher-made questionnaire titled: "Impact of Teachers' Comments on the Academic Performance of Secondary School Students Questionnaire (ITPNCAPSSSQ)". The questionnaire has three sections: 'A', 'B' and 'C'. Section A comprised of bio-data of respondents, Section B comprised items on teachers' comments while Section C was an achievement test in Mathematics and English to measure students' academic performance.

Reliability of the instrument was determined by means of a pilot study. In this act, twenty (20) instruments each was administered on student-participants selected from two private schools not initially included in the sample list for the study. The data obtained from the study were analysed electronically using Cronbach Alpha and a

coefficient of 0.76 was gotten which ascertained that the instrument was reliable and used in the study.

The data collected through the instrument was analyzed using tables and percentages. Also, independent t-test statistics was used to analyse the stated hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

HO_1: This hypothesis in the null form states that there is no significant impact of teachers' positive comments on the academic performance of secondary school students in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area. The hypothesis was tested using independent t-test statistics. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Independent t-test analysis on impact of teachers' positive comments on the academic performance of secondary school students

Variable	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Teachers' positive comments	200	26.26	4.36	198	5.62*	1.98	Significant H01 rejected
Academic performance		22.50	3.17				

P < = 0.05; df – 198; t-crit = 1.a

From the table 1 presented above, the t-tabulated (t-cal=5.62) in higher than the t-critical (t-crit=1.98) given 198 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. The results of inferential statistics evidently revealed that there is a significant impact of teachers' positive comments on the academic performance of secondary school students in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area.

HO_2: This hypothesis in the null form states that there is no significant impact of teachers' negative comments on the academic performance of secondary school students in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area. The hypothesis was tested using independent t-test statistics. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Independent t-test analysis on impact of teachers' negative comments on the academic performance of secondary school students

Variable	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Teachers' negative comments	200	19.87	2.47	198	2.17*	1.98	Significant H02 rejected
Academic performance		22.50	3.17				

P < = 0.05; df – 198; t-crit = 1.98
From the table 2 presented above, the t-tabulated (t-cal=2.17) in higher than the t-critical (t-crit=1.98) given 198 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. The results of inferential statistics evidently revealed that there is a significant impact of teachers' negative comments on the academic performance of secondary school students in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area.

Discussion of Findings
The results of this study were discussed based on the results of the hypotheses tested in the study. The result of the findings of **hypothesis one** revealed that there is a significant impact of teachers' positive comments on the academic performance of secondary school students. This finding supports Sermsook, Liamnimitr and Pochakorn (2017) who concluded that corrective feedback either in the form of written or verbal is more beneficial for rectifying students' academic errors. Westmacott (2017) also claim that teachers' positive comment has a stronger positive effect on students' learning autonomy as compared to negative comment.
In addition, the result of the findings of **hypothesis two** revealed that there is a significant impact of teachers' negative comments on the academic performance of secondary school students. This finding is in line with a study by Butler and McMunn (2016) who found that negative comments that focus on the student's abilities or characteristics, rather than the specific task at hand, can lead to decreased motivation and self-esteem. Other studies have found that negative comments that are perceived as unfair or overly critical can lead to disengagement from school and decreased academic performance (Goodwin and Findley, 2013; Jones et al., 2014). In addition to the impact on academic performance, negative teacher comments can also have a negative impact on students' emotional well-being. Negative comments can lead to a decrease in students' social skills, relationships, and academic performance.

Conclusion
1. Teachers' positive comments have significant impact on the academic performance of secondary school students in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area.
2. Teachers' negative comments have significant impact on the academic performance of secondary school students in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area.

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

1. Positive comments should be used by the teachers as a method of improving the students' academic performance; positive comments can come in form of "thank you", "well done", "impressive performance" among others.
2. Teachers should use alternative disciplinary tactics to negative comments such as a positive and supportive tone when providing feedback, focusing on what students are doing well and how they can improve.

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