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Teachers' Creative Classroom Management Techniques as Correlates of Students Academic Performance in Private Senior Secondary Schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

This study examined teachers' creative classroom management technique as correlates of students' academic performance in private senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State**.** The study was guided by three research objectives, three research questions and three hypotheses. The study adopted a correlational survey design with a population of 9,440 consisting of 2,700 teachers and 6,740 students of the 115 accredited private secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State. The sample size of the study was 706 respondents made up of 348 teachers and 378 students. The Taro Yamane formula was adopted in determining the sample size. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 70 schools out of the 115 approved private senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis representing 61 percent. The instruments for data collection were researcher-designed questionnaires titled "Creative Classroom Management Techniques Questionnaire" and "Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire" respectively. The instruments were validated by three experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation. The internal consistencies of the instruments were determined using the Cronbach Alpha statistics which yielded reliability indexes of 0.81, 0.76, 0.82 and 0.88 which showed that the instruments were reliable. The research questions were answered, and the hypotheses tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics. The hypotheses were further subjected to t-transformation to establish the significance of the r-value at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the data analyzed revealed among others that there is a high and positive relationship between adoption of positive reinforcement and students' academic performance in private senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis Rivers State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that the school management should develop a rewards system that acknowledges student achievements, both big and small. Teachers should regularly provide constructive feedback and celebrate student successes through verbal recognition, certificates, or small incentives. Workshops on effective feedback strategies can help educators enhance their reinforcement techniques

Keywords: Creative, Classroom Management, Academic Performance

INTRODUCTION

The dynamic nature of educational practices has highlighted the need for innovative strategies to enhance student academic performance. One such approach is creative classroom management, which emphasizes the use of inventive methods by teachers to foster a conducive learning environment. The significance of

this strategy has become increasingly evident in private senior secondary schools, where competition and high expectations necessitate robust educational practices.

Port Harcourt, a key metropolis in Rivers State, Nigeria, provides a unique context for examining the interplay between creative classroom management and academic outcomes. The city hosts a mix of urban challenges, including overcrowded classrooms and diverse student demographics, which often complicate traditional teaching and management methods (Imoh, 2023). Against this backdrop, private schools have emerged as pivotal players in delivering quality education, often characterized by better teacher-student ratios and innovative pedagogies.

Research suggests that effective classroom management not only minimizes disruptions but also fosters an environment conducive to academic success (Amie-Ogan & Onyinyechi, 2020). Teachers in private schools who utilize creative strategies—such as interactive learning, differentiated instruction, and the integration of digital tools—report better student engagement and academic outcomes (Nwankwoala, 2021). Moreover, creative classroom management aligns with global educational trends that emphasize critical thinking, collaboration, and adaptability among students (Akpomi & Okiridu, 2022).

Empirical evidence supports the correlation between teacher effectiveness and student performance. In a study conducted in Rivers State, researchers found that schools with teachers employing innovative classroom management strategies experienced significantly higher academic achievement compared to those relying on traditional methods (Sunday-Piaro, 2018). The findings underscore the importance of equipping teachers with the skills and resources to implement creative solutions in classroom settings.

Challenges, however, remain in achieving these outcomes. Teachers in private secondary schools often face pressures from both parents and administrators to meet high academic standards, which can limit their willingness to experiment with new teaching methods (Mbua, Mba, & Uche, 2024). Additionally, disparities in teacher training and resource allocation between urban and rural schools highlight the need for systemic reforms to support creative classroom management.

The focus of this study, therefore, is to investigate how creative classroom management practices employed by teachers in private senior secondary schools influence students' academic performance in Port Harcourt. By examining this relationship, the study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on improving educational outcomes through innovative teaching strategies.

Statement of the Problem

The academic performance of students in private senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis has become a significant concern for educators, parents, and policymakers. Despite the availability of resources and a relatively favorable student-teacher ratio in private schools, students' academic outcomes often fail to meet expectations. This disparity raises questions about the effectiveness of classroom management practices employed by teachers in these schools.

Creative classroom management, which encompasses innovative strategies such as interactive teaching, personalized learning, and the use of technology, has been identified as a critical factor influencing students' engagement and academic performance. However, many teachers in private schools either lack adequate training in these innovative techniques or face systemic challenges, such as high parental expectations and administrative pressures, that discourage experimentation with non-traditional methods. As a result, classrooms may become environments of routine, lacking the vibrancy and adaptability necessary to cater to diverse learning needs.

Studies conducted in other regions of Nigeria suggest a positive correlation between effective classroom management and improved student performance, but there is limited empirical evidence focused on private senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt. Additionally, the role of creative approaches in addressing the unique challenges faced by private schools in the metropolis remains underexplored. Without a clear understanding of how creative classroom management influences academic performance in this context, efforts to improve educational outcomes may remain misdirected.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' creative classroom management techniques as correlates of students' academic performance in private senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. find out the relationship between positive reinforcement techniques and students' academic performance in private senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.
2. determine the relationship between flexible seating techniques and students' academic performance in private senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between positive reinforcement techniques and students' academic performance in private senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between flexible seating techniques and students' academic performance in private senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State?

Hypotheses

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

6. There is no significant relationship between positive reinforcement and students' academic performance in private senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis Rivers State.
7. There is no significant relationship between flexible seating techniques and students' academic performance in private senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a correlational survey design with a population of 9,440 consisting of 2,700 teachers and 6,740 students of the 115 accredited private secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State. The sample size of the study was 726 respondents made up of 348 teachers and 378 students. The Taro Yamane formula was adopted in determining the sample size. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 70 schools out of the 115 approved private senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis representing 61 percent.

The instruments for data collection were researcher-designed questionnaires titled "Creative Classroom Management Techniques Questionnaire" and "Student Academic Performance Questionnaire" respectively. The first instrument comprises two sections: Section A and Section B respectively. Section A was designed to collect the bio-data of respondents while Section B comprises items aimed at providing relevant information in respect to the research questions. The second instrument was designed to determine the relationship between classroom management techniques and students' learning outcome.

Questionnaires items were designed on a four point summation rating scales of Strongly Agree (SA)=4, Agree (A)= 3, Disagree (D)= 2, Strongly Disagree (SD)=1. The instruments were validated by three experts. The internal consistencies of the instruments were determined using the Cronbach Alpha method which yielded reliability indexes of 0.87, 0.086, 0.72, 0.84, 0.70 and 0.75 which showed that the instruments were reliable. Out of the 726 copies of the questionnaire administered, 706 copies were successfully retrieved and used for analysis. The research questions were answered, and the hypotheses tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics. The research questions were answered based on the value and direction of the correlation coefficient, (positive and high, positive but low, or negative and high or negative but low or moderate). Values of 0.1-0.4 were counted as low correlation, values of 0.5 were considered moderate correlation while 0.6-1.0 were considered high correlation. Similarly, the hypotheses were tested for significance of relationship at 0.05 level of significance. This was further tested by transforming the coefficient of correlation (r) to t in order to establish the significance or otherwise of the r-value.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: *What is the relationship between adoption of positive reinforcement techniques and students' academic performance in private senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis Rivers State?*

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation on Relationship between Positive Reinforcement Techniques and Students' Academic Performance in Private Senior Secondary School

Variable	N	$\sum X \sum Y$	$\sum X^2 \sum Y^2$	$\sum X \sum Y$	Rcal	Remarks
reinforcement techniques (X)	706	821.11	2623.12			
				2237.01	0.81	High positive
students' Academic Performance (Y)	706	2112.02	2528.15			

The analyses from Table 1 revealed a correlation value of r = 0.81. This value is high and positive, thus indicating that there is high and positive relationship between positive reinforcement techniques and students' academic performance in private senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis Rivers State. This result implied that the adoption of positive reinforcement techniques leads to improved students' academic performance in private senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis Rivers State.

Research Question 2: *What is the relationship between adoption of flexible seating techniques and students' academic performance in private senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis Rivers State?*

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation on Relationship between Flexible Seating Techniques and Students' Academic Performance in Private Senior Secondary School

Variable	N	$\sum X \sum Y$	$\sum X^2 \sum Y^2$	$\sum X \sum Y$	r-cal	Remarks
Flexible seating techniques (X)	706	853.20	2323.12			
				2613.01	0.82	High Positive
Students' academic (Y)	706	1108.04	3018.02			

The analyses from Table 2 revealed a correlation value of r = 0.82. This value is high and positive, thus indicating that there is high and positive relationship between adoption of flexible seating techniques and students' academic performance in private senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis Rivers State. This result implied that the adoption of flexible seating techniques leads to improved students' learning outcome in private senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis Rivers State

Test of Hypotheses

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between positive reinforcement and students' academic performance in private senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis Rivers State.

Table 3: T-test Summary of Relationship between Positive Reinforcement and Students' Academic Performance in Private Senior Secondary School

Variable	N	$\sum X \sum Y$	$\sum X^2 \sum Y^2$	$\sum X \sum Y$	Df	$\propto$	r_{cal}	t_{cal}	t_{crit}	P-value	Rmk
Positive reinforcement (X)	706	821.11	2623.12								
				2237.01	704	0.05	0.81	23.03	1.96	0.04	Sig. Reject H_0
Students' Academic Performance (Y)	706	2112.02	2528.15								

The data analysed in Table 3 revealed the Pearson correlation summary between positive reinforcement and students' academic performance in private senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis Rivers State. The correlation coefficient is 0.81 and the p-value is 0.04 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between positive reinforcement and students' academic performance in private senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis Rivers State is rejected. This indicates that there is a positive relationship between positive reinforcement and students' academic performance in private senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis Rivers State.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between flexible seating techniques and students' academic performance in private senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis Rivers State.

Table 4: T-test Summary of Relationship between Flexible Seating Techniques and Students' Academic Performance in Private Senior Secondary School

Variable	N	$\sum X \sum Y$	$\sum X^2 \sum Y^2$	$\sum X \sum Y$	Df	$\propto$	r_{cal}	t_{cal}	t_{crit}	P-value	Rmk
Flexible seating techniques (X)	706	853.20	2323.12								
				2613.01	704	0.05	0.82	18.07	1.96	0.03	Sig. Reject H_0
Students' Academic(Y)	706	1001.04	3040.02								

The data analysed in Table 4 revealed the Pearson correlation summary between flexible seating techniques and students' academic performance in private senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis Rivers State. The correlation coefficient is 0.82 and the p-value is 0.03 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between flexible seating techniques and students' academic performance in private senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis State is rejected. This indicates that there is a positive relationship between flexible seating techniques and students' academic performance in private senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the finding of the study for research question 1 on Table 1 revealed that respondents were of the opinion that there is a high and positive relationship between positive reinforcement and students' academic performance in private senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis Rivers State. The study revealed that positive reinforcement increases the desired behavior by adding a favourable stimulus immediately after it occurs. It rewards student to behave in a certain way and the reward encourage them to do it again. All these lead to improved learning outcome in private senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis Rivers State. Similarly, hypothesis one showed that there is a significant relationship between positive reinforcement and students' academic performance in private senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis Rivers State. This finding is in line with the finding of Smith, (2017), he concluded that reinforcement can be particularly useful tool for promoting a desirable change in student behavior. He Also, stated that positive reinforcement is the most valuable behavior management strategy. Moreover, it helps teachers improve student performance and engage in classroom discussion. In addition, positive reinforcement can be an effective technique for modifying student behavior and motivate them to be responsible safe and kind (Morin, 2022).

Therefore positive reinforcement is an effective way to manage students behavior, promote their engagement in the learning process and teach classroom expectation such as responsibility, safety and kindness.

The result of the finding of the study for research question two on Table 2 revealed that respondents were of the opinion that there is a high and positive relationship between adoption of flexible seating techniques and students' academic performance in private senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis Rivers State. It was revealed that easily configurable seating arrangement that provide alternative to desk and chairs that also allow student move within their seats without disruption. Teachers adopt flexible seating as it aids in students' health and a healthy student can exhibit a healthy behaviour and get a positive learning outcome. The corresponding hypothesis five revealed that there is a significant relationship between flexible seating techniques and students' learning outcome in private senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis

Rivers State. This is in line with the findings of Seaver, (2019) he concluded that Flexible seating has also been shown to positively affect student engagement in class, when students have control over choosing where to sit or what type of seating model to use, they are able to internalize their learning. The classroom environment impacts the level of student engagement and academic success. The stake holders of the field of education are looking at ways to continue to move in this direction for students' success.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study it was concluded that the adoption of creative classroom management techniques such as positive reinforcement techniques and flexible seating techniques enhance students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers State. In other words, the adoption of these strategies by the management of private secondary schools in leads to improved students' academic performance of these secondary schools. This way, private secondary schools are able to achieve their predetermined goals and objectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The school management should develop a rewards system that acknowledges student achievements, both big and small. Teachers should regularly provide constructive feedback and celebrate student successes through verbal recognition, certificates, or small incentives. Workshops on effective feedback strategies can help educators enhance their reinforcement techniques
2. The school management should Redesign classroom layouts to include various seating options, such as bean bags, standing desks, or collaborative tables, allowing students to choose where they feel most comfortable. Educators should be trained on how to create a flexible learning environment that fosters collaboration and encourages movement, catering to different learning preferences.

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