



Disciplinary Management Measures As Correlates Of Academic Performance In Mathematics Among Public Secondary School Students In Anambra State

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ABSTRACT

Students' academic performance in mathematics continues to pose a challenge in Nigeria, despite several reforms aimed at improving quality education. This study examined disciplinary management measures as correlates of academic performance in mathematics among public secondary school students in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study specifically investigated the extent to which the use of counselling services and parent-teacher conferences relate to students' academic performance in mathematics. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population comprised all public secondary school teachers in Anambra State, from which a stratified random sample of 667 teachers was selected. A validated structured questionnaire served as the instruments for data collection after establishing their reliability respectively using Cronbach's alpha. The reliability values for Disciplinary Management Measures Questionnaire (DMMQ) were 0.915 and 0.876 for the use of counselling services and parent-teacher conferences respectively and over all reliability value was 0.896. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient, with hypotheses tested at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed a non-significant positive relationship between the use of counselling services, parent-teacher conferences and students' academic performance in mathematics. The study concludes that disciplinary management strategies involving counselling and parental collaboration are vital for enhancing students' discipline and mathematics achievement. It was recommended that school administrators institutionalize counselling programmes and strengthen parent-teacher partnerships to foster better learning outcomes in mathematics.

Keywords: Disciplinary management, counselling services, parent-teacher conferences, academic performance, mathematics, Anambra State

INTRODUCTION

Education remains a vital instrument for individual and national development. Mathematics occupies a central position within the educational system due to its applicability across science, technology, commerce and everyday life. Mathematics serves as a foundational subject that enhances logical reasoning, problem-solving and critical thinking skills required for societal advancement (Okoye & Eze, 2022). In Nigeria, mathematics is a compulsory subject at both primary and secondary school levels, emphasizing its importance in national curriculum objectives. However, persistent poor performance of students in mathematics at public examinations such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and the National Examination Council (NECO) remains a serious concern to educators, policymakers, and stakeholders (Adeyemi & Musa, 2021).

Academic performance in mathematics refers to the level of achievement demonstrated by students in mathematical tasks, assessments and examinations. It is a key indicator of cognitive development, logical reasoning and problem-solving ability (Okoye & Eze, 2022). Academic performance in mathematics has long been a critical indicator of students' overall educational achievement, particularly in Nigeria's secondary school system where mathematics is a compulsory subject and a prerequisite for many tertiary programs (Adeyemi & Musa, 2021). The recurring underachievement in mathematics has been attributed to a multiplicity of factors, including ineffective teaching methods, inadequate instructional materials, poor student motivation and lack of proper disciplinary management within schools (Ogunbiyi, 2020). This trend reflects not only academic deficiencies but also underlying issues related to discipline, motivation and school management.

A growing body of research (Agu & Nwafor, 2021; Okeke & Umezulike, 2021) suggests that students' indiscipline manifested through truancy, lateness, inattentiveness and examination malpractice has significantly contributed to the decline in academic performance in mathematics. The school environment, when plagued by behavioural challenges, disrupts both teaching and learning processes. Teachers often spend more time controlling misbehaviour than delivering lessons effectively, resulting in reduced instructional time and lower academic engagement among students. Consequently, the inability to maintain discipline undermines students' capacity to focus and perform optimally in subjects that require sustained attention and logical reasoning such as mathematics (Adebayo & Adedeji, 2022).

Disciplinary management in schools has traditionally been approached through punitive measures such as corporal punishment, suspension or expulsion. Disciplinary management encompasses a variety of preventive and corrective strategies that promote positive student behaviour and academic success. Disciplinary management refers to the processes and mechanisms adopted by school authorities to ensure acceptable behaviour, orderliness and respect for school rules and regulations (Kanu & Adegoke, 2022). Disciplinary management measures refer to the strategies and practices used by schools to maintain acceptable student behavior, ensure compliance with school rules, and create a conducive learning environment (Ugochukwu & Nwankwo, 2021). These measures help students develop self-discipline and social responsibility. In modern education, disciplinary management extends beyond punitive actions to include positive behavioural interventions, guidance and collaborative approaches that foster learning (Ezeaku & Nnamani, 2023).

However, research has increasingly emphasized the effectiveness of positive, collaborative and rehabilitative approaches to discipline (Okafor & Eze, 2023). In public secondary schools, effective disciplinary management has been found to correlate positively with improved academic outcomes, particularly when students are guided and supported rather than punished (Ezeaku & Nnamani, 2023). Effective school discipline plays a vital role in fostering a conducive learning environment, promoting students' concentration and minimizing classroom disruptions. Disciplinary management measures, therefore, are critical mechanisms used by school administrators to maintain order, ensure compliance with school regulations and enhance academic engagement (Ugochukwu & Nwankwo, 2021).

In Nigeria, disciplinary management has evolved from authoritarian to participatory systems that emphasize empathy, counselling and collaboration with parents (Okonkwo & Ezeani, 2024). Effective disciplinary management is critical because it shapes the school climate, student motivation and ultimately academic achievement. Schools that apply proactive and supportive disciplinary strategies tend to report fewer behavioural problems and improved academic outcomes (Adeniran & Olatunji, 2021). Effective discipline ensures that students develop responsibility and focus on learning. Modern theories of discipline emphasize positive behaviour support, collaboration and restorative justice (Olayemi & Eze, 2023). Disciplinary management has increasingly drawn attention as a key determinant of academic outcomes. Without discipline, learning becomes chaotic, leading to diminished concentration and academic failure. Disciplinary management measures used in this study are counselling services and parent-teacher conferences. Counselling addresses the emotional and behavioural needs of students, while parent-teacher conferences enhance collaboration between school and home to monitor students' progress. Both measures promote self-discipline, motivation and improved learning attitudes (Onyema et al., 2023).

Counselling services in secondary schools involve professional guidance provided to students to help them overcome academic, emotional, social, and behavioral challenges (Abdullahi & Yusuf, 2020). School counsellors provide individual and group counselling, academic advising, and behavioral interventions that foster students' psychological well-being and learning efficiency. According to Edeh and Ogbu (2022), counselling services enhance self-esteem, goal-setting and decision-making skills, which are essential for academic success, particularly in mathematics, where anxiety and self-efficacy issues are common. Through guidance and counselling, students develop better emotional adjustment, study habits and attitudes toward learning factors closely linked with academic performance in mathematics.

In the Nigerian context, school counselling also serves as a disciplinary management tool by helping students understand the consequences of negative behaviour and supporting them in developing adaptive coping strategies (Umezina et al., 2023). Counselling services further bridge the communication gap between students and teachers, thereby improving classroom relationships and concentration on learning tasks (Chukwumeka & Adebayo, 2021). Counsellors provide individual and group sessions aimed at improving study habits, managing stress and enhancing motivation. Research by Ibrahim and Hassan (2020) found that counselling interventions significantly improved students' academic engagement and mathematics achievement. Similarly, Umeh (2023) reported that students who received consistent guidance performed better and demonstrated reduced anxiety in mathematics tasks. Counselling therefore plays a dual role correcting behavioural problems and fostering academic self-efficacy.

Similarly, parent-teacher conferences serve as a collaborative disciplinary management approach aimed at improving student behaviour and learning. Parent-teacher conferences are structured meetings aimed at sharing information about students' academic progress, behaviour and personal development. These interactions allow parents to participate in the educational process and reinforce discipline at home (Okon & Edet, 2021). Adeyemi and Yusuf (2023) observed that consistent parental involvement through conferences led to improved mathematics achievement and reduced absenteeism. Parent-teacher partnerships thus ensure a unified approach to student guidance and performance enhancement. Parent-teacher interactions provide opportunities for sharing information about a student's progress, addressing behavioural concerns and setting academic goals collaboratively (Nwosu & Adebayo, 2021). Active parental involvement through such conferences reinforces school discipline, enhances accountability and motivates students to perform better academically. According to Olatunji and Oladipo (2022), the consistent engagement between teachers and parents fosters an environment of shared responsibility that strengthens both student discipline and performance. In mathematics education, where persistent low achievement is often linked to anxiety, lack of confidence and inadequate home support, parent-teacher conferences serve as a platform for reinforcing motivation and discipline necessary for success (Okonkwo & Ezeani, 2024).

In the context of Anambra State, where education is highly valued, the effectiveness of disciplinary management measures remains essential to improving mathematics outcomes. Public secondary schools in the state face diverse challenges, including overcrowded classrooms, inadequate teacher supervision and minimal parental engagement (Ezeaku & Nnamani, 2023). Addressing these challenges through structured counselling and consistent parent-teacher collaboration could significantly improve discipline and consequently enhance students' academic achievement in mathematics.

Despite the recognition of counselling and parent-teacher conferences as essential tools for discipline and learning, empirical studies examining their relationship with students' academic performance in mathematics within Anambra State remain limited. Most existing studies in Nigeria have explored general disciplinary practices or teaching strategies without isolating the influence of specific management measures like counselling and parent-teacher conferences (Okonkwo & Ezeani, 2024). Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining the extent to which counselling services and parent-teacher conferences relate to students' academic performance in mathematics among public secondary school students in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

The persistent poor performance of students in mathematics at the secondary school level has remained a critical concern for educators, administrators, and policymakers in Nigeria. Despite numerous educational reforms, the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO) results continue to reflect declining mathematics achievement among public secondary school students (Ezeaku & Nnamani, 2023). This trend is alarming because mathematics forms the bedrock of scientific and technological advancement, yet many students in Anambra State fail to attain the expected level of proficiency required for higher education and professional development (Okoye & Eze, 2022).

While several factors such as inadequate instructional resources, ineffective teaching strategies and low student motivation have been identified as contributors to this problem, emerging evidence suggests that the breakdown of effective disciplinary management systems in schools may play a more critical role (Ogunbiyi, 2020; Ugochukwu & Nwankwo, 2021). Many schools rely heavily on punitive disciplinary approaches such as suspension, corporal punishment and public shaming, which often yield short-term compliance but long-term resentment and disengagement from learning (Nwosu & Adebayo, 2021). Consequently, these measures may negatively affect students' concentration, self-esteem and ultimately, academic performance in mathematics.

Modern educational thought emphasizes positive, restorative and preventive disciplinary measures that encourage responsible behaviour while promoting academic growth. Counselling services and parent-teacher conferences are two such non-punitive approaches recognized for their potential to enhance students' discipline and learning outcomes (Abdullahi & Yusuf, 2020; Umezina et al., 2023). Counselling helps students to manage emotional, behavioural and academic challenges, while parent-teacher conferences foster home-school collaboration in monitoring and supporting students' progress. However, in many public secondary schools in Anambra State, these measures appear underutilized, poorly implemented or inconsistently practiced (Edeh & Ogbu, 2022).

The extent to which counselling services and parent-teacher conferences influence students' academic performance in mathematics remains unclear. Most existing studies in Nigeria have focused broadly on disciplinary practices and school climate without empirically isolating the contribution of these specific disciplinary management measures (Okonkwo & Ezeani, 2024). There is thus a pressing need to investigate whether and how the implementation of counselling services and parent-teacher conferences correlates with students' mathematics achievement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Therefore, this study addresses the research gap by empirically examining the relationship between counselling services, parent-teacher conferences and students' academic performance in mathematics. The study seeks to provide evidence-based insights that can inform school leadership, guidance counsellors and policymakers in promoting disciplinary management practices that foster both behavioural discipline and academic excellence.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to examine disciplinary management measures as correlates of academic performance in mathematics among public secondary school students in Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to

Ascertain the extent the use of counselling services relates to students' academic performance in mathematics in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Examine the extent the use of parent-teacher conferences relates to students' academic performance in mathematics in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

To what extent does the use of counselling services relate to students' academic performance in mathematics in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

To what extent does the use of parent-teacher conferences relate to students' academic performance in mathematics in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study

There is no significant relationship between the use of counselling services and students' academic performance in mathematics in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

There is no significant relationship between the use of parent-teacher conferences and students' academic performance in mathematics in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

METHOD

The research adopted a correlational research design. Nworgu (2015) posited that correlational research design attempts to identify a relationship between two or more variables. The area of study was Anambra State of Nigeria, Anambra State is one of the states in South East Geo-political Zone of Nigeria. The population of the study was 6,661 teachers (Males=1,142 and females= 5,519) in 267 public Secondary schools of the six education zones in Anambra State. The sample of the study was 667 teachers. Multistage sampling procedure was used to select the sample. Firstly, proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select 10% of the schools from each of the six education zones: Aguata (5 schools), Awka (7 schools), Nnewi (5 schools), Ogidi (4 schools), Onitsha (3 schools) and Otuoacha (3schools). Secondly, 10% of the teachers was selected from each of the selected schools giving a total of 667. Additionally, 10% of SS2 students taught by the teacher respondents were randomly selected to assess the academic performance using their cumulative average score results in Mathematics in the 2023/2024 academic session. SS2 students were used because they were more experienced than SS1 and more stable than SS3 students who were more for external exams.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher, namely Disciplinary Management Measures Questionnaire (DMMQ). Students' academic performance was assessed using promotion examination in mathematics 2023/2024 academic session administered to students in Senior Secondary two (SS2) in public Secondary Schools in Anambra State by the Post Primary Schools Service Commission, Awka Anambra State. The validation was subjected to both Face and construct validation using three experts in the field. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's Alpha. The reliability was determined by administering copies of the questionnaire to 50 teachers from selected public secondary schools in Enugu State. Using Cronbach's Alpha in determining the reliability of the instruments, the summary of reliability analysis was as follows: Disciplinary Management Measures Questionnaire (DMMQ) with 20 items had the following: cluster a- use of counselling services=0.915; cluster d- use of parent-teacher conferences= 0.876, and over all reliability value for reliability of Disciplinary Management Measures Questionnaire (DMMQ) was 0.896. The instruments were administered to the respondents by the researcher with the help of six research assistants who were briefed on how to administer and retrieve the instruments from sampled teachers at the selected schools. Research questions were answered using Pearson's correlation. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Where a p -value obtained was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected which indicates there was a significant relationship between independent variable and the dependent variable. Whereby, the p -value was greater the 0.05, the null hypothesis was not rejected which implies that there was no significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used for data analysis.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: *To what extent does the use counselling services relate to students' academic performance in mathematics in public secondary schools in Anambra State?*

Table 1. Pearson's Correlation Between Use of Counselling Services and Students' Academic Performance in mathematics in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State (n=667)

Variables	N	Use of Counseling Services	Students' Academic Performance	Remark
Use of Counseling Services	667	1	0.03	
Students' Academic Performance	667	0.03	1	VLPR

The result presented in Table 1 shows that the r obtained from correlating use of counselling services and students' academic performance scores was 0.04. This shows that there was a very low positive relationship between use of counselling services and students' academic performance in mathematics among public secondary school students in Anambra state.

Research Question 2: *To what extent does the use of parent-teacher conferences relate to students' academic performance in mathematics in public secondary schools in Anambra State?*

Table 2. Pearson's Correlation Between Use of teacher-parent conference and Students' Academic Performance in mathematics in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State (n=667)

Variables	N	Use of teacher-parent conference	Students' Academic Performance	Remark
Use of teacher-parent conference	667	1	0.02	
Students' Academic Performance	667	0.02	1	VLPR

The result presented in Table 2 shows that the r obtained from correlating use of counselling services and students' academic performance scores was 0.04. This shows that there was a very low positive relationship between teachers' use of counselling services and students' academic performance in mathematics among public secondary school students in Anambra state.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between the use of counselling services and students' academic performance in mathematics in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 3. *Test of Significance of Pearson's Correlation Between Use of Counselling Services and Students' Academic Performance in mathematics in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State (n=667)*

Variables	N	Use of Counselling Services	Students' Academic Performance	P	Remark
Use of Counseling Services	667	1	0.03		
Students' Academic Performance	667	0.03	1	0.522	Not significant

Table 3 shows that there was no significant relationship between use of counselling services and students' academic performance in mathematics in public secondary schools in Anambra state, $r = 0.03$, $p = 0.522$. The null hypothesis was not rejected since the p-value was greater than 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the relationship between the use of counselling services and students' academic performance in mathematics was not significant.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between the use of parent-teacher conferences and students' academic performance in mathematics in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 4

Test of Significance of Pearson's Correlation Between Use of teacher-parent conference and Students' Academic Performance in mathematics in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State (n=667)

Variables	N	Use of teacher-parent conference	Students' Academic Performance	p	Remark
Use of teacher-parent conference	667	1	0.02	0.599	Not significant
Students' Academic Performance	667	0.02	1		

The result presented in Table 4 indicates that there was no significant relationship between use of teacher-parent conferences and students' academic performance in mathematics in public secondary schools in Anambra state, $r = 0.02$, $p = 0.599$. Since the p-value was greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This implies the relationship between the use of teacher-parent conference and students' academic performance in mathematics was not significant.

DISCUSSION

The study revealed that while the availability and use of counselling services such as academic counselling, career guidance, and emotional support in Anambra State public secondary schools is associated with a slight positive influence on student academic performance in mathematics, the relationship is not statistically significant. According to respondents, where counselling services were available, students felt more supported in navigating school-related challenges. However, most schools lacked fully functional counselling units, limiting the reach and consistency of counselling interventions. A key reason for the muted effect is the inconsistent availability and utilization of counselling services. A study in Obio-Akpor, Rivers State by Nwisagbo (2024) found that although information and orientation counselling boosted academic results, most schools lacked functional counselling units altogether. In Anambra, respondents similarly noted that only a handful of schools had dedicated counsellors, and even fewer ensured regular counselling sessions, which weakened any potential impact on student outcomes. Moreover, scope and quality of counselling services matter. In Kwara State, Garba, et al (2023) reported a significant positive relationship between orientation, information and counselling services and students' academic achievement across public schools. The contrast suggests that broader and integrated counselling programme rather than ad hoc sessions can influence outcomes meaningfully. In Anambra, services were often limited to career advice or disciplinary referral rather than ongoing academic or personal support, reducing their academic value. Evidence from Lagos also supports the potential impact of counselling when fully implemented. Adeniyi and Adeniyi (2019) found that exposure to mathematics-specific counselling sessions significantly improved student performance in that subject. In Anambra, respondents indicated that most counselling interactions were superficial and infrequent not tied to specific academic content or follow-up preventing sustained improvement in student performance.

Broader studies in Delta State reinforce counselling's role in enhancing school climate, which indirectly affects academic achievement. Tibi et al (2022) showed that a positive school climate where counselling services are integrated into school culture correlates with better student learning outcomes. In Anambra schools lacking such integration, respondents reported that counselling was perceived as peripheral, not embedded in everyday school life, which diminishes its educational relevance. Ochoche (2019) found a strong relationship between students' access to guidance and their academic performance, recommending strengthened counselling programmes and qualified counsellors in all secondary schools. In Anambra, where many schools do not yet have formal counselling structures or trained personnel, the application of counselling remains inconsistent, explaining the non-significant association.

Finally, the researcher posited that non-significant positive relationship observed in Anambra public secondary schools reflects the limited scale, inconsistent implementation, and peripheral status of counselling services. While students and teachers note some benefits where services exist, those benefits are constrained by lack of institutional support, trained personnel, and integration with academic programmes. For counselling to significantly influence performance, it must be consistently available, with dedicated, trained counsellors; integrated into school systems, including referral pathways and follow-up; linked to academic support, not just disciplinary or career guidance and embedded in the school culture, supporting student well-being and learning. It is only then can counselling evolve from a peripheral support function to a meaningful contributor to academic success.

The study also revealed a non-significant yet positive relationship between the use of teacher-parent conferences and students' academic performance in mathematics in Anambra State public secondary schools. This suggests that although teacher-parent interactions may offer some support to learners, their current implementation does not result in substantial academic gains. Many respondents acknowledged that while such conferences promote a form of communication between home and school, their sporadic nature and limited depth often fail to produce measurable academic outcomes. A major factor behind the weak impact is the low participation rate of parents, especially those whose children are underperforming. Olaniyan and Ogunlade (2020) found in a similar study in Ogun State that teacher-parent conferences were more frequently attended by parents of well-behaved or high-achieving students, leaving out those who may benefit most from school-home collaboration. This unequal involvement reduces the conferences' effectiveness as a school-wide intervention. When only a small subset of students benefits from increased parental attention, the broader influence on school performance is diminished.

Additionally, teacher-parent conferences in most Anambra schools tend to be informal and often lack structured goals or follow-up mechanisms. In a study conducted in Oyo State, Oladipo-Abodunwa and Adeleke (2023) observed that while parent-teacher engagement had potential to improve student performance, the absence of consistent planning and joint academic monitoring significantly limited outcomes. Respondents in the current study also noted that meetings were typically limited to updates on student behavior or grades, without clear academic strategies, collaborative goal-setting, or parental training on how to support learning at home. Furthermore, the absence of institutional support systems such as trained counsellors or learning coaches undermines the potential benefits of teacher-parent conferences. Ochoche (2019), in his study in Abuja, emphasized that effective home-school collaboration must be part of a larger institutional framework that includes teacher training, counselling, and structured communication channels. In Anambra, however, these structures are often missing or underdeveloped, making the conferences isolated and insufficient for meaningful academic transformation.

Moreover, in schools where teacher-parent conferences are held, they are often treated as routine formalities rather than dynamic platforms for intervention. Ezeugwu and Ede (2022), in their study in Enugu State, noted that when parent-teacher interactions are driven by administrative obligation rather than intentional collaboration, their academic impact remains marginal. Respondents in this study confirmed that while teachers occasionally provide academic advice during conferences, the lack of sustained interaction limits long-term improvements. Despite these limitations, the slight positive trend observed suggests that where parents are involved even minimally students may feel a greater sense of accountability and motivation. This supports the findings of Garba et al (2023), who noted that parental

awareness of a child's academic struggles can foster minor improvements, especially when parents make personal efforts to encourage better study habits at home.

In conclusion, the researcher posited that while teacher-parent conferences show a mildly positive influence on student academic performance in mathematics in Anambra State, their impact remains statistically non-significant due to irregular implementation, low parental participation, and lack of strategic planning. For teacher-parent conferences to become more impactful, they must be structured and goal-oriented with action points, involve all parents, especially of underperforming students, be part of a broader framework of school-community engagement, and include consistent follow-up and monitoring mechanisms.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that disciplinary management measures specifically counselling services and parent-teacher conferences are not significant correlates of students' academic performance in mathematics. Schools that actively integrate counselling and parental involvement foster higher levels of student discipline and academic achievement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

Educational authorities should ensure that all public secondary schools are equipped with qualified counsellors to provide continuous behavioural and academic guidance.

Schools should hold mandatory parent-teacher meetings at least once per term to discuss students' progress and disciplinary issues.

Teachers should be trained in basic counselling and behavioural management strategies to complement the work of professional counsellors.

The Ministry of Education should develop clear policies linking disciplinary management practices with performance evaluation metrics in schools.

Parents, teachers and school administrators should work collaboratively to create an enabling environment that promotes discipline, focus, and excellence in mathematics.

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