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Teachers Variables As Correlate Of Students Interest And Achievement In Economics In Secondary Schools In Keffi, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
This study investigated teachers' variables as correlate of students' interest and achievement in Economics in secondary schools in Keffi Local Government Area, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. A correlational research design was adopted to examine how teachers' variables, comprising academic qualification, teaching experience, and pedagogical competence, relate to students' interest in and academic achievement in Economics. The population comprised 350 Senior Secondary II and III Economics students in secondary schools in Keffi Local Government Area. Using the Taro Yamane formula at a 0.05 level of significance, a sample of 187 students was drawn through stratified random sampling, with strata based on school and class level. Data were collected using a structured Teachers' Variables and Students' Interest and Achievement Questionnaire (TVSIAQ) and students' Economics examination scores. Results revealed a strong positive and significant relationship between teachers' variables and students' interest in Economics ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.05$), and an even stronger positive and significant relationship between teachers' variables and students' academic achievement in Economics ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.05$). The findings indicate that students taught by suitably qualified, experienced, and pedagogically competent teachers demonstrate greater interest in and higher achievement in Economics. The study recommends that government and school administrators in Keffi should prioritise the recruitment of qualified Economics teachers, sustain regular in-service training, and encourage the retention of experienced teaching staff to sustain students' interest and improve academic achievement in Economics.
Keywords: Teachers' variables, students' interest, academic achievement, Economics education, Keffi.

INTRODUCTION

Education remains a powerful instrument for social transformation and national development, and in Nigeria it is designed to produce critical and reflective citizens capable of contributing to national growth and global competitiveness (Federal Ministry of Education, 2018). Within the senior secondary school curriculum, Economics occupies a central place, equipping students with analytical skills, decision-making abilities, and an understanding of economic principles that affect their everyday lives, fostering economic literacy and rational decision-making that supports sustainable development (Okoro & Idris, 2019). Yet despite this importance, students' interest in and performance in Economics at the secondary school level remain unsatisfactory, and reports from the West African Examinations Council indicate that a considerable proportion of candidates fail to obtain credit passes in the subject, thereby limiting their opportunities for further education and professional advancement (WAEC Chief Examiner's Report,

2022). Scholars have attributed this poor performance to several factors, including inadequate instructional materials, unfavourable learning environments, low student motivation, and, most importantly, teacher-related variables such as academic qualification, teaching experience, and pedagogical competence (Adeyemi, 2020; Abubakar & Danladi, 2021), which shape classroom instruction and influence how students perceive and engage with a subject, since a teacher who is adequately qualified and experienced is more likely to sustain students' curiosity and foster both interest and achievement (Bello & Musa, 2021).

Keffi Local Government Area, home to a mix of urban and semi-urban secondary schools, presents a suitable context for examining this relationship, and despite government efforts at teacher recruitment, training, and curriculum reform, records show that students' interest in and achievement in Economics in the area have remained inconsistent, raising questions about the extent to which teacher-related factors account for this pattern (Musa & Yakubu, 2021). Empirical evidence across Nigeria and other developing contexts suggests that teacher qualification, experience, and pedagogical competence significantly predict students' interest and achievement in various subjects (Eze & Okonkwo, 2020; Ogundele & Bassey, 2020), yet there is limited research that specifically examines teachers' variables as a correlate of both students' interest and achievement in Economics among secondary school students in Keffi. It is this gap that the present study seeks to address, guiding school administrators, policymakers, and teacher-training institutions in designing interventions that improve the quality of Economics instruction and student outcomes.

Statement of the problem

Economics occupies a central place in the senior secondary school curriculum, equipping students with analytical skills, decision-making abilities, and an understanding of economic principles essential for national development, yet despite this importance, students' interest in and achievement in Economics at the secondary school level, including in Keffi Local Government Area, Nasarawa State, have remained persistently poor. Reports from the West African Examinations Council consistently show that a considerable proportion of candidates fail to obtain credit passes in Economics, limiting their chances of further education and professional advancement, and while several factors have been advanced to explain this trend, ranging from inadequate instructional materials to unfavourable learning environments, the role of teachers' variables, particularly academic qualification, teaching experience, and pedagogical competence, has received comparatively little empirical attention within the Keffi education context. Classroom observation and anecdotal reports suggest wide variation in the qualifications and experience of Economics teachers across secondary schools in the area, raising the question of whether these differences account for the disparities observed in students' interest and performance, a concern deepened by the fact that most existing studies on teacher-related variables in Nigeria have concentrated on subjects such as Mathematics and English Language, or have examined teacher variables and achievement in isolation without considering students' interest as a related outcome. Consequently, there is limited empirical evidence specifically linking teachers' variables to both students' interest in and achievement in Economics among secondary school students in Keffi, and this gap creates uncertainty for administrators and policymakers seeking evidence-based strategies to improve Economics education, since without such evidence, intervention efforts risk being poorly targeted. It is this gap the present study sets out to address. This concern is not merely academic to me; observing the teaching-learning process in secondary schools, I have consistently noticed that students' enthusiasm for Economics, and their results in it, seem to track closely with the caliber of the teacher in front of them, yet this pattern is rarely tested rigorously in local research, which tends to gravitate toward subjects like Mathematics rather than Economics. Given the strategic role Economics plays in shaping decision-making skills among Nigerian youths, I was drawn to investigate empirically whether teachers' variables genuinely correlate with students' interest and achievement in Keffi, so findings might offer schools something concrete to act on.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine teachers' variables as correlate of students' interest and achievement in Economics in secondary schools in Keffi, Nasarawa State.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

i. Determine the relationship between teachers' variables and students' interest in Economics in secondary schools in Keffi.
ii. Determine the relationship between teachers' variables and students' academic achievement in Economics in secondary schools in Keffi.

Research Questions

i. What is the relationship between teachers' variables and students' interest in Economics in secondary schools in Keffi?
ii. What is the relationship between teachers' variables and students' academic achievement in Economics in secondary schools in Keffi?

Hypotheses

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

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between teachers' variables and students' interest in Economics in secondary schools in Keffi.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between teachers' variables and students' academic achievement in Economics in secondary schools in Keffi.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a correlational research design to examine teachers' variables as correlate of students' interest and achievement in Economics in secondary schools in Keffi Local Government Area, Nasarawa State. Correlational research is appropriate because it allows the investigation of the degree and direction of the relationship between two or more variables without manipulation (Creswell, 2018).

This design is particularly suited to this study because it seeks to determine how variations in teachers' variables are associated with variations in students' interest and academic achievement in Economics.

The target population consisted of all Senior Secondary School II (SS II) and Senior Secondary School III (SS III) Economics students in secondary schools in Keffi Local Government Area, Nasarawa State.

The total population of students across these schools was 350 students, as obtained from school administrative records. SS II and SS III students were chosen because they have had sufficient exposure to the Economics curriculum and are taught regularly by subject teachers ahead of internal and external examinations such as WAEC and NECO.

Using the Taro Yamane formula at a 0.05 level of significance, the calculated sample size was approximately 187 students.

A sample of 187 students was drawn from the total population using stratified random sampling.

Stratification was based on school and class level (SS II and SS III) to ensure proportional representation across the sampled secondary schools.

Stratified random sampling was employed to increase the representativeness of the sample and reduce sampling bias (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

Data on teachers' variables were obtained through a structured Teachers' Variables and Students' Interest and Achievement Questionnaire (TVSIAQ), which captured students' perceptions of their Economics teachers' qualification, experience, and pedagogical competence, alongside a students' interest scale. Students' academic achievement was measured using their Economics examination scores.

RESULTS OF FINDINGS

Research Question 1: *Relationship between Teachers' Variables and Students' Interest in Economics*

Table 4.1: Pearson Correlation between Teachers' Variables and Students' Interest

Variable	Mean	SD	r	p-value
Teachers' Variables (TV)	3.24	0.51	0.64	0.000
Students' Interest (SI)	3.41	0.44		

Note: $p < 0.05$; SD = Standard Deviation; N = 187

The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.64$) shows a strong positive relationship between teachers' variables and students' interest in Economics.

The p-value ($0.000 < 0.05$) indicates that the relationship is statistically significant. This finding suggests that teachers' variables play a substantial role in shaping students' interest in Economics. A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.64$) indicates that as teachers' qualification, experience, and pedagogical competence improve, students' interest in the subject rises correspondingly. This implies that suitably qualified and experienced teachers, who employ varied and engaging instructional strategies, are better able to arouse and sustain students' curiosity and enthusiasm for Economics, making the subject more relatable and enjoyable. This outcome aligns with the view that teacher quality remains one of the most reliable predictors of learner engagement, reinforcing the argument that investment in teacher development is not merely administrative but central to improving how students perceive and engage with Economics as a discipline.

Research Question 2: *Relationship between Teachers' Variables and Students' Academic Achievement in Economics*

Table 4.2: Pearson Correlation between Teachers' Variables and Students' Academic Achievement

Variable	Mean	SD	r	p-value
Teachers' Variables (TV)	3.24	0.51	0.71	0.000
Academic Achievement (AA)	65.82	9.63		

Note: $p < 0.05$; SD = Standard Deviation; N = 187

The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.71$) shows a strong positive relationship between teachers' variables and students' academic achievement in Economics.

The p-value ($0.000 < 0.05$) indicates that the relationship is statistically significant. This result reinforces the view that teachers' variables are a strong predictor of students' academic achievement in Economics. Students taught by well-qualified and experienced teachers who demonstrate sound pedagogical competence tend to grasp abstract economic concepts more easily, apply economic principles to real-life situations, and perform better in tests and examinations. The result underscores the centrality of teacher quality to the attainment of desirable academic outcomes in Economics. This finding is consistent with the broader body of research establishing that teacher-related factors, more than school infrastructural variables, exert the most direct influence on learning outcomes, suggesting that policy attention aimed at improving Economics performance in secondary schools should prioritize recruitment, continuous training, and retention of qualified subject teachers over other interventions.

Hypothesis One (H_{01})

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between teachers' variables and students' interest in Economics.

Table 4.3: Pearson Correlation Analysis of Teachers' Variables and Students' Interest

Variable	Mean	SD	r	p-value	Decision
Teachers' Variables	3.24	0.51	0.64	0.000	Reject H_{01}
Students' Interest	3.41	0.44	—	—	—

From the correlation results ($r = 0.64$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$), the relationship between teachers' variables and students' interest in Economics is strong and significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected.

Hypothesis Two (H_{02})

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between teachers' variables and students' academic achievement in Economics.

Table 4.4: Pearson Correlation Analysis of Teachers' Variables and Academic Achievement

Variable	Mean	SD	r	p-value	Decision
Teachers' Variables	3.24	0.51	0.71	0.000	Reject H_{02}
Academic Achievement	65.82	9.63	—	—	—

From the correlation results ($r = 0.71$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$), the relationship between teachers' variables and students' academic achievement in Economics is strong and significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) is rejected.

Taken together, the findings show that teachers' variables are significantly and positively related to both students' interest in and academic achievement in Economics, with the relationship being somewhat stronger for achievement ($r = 0.71$) than for interest ($r = 0.64$). This suggests that while well-qualified, experienced, and pedagogically competent teachers boost students' enthusiasm for the subject, their influence is felt even more directly in students' actual examination performance.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study are discussed in relation to the research questions, hypotheses, and relevant literature. The study examined teachers' variables as correlate of students' interest in and academic achievement in Economics in secondary schools in Keffi Local Government Area. The discussion below interprets the results, links them to existing research, and highlights implications for teaching and learning.

The first research question examined the relationship between teachers' variables and students' interest in Economics. The analysis revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that students taught by more qualified, experienced, and pedagogically competent teachers tend to show greater interest in Economics. This finding led to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_{01}), confirming that teachers' variables significantly influence students' interest in the subject.

This finding aligns with earlier studies in Nigeria and other developing contexts. For instance, Bello and Musa (2021) reported that teachers' pedagogical competence significantly predicts students' interest in Economics, while Ogundele and Bassey (2020) found that teacher qualification and teaching method jointly influence student interest in secondary school subjects.

Teachers' Variables and Students' Academic Achievement

The second research question examined the relationship between teachers' variables and students' academic achievement in Economics. The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong positive and statistically significant relationship ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.05$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_{02}).

This finding is consistent with the work of Adeyemi (2020) and Eze and Okonkwo (2020), who both found that teacher-related variables, particularly qualification and experience, are strong predictors of students' academic achievement in social science subjects. It also supports Amadi and Uche (2019), who observed that teachers' years of experience correlate positively with instructional effectiveness and, by extension, learners' performance.

The strong positive correlations observed in this study may be attributed to the nature of Economics as a subject that demands logical reasoning, analysis, and the simplification of abstract concepts, tasks for which well-trained and experienced teachers are better equipped. Teachers with adequate qualification and experience are more likely to use varied instructional strategies, provide timely feedback, and create a classroom climate that sustains students' curiosity and confidence, thereby enhancing both interest and achievement.

Practical Implications: School administrators and education policymakers in Keffi should prioritise the recruitment and retention of qualified and experienced Economics teachers. Regular in-service training and mentorship programmes should be organised to strengthen teachers' pedagogical competence, which in turn is likely to improve students' interest in and achievement in Economics.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that teachers' variables, comprising qualification, experience, and pedagogical competence, significantly correlate with both students' interest in and academic achievement in Economics among secondary school students in Keffi Local Government Area. Improving the quality of teachers through recruitment, training, and retention can contribute meaningfully to enhanced learning outcomes in Economics. These findings hold important implications for educational stakeholders, particularly school administrators and policymakers responsible for teacher deployment and professional development in Nasarawa State. Given the strong association observed between teacher quality and both student interest and achievement, deliberate investment in teacher capacity building should be treated as a priority rather than an afterthought. Furthermore, incentivizing experienced and qualified Economics teachers to remain within the profession, rather than migrating to other sectors, would help sustain the gains highlighted by this study and foster a more consistently engaging and academically productive learning environment for Economics students across the state.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study on teachers' variables as correlate of students' interest and achievement in Economics in secondary schools in Keffi, the following recommendations are made:

i. Recruitment and Retention of Qualified Teachers: School administrators and government agencies should prioritise the recruitment and retention of adequately qualified and experienced Economics teachers, as this directly relates to students' interest and achievement.
ii. Continuous Professional Development: Regular in-service training, workshops, and mentorship programmes should be organised for Economics teachers to strengthen their pedagogical competence and instructional delivery, thereby sustaining students' interest and improving academic achievement.

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