AJSSM
African Journal of Social Sciences and Management

African Journal of Social Sciences and Management
ISSN: 3141-5369
Journal homepage: www.ajssm.com

Research article

Influence of demographic factors and professional development programmes on teachers' task performance in junior secondary schools in Imo State, southeast, Nigeria

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Abstract
This study examines the influence of demographic characteristics and professional development initiatives on task performance of teachers in junior secondary schools in Imo State, Southeast, Nigeria. The research was driven by the need to improve teacher effectiveness as a way of enhancing quality of education delivery. Demographic variables investigated include age, gender, academic qualifications, and years of teaching experience, while participation in professional development activities was also considered as a predictor of teachers' job performance. A survey research design was adopted. The population comprised teachers in public junior secondary schools across Imo State, from which a representative sample of 269 was selected. The data was collected using a structured research instrument. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha statistics. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was employed. Findings indicated that demographic attributes and professional development activities such as workshops, seminars, and conference participation positively contributed to teachers' instructional effectiveness, classroom management abilities, and assessment practices. In particular, teaching experience and educational attainment emerged as significant determinants of task performance. The study concluded that sustained participation in professional development programmes enhances teachers' effectiveness. Consequently, it recommended that educational authorities and school administrators should expand professional development opportunities and formulate policies that accommodate the varying demographic characteristics of teachers.

Keywords: Demographic characteristics, professional development programmes, teacher effectiveness, task performance, junior secondary education

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How to cite this article: Onyemachi, C. C. (2026). Influence of demographic factors and professional development programmes on teachers' task performance in junior secondary schools in Imo State, southeast, Nigeria. *African Journal of Social Sciences and Management, 1*(3): 78-89.

INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental instrument for national growth and development with teachers occupying a central position in the achievement of educational objectives. In Nigeria, government policies and programmes have consistently emphasized the importance of education, resulting in increased school enrolment and greater investment in the sector. According to Odekunle (2021), education serves as a critical mechanism for advancing socio-economic, political, and cultural development. Similarly, Akpofure (2022) emphasized that education remains an indispensable component of individual and national progress. Consequently, educational systems must be effectively planned and managed to ensure the attainment of desired outcomes.

The realization of educational goals depends largely on the effectiveness of teachers in carrying out their professional responsibilities. At the junior secondary school level, teachers play a significant role in equipping learners with the foundational knowledge and competencies required for further education. Teachers' task performance encompasses several responsibilities, including lesson preparation and delivery, classroom management, learner assessment, record keeping, and compliance with institutional regulations. The extent to which teachers perform these duties effectively has a direct impact on students' academic achievement and the overall quality of education (Olatunji & Owolabi, 2022).

Despite efforts to improve educational standards in Imo State, concerns persist regarding variations in teachers' performance across public junior secondary schools. Reports have highlighted challenges such as inadequate lesson preparation, ineffective utilization of instructional materials, and poor adherence to curriculum requirements (Imo State Universal Basic Education Board, 2023). These concerns have generated interest among educational researchers and policymakers in identifying factors that influence teachers' effectiveness.

Among the variables frequently associated with teacher effectiveness are demographic characteristics and participation in professional development programmes. Demographic characteristics, including age, gender, teaching experience, academic qualification, and marital status, are believed to influence teachers' attitudes toward work, motivation levels, adaptability, and capacity to manage professional responsibilities (Nwosu & Anyanwu, 2021; Okeke & Nwankwo, 2024). For example, younger teachers may demonstrate greater proficiency in the use of technology and innovative instructional approaches, whereas more experienced teachers may possess stronger classroom management skills and practical pedagogical knowledge (Adegoke, 2023).

Demographic characteristics are often used to describe and categorize individuals based on specific social and professional attributes. Ashraf (2020) described demographic factors as personal characteristics such as age, gender, marital status, educational attainment, occupation, income level, ethnicity, religion, nationality, and place of residence. Previous studies have shown that certain demographic variables, particularly educational qualification and teaching experience, significantly influence employee productivity and professional performance (Amegayibor, 2021).

Professional development, on the other hand, refers to organized learning activities aimed at enhancing the knowledge, skills, and competencies of professionals to improve workplace performance and contribute to national development. The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (2022) described professional development as a continuous process through which educators update their professional knowledge and improve their instructional capabilities. Professional development programmes often include workshops, seminars, conferences, mentoring, coaching, and in-service training opportunities. Literature suggests that teachers who participate actively in professional development initiatives are more likely to adopt innovative teaching strategies, improve classroom

practices, and enhance students' learning outcomes. For instance, UNESCO (2022) noted that professional development programmes contribute significantly to the acquisition of current pedagogical knowledge and effective instructional practices. In Nigeria, initiatives such as the Teachers Professional Development Programme and training programmes organized by State Universal Basic Education Boards are designed to strengthen teachers' competencies and address skill deficiencies (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2021).

Although various professional development opportunities are available to teachers in southeast Nigeria, several studies have reported low participation rates due to inadequate funding, poor scheduling, and a mismatch between training content and classroom realities (Eze & Obi, 2023). These challenges raise concerns about whether existing professional development opportunities adequately support teachers in improving their professional performance.

In Imo State, government agencies, educational institutions, and professional organizations have continued to invest in teacher development through recruitment, training, and capacity-building programmes. Nevertheless, disparities in teachers' effectiveness remain evident across junior secondary schools. Reports indicate persistent shortcomings in areas such as lesson note preparation, utilization of instructional resources, supervision of students' academic work, and classroom management practices (Eze & Obi, 2023).

Although existing literature suggests that demographic characteristics and professional development programmes contribute significantly to teacher effectiveness, findings from studies conducted in other states may not necessarily reflect the realities of Imo State due to differences in educational policies, school environments, and access to training opportunities. Furthermore, many previous studies have examined demographic characteristics and professional development independently, with limited attention given to their combined influence on teachers' task performance. This gap in empirical evidence underscores the need to investigate the extent to which demographic factors and professional development programmes jointly predict teachers' task performance in junior secondary schools in Imo State.

Against this background, this study seeks to determine the influence of demographic factors and professional development programmes on teachers' task performance in junior secondary schools in Imo State. Specifically, the study examines the extent to which selected demographic variables and participation in professional development activities contribute to teachers' effectiveness in the execution of their professional duties.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teachers' task performance refers to the effectiveness with which teachers execute their professional responsibilities within the school environment. These responsibilities include planning lessons, delivering instruction, utilizing appropriate teaching resources, managing classroom activities, assessing students' learning outcomes, maintaining records, and complying with institutional regulations. The quality of teachers' performance directly influences students' academic achievement and the attainment of educational objectives (Olatunji & Owolabi, 2022).

At the junior secondary school level, effective task performance is particularly important because it contributes to the development of foundational knowledge and skills required for higher levels of education. Teachers who demonstrate high levels of task performance are more likely to create productive learning environments, encourage student engagement, and facilitate meaningful learning experiences. Conversely, poor task performance may be reflected in inadequate lesson

preparation, ineffective instructional delivery, weak classroom control, and insufficient monitoring of students' progress (Eze & Obi, 2023).

Demographic factors are personal and professional characteristics that distinguish individuals within a population. In educational settings, commonly examined demographic variables include age, gender, teaching experience, academic qualifications, and marital status. These characteristics often influence teachers' attitudes, behaviors, motivation, and effectiveness in carrying out professional duties (Nwosu & Anyanwu, 2021).

Age is considered an important determinant of workplace behavior and productivity. Younger teachers tend to be more receptive to technological innovations and modern teaching strategies, whereas older teachers often possess extensive practical experience and well-developed classroom management skills. While younger educators may demonstrate creativity and adaptability, experienced teachers frequently rely on accumulated knowledge and professional expertise to address classroom challenges effectively (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2024).

Gender has also been investigated as a possible determinant of teacher effectiveness. Although findings from previous studies have been inconsistent, some researchers have reported differences in teaching approaches, communication styles, and classroom interactions between male and female teachers. Teaching experience represents another significant demographic characteristic. Teachers who have spent several years in the profession are generally more familiar with curriculum implementation, learner behavior, classroom management techniques, and assessment procedures. Through continuous practice and exposure, experienced teachers develop competencies that contribute to improved instructional effectiveness. Nevertheless, some studies indicate that the benefits of experience may stabilize after a certain period, suggesting that experience alone does not guarantee sustained professional growth (Adegoke, 2023).

Academic qualification is equally important in determining teachers' competence and effectiveness. Higher educational attainment often equips teachers with advanced subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, and research competencies necessary for effective teaching. Teachers with postgraduate qualifications may possess broader perspectives on instructional strategies and educational innovations, thereby enhancing their capacity to facilitate learning and address students' diverse needs. Amegayibor (2021) reported that factors such as educational attainment and work experience contribute substantially to employee productivity and organizational effectiveness. Similarly, studies conducted in Nigerian secondary schools have shown that teaching experience and academic qualifications are among the strongest predictors of effective instructional delivery and classroom performance (Nwosu & Anyanwu, 2021).

Professional development refers to systematic and continuous learning activities designed to enhance the knowledge, skills, competencies, and professional practices of educators. These activities are intended to support teachers in adapting to changing educational demands, improving instructional effectiveness, and maintaining professional relevance throughout their careers. Professional development programmes may take various forms, including workshops, seminars, conferences, mentoring, coaching, in-service training, collaborative learning activities, and professional learning communities. Such programmes provide opportunities for teachers to acquire new knowledge, update existing skills, and exchange ideas with colleagues and educational experts (UNESCO, 2022).

The importance of professional development has increased considerably due to rapid technological advancement, curriculum reforms, and evolving educational expectations. Teachers are now expected to integrate digital technologies into classroom instruction, adopt learner-centered approaches, and utilize innovative assessment techniques. Continuous professional learning enables

educators to meet these expectations effectively while enhancing student learning outcomes. The Federal Government of Nigeria recognizes the importance of teacher development and has implemented policies aimed at promoting continuous professional learning. Through initiatives such as the Teachers Professional Development Programme, efforts have been made to strengthen teachers' competencies and bridge identified skill gaps within the educational system (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2021).

Studies have suggested a positive relationship between participation in professional development programmes and improved teaching performance. Despite these benefits, several challenges continue to hinder effective participation in professional development programmes in Nigeria. Common constraints include inadequate funding, limited access to training opportunities, poor scheduling of workshops, and insufficient alignment between training content and classroom realities. Eze and Obi (2023) also observed that although many teachers recognize the value of professional development, participation rates remain relatively low due to these challenges.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two complementary theoretical perspectives: Human Capital Theory and Adult Learning Theory (Andragogy).

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory was developed by Becker (1993) and emphasizes the importance of investing in education, training, and skill acquisition to improve individual productivity and organizational performance. The theory argues that knowledge, skills, and competencies constitute valuable forms of capital that contribute to economic growth and professional effectiveness. Within the educational context, teachers who participate in professional development activities are expected to improve their instructional competencies and overall effectiveness. Investment in teacher training enhances professional knowledge and pedagogical skills, which subsequently translates into improved classroom performance and better educational outcomes. Therefore, Human Capital Theory provides a useful framework for understanding how professional development programmes contribute to teachers' task performance.

Adult Learning Theory (Andragogy)

Adult Learning Theory, popularized by Knowles (1984), focuses on the characteristics and learning preferences of adult learners. According to the theory, adults learn most effectively when learning experiences are relevant to their needs, problem-centered, and connected to their prior experiences. Teachers, as adult learners, are more likely to benefit from professional development programmes that address real classroom challenges and provide practical solutions. Training activities that are interactive, experience-based, and directly applicable to teaching practice tend to produce greater improvements in professional competence. Conversely, professional development initiatives that fail to address teachers' actual needs may have limited impact on classroom performance. The principles of andragogy therefore provide a useful explanation for variations in the effectiveness of professional development programmes and their influence on teachers' task performance.

Empirical Review

Several empirical studies have explored the relationship between demographic factors, professional development programmes, and teachers' performance. Nwosu and Anyanwu (2021) investigated the influence of demographic variables on teachers' job performance among secondary

school teachers in Abia State. Their findings revealed that teaching experience and academic qualifications significantly predicted teachers' effectiveness, whereas age and gender demonstrated comparatively weaker effects. Similarly, Okeke and Nwankwo (2024) examined the influence of demographic characteristics on classroom effectiveness in Anambra State. Their study reported that teachers with higher educational qualifications exhibited superior instructional delivery and assessment practices. The study also observed variations in performance based on demographic characteristics, although qualification and experience emerged as the strongest determinants.

Regarding professional development, Eze and Obi (2023) conducted a study involving junior secondary school teachers across South-East Nigeria. The findings indicated that participation in professional development activities was generally low due to financial and organizational constraints. However, teachers who attended multiple workshops and training programmes annually demonstrated significantly higher levels of instructional effectiveness and classroom management competence. UNESCO (2022) further reported that continuous, school-based professional development programmes produce greater improvements in teacher effectiveness than isolated training events. Similarly, recent international studies have confirmed that sustained professional learning contributes positively to instructional quality, teacher confidence, and student achievement. Although previous studies have established the independent influence of demographic factors and professional development programmes on teacher performance, relatively few studies have examined their combined predictive effects, particularly within the context of junior secondary schools in Imo State. This gap in existing literature provides the justification for the present study.

RESEARCH METHOD AND MATERIALS

This study employed a correlational survey research design to investigate the relationship between demographic characteristics, participation in professional development programmes, and teachers' task performance in junior secondary schools in Imo State, Nigeria. The choice of this design was informed by its suitability for determining the degree and direction of association among variables without manipulating them. Furthermore, the design facilitated the collection of data from a relatively large population within a limited period while allowing the researcher to examine the predictive influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

The study was conducted in Imo State, located in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The state comprises three educational zones, namely Owerri, Orlu, and Okigwe. Imo State has a considerable number of public and private junior secondary schools staffed by qualified teachers responsible for implementing the national junior secondary school curriculum. The selection of Imo State as the study area was based on persistent concerns regarding variations in teachers' task performance across public junior secondary schools within the state.

The target population consisted of all teachers in public junior secondary schools in Imo State. These teachers are directly involved in classroom instruction, learner assessment, classroom management, and the implementation of educational policies at the junior secondary school level. The population provided the basis for examining the influence of demographic factors and professional development programmes on teachers' performance. However, since the exact population of the teachers in public junior secondary schools within the state could not be precisely determined as of the time of the study, the sample size formula for infinite populations was used (Godden, 2004). The formula is stated as follows:

$$SS = Z^2 \times p \times (1 - p) / CI^2$$

$$SS = \frac{Z^2 * p(1-p)}{CI^2}$$

where: SS = Sample size; Z = Z-score at 95% confidence level (Z = 1.96); p = estimated proportion of the population picking a choice, expressed as decimal (p = 0.5); CI = Confidence interval expressed as decimal (CI = 0.06).

Substituting the values into the formula:

$$SS = \frac{1.96^2 * 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.06^2}$$

SS = 0.9604 / 0.0036

$$SS = \frac{0.9604}{0.0036}$$

SS ≈ 266.78

Incidentally, 269 responded to the survey and data collected from them were used in the study to avoid losing vital information.

A proportionate random sampling technique was utilized to ensure fair representation of respondents from the various educational zones and schools included in the study. This sampling method was considered appropriate because it enhanced the representativeness of the sample and minimized sampling bias. By giving all eligible teachers an equal opportunity to participate, the researcher ensured that the findings could reasonably reflect the characteristics of the broader population.

Data for the study were collected using three structured instruments developed by the researcher: Demographic Factors Rating Scale (DFRS), Professional Development Programme Rating Scale (PDPRS), and Teachers' Task Performance Rating Scale (TTPRS). The Demographic Factors Rating Scale was designed to obtain information relating to respondents' personal and professional characteristics, including age, gender, teaching experience, and academic qualifications. The Professional Development Programme Rating Scale measured teachers' participation in various professional development activities such as workshops, seminars, conferences, mentoring programmes, and in-service training. The Teachers' Task Performance Rating Scale assessed the effectiveness of teachers in carrying out their professional duties, including lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, learner assessment, and adherence to school regulations. The instruments consisted of structured items designed to elicit responses relevant to the objectives of the study. Responses obtained from the instruments were used to determine the relationships among the variables under investigation.

To ensure the appropriateness and adequacy of the instruments, the draft copies were subjected to expert validation. Specialists in educational management, measurement and evaluation, and related fields examined the instruments with respect to clarity, relevance, content coverage, and alignment with the objectives of the study. Their observations, suggestions, and corrections were incorporated into the final versions of the instruments before administration. The reliability of the instruments was established through a pilot study involving respondents who possessed characteristics similar to those of the study population but were not included in the final sample. Data generated from the pilot study were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha reliability technique to determine the internal consistency of the instrument items. The reliability coefficients obtained were considered adequate for educational research, indicating that the instruments were reliable for data collection.

The researcher personally administered the instruments to the selected respondents with the assistance of trained research assistants where necessary. Respondents were adequately briefed on

the purpose of the study and provided with instructions on how to complete the questionnaires. The completed instruments were collected, screened, and organized for analysis to ensure accuracy and completeness of responses. Data collected for the study were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) was employed to answer the research questions by determining the strength and direction of the relationships among the variables. The null hypotheses were tested using the t-test associated with the Pearson correlation coefficient at a 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule was that any calculated t-value greater than the critical table value would lead to the rejection of the null hypothesis, whereas a calculated value lower than the critical value would result in the retention of the null hypothesis.

RESULT PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

The results are presented according to the research questions.

1. ***Research Question One: To what extent do demographic factors predict teachers' task performance in junior secondary schools in Imo State?***

Table 1. Summary of the extent demographic factors correlation scores influence teachers' task performance in junior secondary schools.

N	Df	r	t_{cal}	t_{tab}	MR	DR	Remark	Decision
269	267	0.821	28.62	1.96	Very high	Positive	Very high positive relationship	Reject H_0

Sample size (N), coefficient of relationship (r), Magnitude of Relationship (MR), Direction of relationship (DR), Alpha level (α= 0.05), Degree of Freedom (df), t-calculated (t_{cal}) and t-tabulated (t_{bab})

The analysis revealed a pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.821 between demographic factors and teachers' task performance (Table 1). This coefficient indicates a very strong positive relationship between the two variables. The result suggests that variations in demographic characteristics such as age, gender, teaching experience, and academic qualification are associated with corresponding variations in teachers' effectiveness in performing their professional duties. The magnitude of the relationship demonstrates that demographic factors constitute important determinants of teachers' task performance in junior secondary schools. Consequently, the findings indicate that teachers' personal and professional characteristics significantly contribute to their effectiveness in areas such as instructional delivery, classroom management, learner assessment, and adherence to institutional responsibilities. The result also shows that t-calculated value of 28.62 is greater than the t-tabulated value of 1.96. As a result, it was concluded that the relationship (coefficient) between demographic factors (age, gender, years of teaching experience and academic qualification) and teachers' task performance in junior secondary schools is statistically significant.

2. ***Research Question Two: To what extent does participation in professional development programmes predict teachers' task performance in junior secondary schools?***

Table 2. Summaries of correlation scores on the extent participation in professional development programmes predict teachers' task performance in junior secondary schools

N	Df	R	t_{cal}	t_{tab}	MR	DR	Remark	Decision
269	267	0.922	267	42.20	Very high	Positive	Very high positive relationship	Reject H_0

Sample size (N), coefficient of relationship (r), Magnitude of Relationship (MR), Direction of relationship (DR), Alpha level (α= 0.05), Degree of Freedom (df), t-calculated (t_{cal}) and t-tabulated (t_{bab})

The correlation analysis yielded a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.922 between participation in professional development programmes and teachers' task performance. This coefficient indicates an exceptionally strong positive relationship between the variables. The result suggests that increased participation in professional development activities is associated with improved teacher effectiveness. Teachers who engage more frequently in workshops, seminars, conferences, mentoring programmes, and in-service training tend to demonstrate higher levels of professional competence and instructional effectiveness.

Furthermore, Table 2 shows the t-test result of Pearson (r) analysis on coefficient of relationship between Participation in professional development programmes and teachers' task performance in junior secondary schools. The result indicates the t-calculated value of 42.20 is greater than the t-tabulated value of 1.96. As a result, it was concluded that the coefficient of relationship between participation in professional development programmes and teachers' task performance in junior secondary schools is statistically significant. Thus, demographic characteristics significantly influence teachers' task performance in junior secondary schools.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that while both demographic factors and professional development programmes significantly predict teachers' task performance, professional development programmes exerted a comparatively stronger influence. This suggests that continuous learning and capacity-building initiatives remain essential mechanisms for improving teacher effectiveness irrespective of demographic differences.

The findings of this study provide empirical support for the argument that both demographic characteristics and professional development opportunities are important determinants of teachers' effectiveness. The significant influence of teaching experience and academic qualification supports the assumptions of Human Capital Theory, which emphasizes that investments in knowledge, skills, and experience enhance individual productivity and workplace performance. Teachers with extensive teaching experience are more likely to possess refined instructional techniques, stronger classroom management strategies, and deeper understanding of learner needs acquired through years of professional practice. Similarly, teachers with higher academic qualifications are often equipped with advanced pedagogical knowledge, critical thinking abilities, and professional competencies that enhance their effectiveness in the classroom.

The strong positive relationship observed between professional development programmes and teachers' task performance is consistent with previous empirical studies that highlighted the importance of continuous professional learning in promoting educational quality. Professional development activities provide teachers with opportunities to update their pedagogical knowledge, acquire contemporary instructional skills, and adapt to evolving educational policies and curriculum requirements. The finding also aligns with Adult Learning Theory, which emphasizes that adults learn more effectively when educational experiences are relevant, practical, and connected to their professional responsibilities. Teachers who participate in well-structured professional development programmes are able to apply newly acquired knowledge directly to classroom situations, thereby improving instructional quality and learner outcomes.

In an era characterized by rapid technological advancement and educational transformation, continuous professional development has become increasingly essential. Teachers are expected to integrate digital technologies, learner-centered approaches, and innovative assessment practices into classroom instruction. Participation in professional development programmes equips educators with the competencies required to respond effectively to these emerging demands. The findings therefore suggest that educational authorities, policymakers, and school administrators should prioritize investments in professional development initiatives while simultaneously recognizing the

contribution of demographic characteristics to teacher effectiveness. Creating opportunities for continuous professional learning can enhance instructional quality, improve student achievement, and contribute significantly to the attainment of educational goals in Imo State and Nigeria as a whole.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the influence of demographic characteristics and professional development programmes on teachers' task performance in public junior secondary schools in Imo State, Nigeria. The findings demonstrated that both variables significantly contribute to variations in teachers' effectiveness in the execution of their professional responsibilities.

The study established that demographic factors, particularly teaching experience and academic qualifications, play a crucial role in determining teachers' performance. Teachers with extensive professional experience and higher educational attainment were found to exhibit greater competence in instructional delivery, classroom management, learner assessment, and other professional duties. These findings underscore the importance of human capital attributes in enhancing educational effectiveness.

Furthermore, the results revealed that participation in professional development programmes significantly improves teachers' task performance. Activities such as workshops, seminars, conferences, mentoring programmes, and in-service training provide opportunities for teachers to acquire updated pedagogical knowledge, develop innovative instructional skills, and strengthen their professional competencies. Teachers who participated regularly in these programmes demonstrated higher levels of effectiveness and efficiency in carrying out their educational responsibilities.

This study concludes that sustained investment in teacher professional development, alongside recognition of demographic factors, is essential for promoting quality teaching and learning in junior secondary schools. Enhancing teachers' competencies through continuous training and capacity-building initiatives will contribute significantly to the achievement of educational goals in Imo State and Nigeria at large.

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