

Teachers' Professional Commitment as a Predictor of Students' Academic Performance in Public Senior Secondary Schools in South-West Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated teachers' professional commitment as a predictor of students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in South West Nigeria. The study was guided by two research questions and one null hypothesis. A correlational survey and ex-post facto research design were employed to determine the predictive influence of teachers' commitment on students' academic outcomes. From a population of 134 public senior secondary schools and their principals, a sample of 67 schools and 67 principals was selected from Ondo, Osun, and Ogun States through a multistage sampling procedure. Two researcher-developed instruments titled Teachers' Professional Commitment Questionnaire (TPCQ) and Students' Academic Performance Proforma (SAPP) were used for data collection. The reliability coefficient of the TPCQ was 0.83, obtained using the split-half method, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and Spearman Brown Prophecy Formula. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while multiple regression analysis tested the null hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed a high level of teachers' professional commitment and a positive trend in students' academic performance in Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) results from 2013 to 2022. The study concluded that teachers' professional commitment significantly predicts students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in South West Nigeria. It was therefore recommended that State Post-Primary Education Boards in Ondo, Osun, and Ogun States should improve the remuneration and welfare of teachers to enhance

their professional commitment. Additionally, school administrators and teachers should set high academic expectations for students and continuously monitor their progress during instructional and assessment activities to foster sustained academic excellence.

Keywords:

Teachers' Professional Commitment; Predictor; Students' Academic Performance; Public Senior Secondary Schools; South West Nigeria

Introduction

Education remains an indispensable instrument for both human advancement and national development. Recognizing its transformative potential, nations across the world continue to make substantial investments in education as part of the global agenda for sustainable development. As observed by Mark (2013), education nurtures moral, social, intellectual, and physical growth, thereby enhancing individuals' capacity to contribute meaningfully to the socio-political, technological, and economic transformation of society.

Within this context, the professional commitment of teachers stands as a critical determinant of the effective implementation and success of secondary education. Moore and Moore (2014) affirm that teachers occupy a central position in the educational system, bearing responsibilities that extend beyond the classroom to the school and the larger society. As professionals, teachers are accountable not only for the academic achievement of their students but also for their moral, social, and emotional development (Elias & Arnold, 2016). Similarly, Onjoro, Arago, and Embeywa (2015)

highlight that teachers exert both positive and negative influences on learning outcomes, as they shape instructional quality and play a pivotal role in the implementation of curriculum and educational policies.

Given these multifaceted responsibilities, teachers' professional commitment has remained a central theme in educational research. It represents a psychological and affective state that defines teachers' relationship with their institutions and influences their willingness to remain in or leave the profession (Yusuf & Metiboba, 2012). The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN, 2010) emphasizes that professional commitment is an essential component of teachers' values, attitudes, and conduct toward their schools, students, and the teaching profession at large. Hussen, W/Teggen, and Teshome (2016) conceptualize teachers' commitment as comprising three major dimensions—commitment to the school organization, commitment to students' development, and commitment to the profession. Commitment to the school organization involves a teacher's alignment with the institution's vision, goals, and standards, as well as the desire to remain an active member of the system (Mohammed, Bilal, Batool, & Yahya, 2016). Commitment to students' development, on the other hand, reflects teachers' dedication to learners' intellectual and emotional growth through consistent efforts to enhance engagement and achievement (Thien & Razak, 2014; as cited in Hariri & Sumintono, 2020).

Despite the importance of these commitments, emerging observations within the South West region of Nigeria indicate that some teachers demonstrate a degree of complacency toward their professional duties. Such tendencies are often manifested in poor attendance at professional development programmes, limited collaboration toward institutional goals, habitual lateness, and weakened teacher-student relationships. These patterns of behavior may have far-reaching implications for student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement.

The concern becomes even more pressing in light of the persistent decline in students' academic performance in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination

(WASSCE). Academic performance, conceptualized as the quality or quantity of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values acquired by learners—often assessed through grades or examination results (Kiamba, Mutwa, & Mulwa, 2017)—serves as a vital benchmark for educational quality and effectiveness. It also provides policymakers and stakeholders with a reliable measure for assessing the functionality of the education system (Nonyelum, Ogugua, & Abah, 2022). However, despite the Federal Government's sustained emphasis on education as a strategic investment for national growth (FRN, 2013), student performance at the secondary school level has remained below expected standards.

Available statistics reveal that between 2014 and 2021, only 55.86% of candidates nationwide achieved the minimum benchmark of five credits, including English Language and Mathematics, required for admission into higher institutions—leaving a performance deficit of 44.14% (WAEC Records, 2014–2021). Performance disparities further exist across Nigeria's geopolitical zones (Utibe & Agwagah, 2015), with the South West states—Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo—recording mean pass rates of 52.36%, 57.47%, 44.10%, 47.81%, 33.42%, and 33.74%, respectively, between 2014 and 2018 (WAEC, 2019). These statistics indicate significant gaps in students' academic performance, ranging from 42.53% to 66.58% across the region.

For the objectives of secondary education to be achieved, there is a pressing need to strengthen both teachers' professional commitment—to their schools, students, and the teaching profession—and students' academic performance, particularly in standardized examinations such as the WASSCE. Given the established theoretical and empirical linkage between these two constructs, teachers' professional commitment serves as a crucial factor in determining students' academic success.

This study is therefore both timely and imperative, as it seeks to empirically examine the predictive relationship between teachers' professional commitment and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools across South West Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the centrality of secondary education to Nigeria's human capital development, persistent concerns remain over the academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools, particularly in the South West. WAEC statistics reveal that, between 2014 and 2021, fewer than 56% of candidates nationwide attained the minimum benchmark of five credits, including English and Mathematics, required for higher education admission (WAEC Records, 2014–2021). In the South West, mean pass rates during 2014–2018 ranged from 33.42% to 57.47%, leaving substantial achievement gaps of 42.53% to 66.58% (WAEC, 2019). These trends signal systemic challenges that threaten the attainment of national educational objectives.

Teachers' professional commitment has been identified as a critical determinant of educational quality and student achievement (Onjoro, Arago, & Embeywa, 2015). It encompasses dedication to the school organization, active involvement in students' development, and loyalty to the teaching profession (Hussen, W/Teggen, & Teshome, 2016). However, in South West Nigeria, evidence suggests that some teachers exhibit nonchalant attitudes toward professional responsibilities—such as improving competencies, attending training programmes, fostering teamwork, and ensuring consistent student engagement—potentially contributing to low examination performance.

Although several studies have examined aspects of teacher commitment and student performance in other contexts, there is limited empirical research that specifically investigates the predictive relationship between teachers' professional commitment and students' academic performance within the South West geopolitical zone.

This study therefore addresses this gap by empirically examining the extent to which teachers' professional commitment predicts students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in South West Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Examine the level of teachers' professional commitment in public senior secondary schools in South West, Nigeria.

2. Find out the trend in students' academic performance in SSCE results in public senior secondary schools in South West, Nigeria, from 2013 to 2022.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the level of teachers' professional commitment in public senior secondary schools in South West, Nigeria?
2. What is the trend in students' academic performance in SSCE in public senior secondary schools in South West, Nigeria, from 2013 to 2022?

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between teachers' professional commitment and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in South West, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Teachers' Professional Commitment

The professional commitment of teachers has been a topical issue due to challenges such as teacher attrition and brain drain affecting the education system. Rinat and Adiv (2021) reported that many teachers leave the profession within the first five years, a situation that concerns educational leaders who seek ways to retain qualified educators. According to Saatcioglu (2020), alignment between personal beliefs and the profession fosters higher commitment, encouraging teachers to remain in their career.

Professional commitment is a psychological state reflecting attitudes toward a chosen career, integrating personal beliefs with professional values, norms, and development (Rinat & Adiv, 2021). It involves dedication, pride in the profession, and a desire for professional growth (Shashi, 2014; Habib, 2016; Ali, 2020). Bashir (2017, 2019) describes it as strong identification with professional goals, faith in the profession, and sustained effort to maintain membership, while Tindowen, Bautista, Echalar, and Parallag (2020) link it to emotional intelligence and organizational loyalty.

It encompasses devotion of personal time (Arya, 2012), loyalty to colleagues and professional norms (Perry, Hunter, & Currall, 2016), and adherence to professional standards (Nugraha, 2016; Solihim & Nurhayati, 2020). Jamwal (2017) emphasizes consistency, loyalty, competence, and ethics, while Skidmore (2007, as cited in Jamwal, 2017) highlights professional development, reflective practice, and leadership contributions. McCabe and Sambrook (2013, as cited in Parveen, 2025) see it as loyalty and responsibility toward professional challenges, with harmony between beliefs and determination to continue (Parveen, 2025).

Professional commitment also reflects moral values in service delivery and a sense of belonging (Garcia-Maryano et al., 2019), as well as psychological attachment and self-identification with one's work (Chang & Choi, 2007, as cited in Bastian & Wododo, 2024). It entails adherence to professional norms, ethics, and the pursuit of excellence (Shoaib & Khalid, 2019; Gill & Kaur, 2017). For Aashiq (2017), it signifies dedication to teaching, fostering both student development and personal growth.

In this study, teachers' professional commitment refers to the psychological state characterizing dedication to the teaching profession, relationships with the school organization, and devotion to student development in public senior secondary schools in South West, Nigeria.

Students' Academic Performance

The performance of students in academic tasks has long attracted the interest of educators, parents, and society. Educators responsible for selecting candidates for advanced training prioritize accurately estimating the likelihood of their success or failure (Nonyelum, Oggua, & Abah, 2022). Academic performance refers to scores from assessments such as exercises, tests, mock exams, and final examinations (Nonyelum et al., 2022), and can be defined in terms of gaining knowledge, acquiring skills, achieving high grades, and maintaining persistence in education (Kumar, Agarwal, & Agarwal, 2021; York, Gibson, & Rankin, 2015). It results from the interaction of psychological, social, and economic factors (Diaz-Morales & Escrivano, 2015) and reflects the extent to which a student

completes academic tasks (Sharm, 2012; Yusuf, Onifade, & Bello, 2016).

Academic performance encompasses not only exam scores but also mastery of curriculum content that fosters critical thinking and lifelong learning (Omokhua & Agi, 2021). It is widely believed that good performance signals better career prospects (Narad & Abdullah, 2016) and is typically measured through continuous assessment and examinations (Narad & Abdullah, 2016; Dimkpa, 2015). It may be expressed as grades, test scores, or knowledge acquired (Richardson, Abraham, & Bond, 2012; Olowo & Fashiku, 2019). Conversely, poor performance is output judged to fall below expected standards, which are subjectively interpreted by evaluators (Efe & Aderson, 2016; Orji, 2019).

Methodology

A correlational survey and ex-post facto design were adopted to examine the relationship between teachers' professional commitment and students' academic performance. Correlational surveys assess variable relationships without manipulation (Cherry, 2022), while the ex-post facto approach was suitable as the variables had already occurred, using SSCE records from 2012–2021 (Owan, Bassey, & Ekpe, 2020). The study population comprised 134 public senior secondary schools and their principals in three South West states of Nigeria. Using Mora's (2019) recommendation of a 0.5 event probability for maximum variability, a sample of 67 schools and principals (50% of the population) was drawn through multistage sampling. Three states—Ondo, Osun, and Ogun—were randomly selected from six South West states; two education zones per state were randomly sampled, followed by proportionate allocation to ensure even representation. Two instruments were used: the Teachers' Professional Commitment Questionnaire (TPCQ) and the Students' Academic Performance Proforma (SAPP). The TPCQ contained 18 items covering commitment to school organization, student development, and the teaching profession, rated on a four-point scale (VHL, HL, ML, LL). The SAPP captured WASSCE results (2013–2022) in four performance categories: five credits including

English and Mathematics; five credits with either subject; five credits without both; and fewer than five credits. Face and content validity were established by experts from the University of Abuja. A pilot test yielded a TPCQ reliability coefficient of 0.76 (split-half), adjusted to 0.86 via the Spearman-Brown formula, surpassing the 0.60 threshold. The SAPP was not reliability-tested as it utilized WAEC-authenticated data. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and multiple regression at the 0.05 significance level.

Data Analysis and Results

Research Question One

What is the level of teachers' professional commitment in public senior secondary schools in South West, Nigeria?

Table 1:Analysis of the Level of Teachers' Professional Commitment in Public Senior Secondary Schools in South West, Nigerian = 67

S/N	Items	VHL	HL	ML	LL		S.D	Decision
A	Commitment to school organization: In my school, the teachers:							
1	are punctual and do not miss classes	18	25	13	11	2.75	.76	High Level
2	work towards goal achievement, objectives and values of the school	15	28	10	14	2.66	.85	High Level
3	work as a team towards achieving organizational goals.	13	33	7	14	2.67	.83	High Level
4	dedicate extra time towards implementing school based activities	27	18	12	10	2.92	.90	High Level
5	perform delegated duties with utmost dedication	19	21	9	18	2.61	.87	High Level
6	participate in activities geared towards solving organizational challenges	16	26	13	12	2.69	.79	High Level
	Section Mean/Standard Deviation					2.72	.83	High Level
B	Commitment to students development: In my school, the teachers:							
7	put in extra effort to enable students understand subject matter being taught	21	19	11	16	2.67	.94	High Level
8	encourage students to ask questions during the teaching learning process	15	24	16	12	2.63	.93	High Level
9	stimulate students interest in collaborative activities	15	22	13	17	2.52	.92	High Level
10	are willing to re-teach concepts not well understood by students	18	26	14	9	2.79	.73	High Level
11	set high expectations for students' acquisition of knowledge and skills and work towards their actualization	14	25	15	13	2.60	.88	High Level
12	care for students and assist them to achieve their educational goals	22	13	16	16	2.61	.89	High Level
	Section Mean/Standard Deviation					2.64	.88	High Level
C	Commitment to teaching profession: In my school, the teachers:							
13	are on the job irrespective of their remuneration	19	23	10	15	2.69	.92	High Level
14	are keen to protect the values and norms of the profession by their conduct	17	26	11	113	2.70	.75	High Level
15	use the training opportunities to improve their performance on the job	18	21	9	19	2.57	.89	High Level
16	are eager to learn new things about their area of specialization	13	34	10	10	2.75	.76	High Level
17	demonstrate knowledge of content and pedagogy	14	25	11	17	2.54	.90	High Level
18	set instructional outcomes and manage classroom procedures	17	24	16	10	2.72	.87	High Level
	Section Mean/Standard Deviation					2.66	.85	High Level
	Overall Section Mean/Standard Deviation					2.67	.85	High Level

Table 1 shows that teachers in public senior secondary schools in South West, Nigeria, demonstrate high professional commitment, with mean scores of 2.72 (school organization), 2.64 (students' development), and 2.66 (teaching profession). The overall mean of 2.67 exceeds

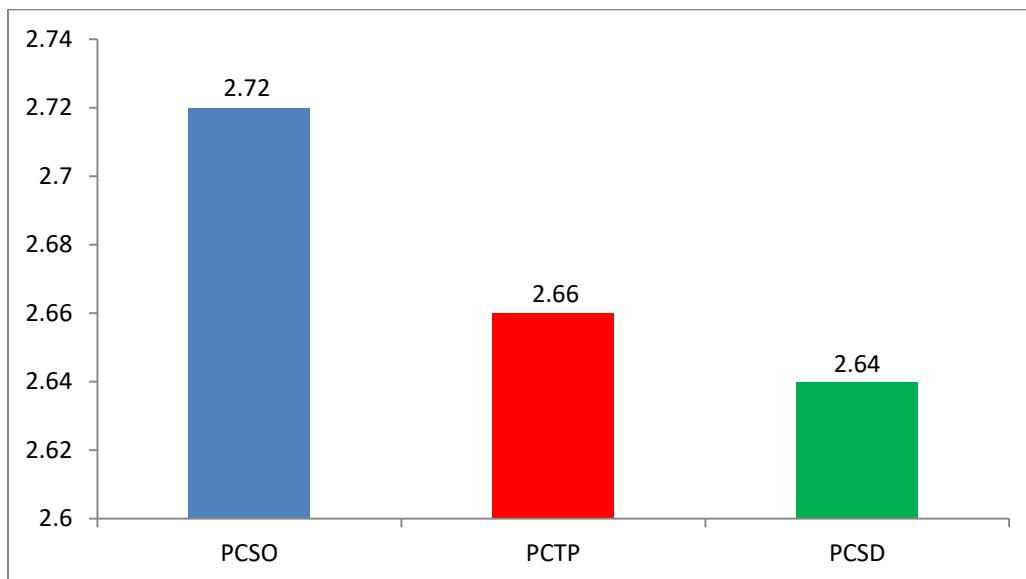
the 2.50 criterion, indicating a high commitment level.

Table 2:Mean Order Ranking of Teachers' Professional Commitment in Public Senior Secondary Schools in South West, Nigeria

Principals' Administrative Task Areas	\bar{x}	S.D	Decision
Commitment to School Organization	2.72	.83	1 st
Commitment to Teaching Profession	2.66	.85	2 nd
Commitment to Students' Development	2.64	.88	3 rd

Table 2 shows the mean order ranking of teachers' professional commitment in public senior secondary schools in South West, Nigeria in descending order of magnitude. According to the table, teachers' professional commitment to school organization is ranked 1st with a section mean of 2.72; teachers' professional

commitment to teaching profession is ranked 2nd with a section mean of 2.66; while teachers' professional commitment to students' development is ranked 3rd with a section mean of 2.64. This further implies that teachers were found to professionally committed in the three dimensions measured in the study.



Key: PCSO █ Professional Commitment to School Organization
 PCTP █ Professional Commitment to Teaching Profession
 PCSD █ Professional Commitment to Students' Development

Figure 1:Mean Rank Order Distribution of Teachers' Professional Commitment in Public Senior Secondary Schools in South West, Nigeria.

Research Question Two

What is the trend in students' academic performance in SSCE in public senior secondary

Year	No. of Candidates							Decision
		4	3	2	1	\bar{x}	S.D	
2013	58,985	13,874	15,613	12,692	16,806	2.45	1.05	Fairly good performance
2014	59,874	12,708	15,404	15,573	16,189	2.41	1.07	Fairly good performance
2015	58,263	21,946	16,587	11,272	8,458	2.90	.75	Good performance
2016	61,352	20,521	18,645	9,364	12,822	2.76	.88	Good performance
2017	63,467	22,789	21,786	8,436	10,456	2.90	.74	Good performance
2018	65,881	21,697	20,821	12,545	12,818	2.81	.86	Good performance
2019	66,355	24,509	17,943	11,638	12,265	2.82	.84	Good performance
2020	67,909	30,421	17,765	10,727	8,994	3.03	.72	Very good performance
2021	67,742	29,875	18,987	11,814	7,066	3.06	.67	Very good performance
2022	69,936	32,368	17,581	10,903	9,084	3.05	.70	Very good performance
Total	639,762	230,708	181,132	114,964	112,958	2.82	.83	Good performance
	(100.0%)	(36.1%)	(28.3%)	(17.96%)	(17.66%)			
<p>Highest mean score = 3.06 Average mean score = 2.82 Lowest mean score = 2.41</p>								

Table 3 presents the analysis of the trend in students' academic performance in SSCE results in South West, Nigeria from 2013 to 2022. The results of the analysis show that a total of 639,762 sat for the SSCE in the sampled public secondary schools in 2013 to 2022. Out of this number, 230,708 students (36.1%) had 5 credits and above including Mathematics and English Language; 181,132 students (28.3%) had 5 credits with either Mathematics or English Language; 114,964 students (17.96%) had 5 credits with neither Mathematics nor English

schools in South West, Nigeria from 2013 to 2022?

Table 3:Analysis of Trend of Students' Academic Performance in SSCE Results in South West, Nigeria from 2013 to 2022

Language; while 112,958 students (17.66%) had less than 5 credits or no credit.

As observed in the results, the highest mean academic performance of 3.06 was recorded in 2021, while the lowest mean academic performance of 2.41 was recorded in 2014. Cumulatively, from 2013 to 2022, the average mean academic performance for students was 2.82. This implies that there was a good performance in SSCE results in public senior secondary schools in South West, Nigeria, from 2013 to 2022.

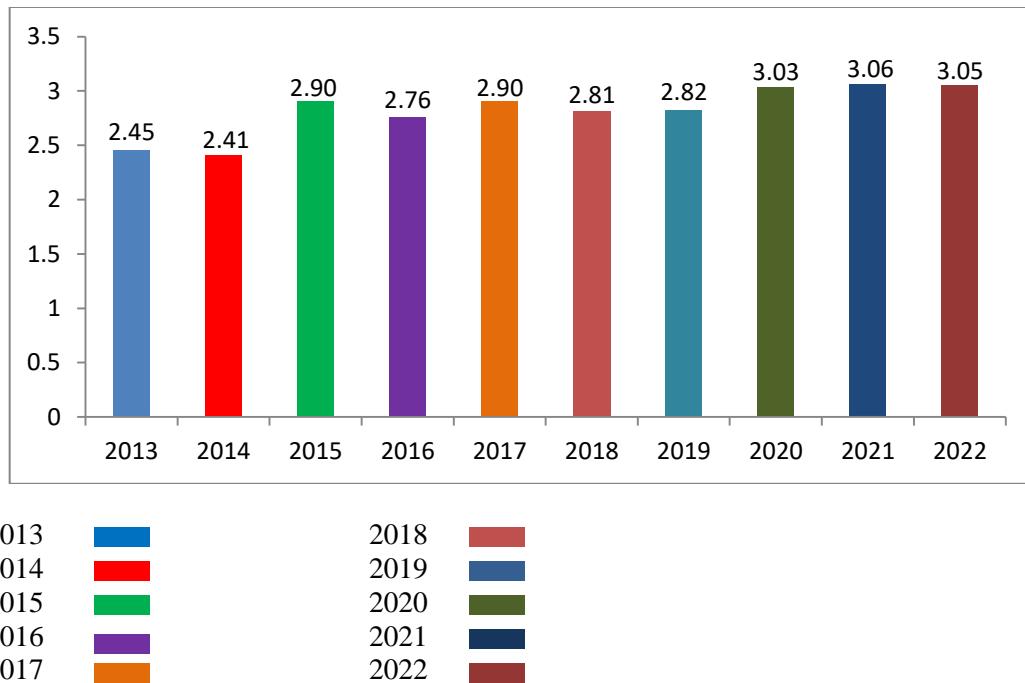


Figure 2:Mean Score Distribution of Trend in Students' Academic Performance in SSCE Results in South West, Nigeria from 2013 to 2022

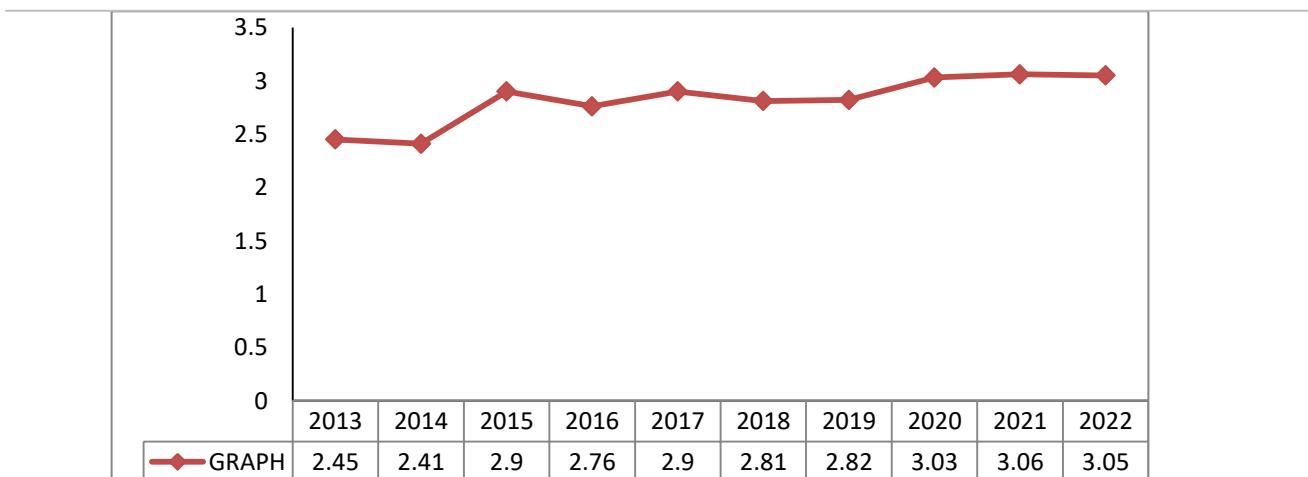


Figure 3:Graphical Representation of Trend in Students' Academic Performance in SSCE Results in South West, Nigeria from 2013 to 2022

Ho1:There is no significant relationship between teachers' professional commitment and

students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in South West, Nigeria

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis of Significant Relationship between Teachers' Professional Commitment and Students'

Academic Performance in Public Senior Secondary Schools in South West, Nigeria

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Rank
	B	SE	0			
(Constant)	3.389	1.577		2.982	.037	
Commitment to school organization	.286	.125	.367	4.259	.000	1st
Commitment to student development	.242	.169	.348	3.631	.009	3rd
Commitment to teaching profession	.275	.141	.355	3.864	.004	2nd
Dependent Variable: Students' Academic Performance						

* p<

0.05 = Significant relationship

Table 3 shows the multiple regression analysis on the relationship between teachers' professional commitment and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in South West, Nigeria. Results indicate that commitment to the school organization is the strongest predictor ($\beta = .367$, $t = 4.259$, $p < 0.05$), followed by commitment to the teaching profession ($\beta = .355$, $t = 3.864$, $p < 0.05$) and to student development ($\beta = .348$, $t = 3.631$, $p < 0.05$). Since all p-values were below 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, confirming a significant relationship. This implies that higher teacher commitment leads to improved student performance.

Discussion of Findings

The study found a high level of teachers' professional commitment in public senior secondary schools in South West, Nigeria, aligning with the findings of Mwesiga and Okendo (2018), Mwamatandala and Muneja (2020), Tindowen et al. (2020), and Elijah and Enaohwo (2021), but contrasting with those of Hussen et al. (2016), Obilor (2019), Oredin and Ebo (2021), and Dahiru et al. (2023). While the supporting studies reported strong teacher dedication to professional responsibilities, school goals, and the teaching profession, the contrasting studies indicated low or moderate commitment in other contexts. The results also showed good SSCE performance in the region between 2013 and 2022, corroborating Aniekop

(2023) and Sule (2016), who similarly observed positive trends and relatively strong academic outcomes in other Nigerian regions. Furthermore, the study revealed a significant positive relationship between teachers' professional commitment and students' academic performance. This agrees with Bibiso et al. (2017), Deji-Afuye and Alonge (2018), Essien et al. (2018), and Kalai et al. (2021), who found that teacher commitment enhances student achievement across different contexts, but contrasts with Ibi et al. (2020), who reported a negative correlation in Gombe State.

Conclusion

The findings of the study established that there is a high level of teachers' professional commitment, and a good performance in students' SSCE results from 2013 to 2022. The study concluded there is a significant relationship between teachers' professional commitment and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in South West, Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made in respect of the findings of the study.

1. The State Post-Secondary Education Boards in Ondo, Osun, and Ogun States should improve the remuneration of teaching staff in public senior secondary schools to enhance their commitment to the teaching profession.

2. Public senior secondary school students in the South West preparing for the SSCE should be encouraged by teachers to ask relevant questions and also participate actively during lessons in order to expand their knowledge base of various instructional content related to their subject offerings with the aim of improving academic performance outcomes.
3. To enhance students' academic performance in the SSCE results, school principals and subject teachers should continuously set high academic expectations for students and monitor their progress during instructional and assessment-based activities.

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