

PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF LECTURER-STUDENTS' RELATIONSHIP ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN ANMABRA STATE

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Abstract

The main purpose of the study was to determine the perceived influence of lecturer-students' relationship on the academic performance of students in public universities Anambra State. Two research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 212 (400 level) students of Educational Management and Policy and Educational Foundations Department in the 2023/2024 academic session in Public universities in Anambra State and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus. The entire population was used without sampling because it was manageable. Two questionnaires were used to collect data for the study. The instruments were validated and their reliability test conducted. Mean, standard deviation and t-test were used to analyze data for the study. The findings of the study revealed that open and consistent communication between lecturer and students influence academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State to a high extent. The finding of the study also revealed that mutual trust and respect between lecturer and students influence academic achievement of students in Public universities in Anambra State to a high extent. Furthermore, the finding of the study revealed that lecturer-students' relationship significantly influences students academic performance in public universities in Anambra State. Based on these findings, the researcher recommended among others that administrators of public universities should prioritize initiatives aimed at fostering open and consistent communication between lecturers and students by implementing regular feedback mechanisms, establishing clear communication protocols and providing training for lecturers on effective communication strategies.

Introduction

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University is the highest level of tertiary education in Nigeria. University is the uppermost level of formal education training that prepares individuals for various fields of academic discipline. Universities are tertiary institutions that offer degree certificates in various academic programmes (Mole, 2017). It is a top-tier educational institution that may award both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. The goals of university education are to contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training; develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society; develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments; acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society. The evidence of the realization of these goals is reflected in the students' academic performance.

Students' academic performance is one part of their overall behaviour. It is the result of the student's interaction as an individual with his surroundings, particularly school, instructors, and classmates. Academic performance is an educational outcome that demonstrates how well a person achieves in relation to certain objectives that were the focus of activities in instructional settings, specifically in school, college, and university. Academic performance in some universities can be viewed as the realization of cognitive objectives that either apply to several subject areas (for example, critical thinking) or encompass the acquisition of information and comprehension in a specific academic discipline (Peter, 2015). As a result, academic performance is seen as a multifaceted construct which includes multiple domains of learning (Osharive, 2015). Academic performance is considered a critical indicator of the effectiveness of the education system and the culmination of the teaching and learning process. Akinleke (2017) suggested that students who exceed societal expectations in academic performance are more likely to contribute to societal growth, improvement, and long-term sustainability. Academic performance is also recognized as a significant factor in both educational advancement and national development (Onaolapo, 2017). However, despite substantial investments in the educational sector, governmental efforts to enhance students' academic performances in Anambra State have not yielded desired results. Some authors have blamed the major cause of poor academic performance among students in universities on lecturer-student relationship. Lecturer-student relationship building is very important to create good academic experiences and more satisfaction (Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos, 2019). The relationship between a lecturer and a student is defined as a formalised interpersonal association between an authority figure and a subordinate who interact on a nearly day to day basis. Varga (2017) stated that the first step to helping a student become more motivated and engaged, and thus academically successful, is building and maintaining positive teacher-student relationships. The lecturer-student relationship refers to the interaction, dynamics, and connections between lecturers (or professors) and students within an academic setting, typically in higher education institutions such as universities. In this regard, Wanders et al (2019) averred that students who perceive their teachers as caring, understanding, and listening are better able and more willing to engage in classroom activities. Sundani and Mamokhere (2021) noted that positive lecturer-student relationships are characterised by mutual acceptance, understanding, warmth, closeness, trust, respect, care and cooperation.

The relationship between lecturers and students is crucial in the learning process, influencing students' development, engagement, and academic objectives within the university environment. Students tend to believe that lecturers have their best interests at heart, which can positively impact their perception of the university. Buah (2017) advocated for regular and productive interaction between lecturers and students fostering collaboration in group projects and nurturing a sense of belonging. Krstić (2015) asserted that both formal and informal interactions between lecturers and students are vital in inspiring students and equipping them with skills to navigate an increasingly complex world. Positive and healthy relationships between lecturers and students often motivate undergraduates to integrate academically, personally, and socially within the university setting. These

relationships play a significant role in shaping students' experiences and outcomes during their academic journey. The lecturer-student relationship is classified based on their roles in various ways that affect how well students perform academically. There seem to be three components to a successful lecturer-student relationship in the academic setting: open and consistent communication, shared trust and respect and fair treatment (Shaibu et al., 2024).

Open and Consistent communication stands out as the primary factor in fostering a connection between the teacher and the student. When a teacher comprehends the challenges faced by their students and adjusts their teaching approach to better engage with them, success becomes achievable (Nonyelum et al., 2022). However, achieving this success requires more than mere observation; it necessitates effective communication. In educational environments, clear and efficient communication emerges as the cornerstone of a positive lecturer-student dynamic (Faremi & Jita, 2018). It enables lecturers to forge strong bonds with their students, thereby enhancing the likelihood of academic success within the classroom (Wanders et al., 2019). Consequently, assisting students in achieving academic proficiency goes beyond merely recognizing their weaknesses; it entails establishing a communication channel with them (Nugent, 2019). This process is intertwined with fostering shared trust and respect, which further enriches the lecturer-student relationship. Therefore, developing a long-lasting relationship between students and teachers requires mutual trust and respect.

Mutual respect and trust serve as the bedrock of any enduring relationship. Merely focusing on academic progress or behavior management in student-lecturer interactions can create barriers for students and hinder genuine relationship development (Nonyelum et al., 2022). Lecturers who demonstrate respect for their students and a willingness to assist them through challenges earn respect themselves, inspiring students to learn and strive to make their lecturers proud (Seth & Buyan, 2023). Establishing an open-learning environment where diverse viewpoints are valued equally, and where there's no fear of judgment from peers or lecturers, is essential for fostering a strong student-lecturer relationship (Shaibu, et al., 2024). It's crucial for students to feel comfortable asking questions, confident that they won't face ridicule, mockery, or criticism, but rather receive patient and respectful responses to their inquiries or comments. However, the extents to which these assertions are true have not been empirically verified to be the case in Anambra State. It is against this background that the researcher investigated the perceived influence of lecturer-students' relationship on the academic performance of students in public universities in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

Field observation by the researcher seems to suggest that undergraduates often find it challenging to approach their lecturers for guidance on difficult academic tasks. The difficulties in forming a positive academic bond between lecturers and students for improving academic performance persist as lecturers strive to avoid emotional entanglements with students who exploit their relationships for personal gain. Particularly troubling is the prevalence of female undergraduates resorting to sexual advances to gain an unfair advantage over their peers, leading to a breakdown in trust between lecturers and students. There have been allegations that some lecturers seem to leverage their academic relationships with female students by promising favorable grades and exam success, thereby fostering a culture of academic complacency among undergraduates who prioritize pleasing their lecturers over genuine learning (Elekwe, 2023). As a result, most undergraduates demonstrate apathy towards their studies and fail to seek guidance from lecturers on challenging academic subjects. This lack of engagement further exacerbates the deterioration of the lecturer-student relationship and undermines efforts to improve academic performance. It is against this background that the researcher investigated the perceived influence of lecturer-students' relationship on the academic performance of students in public universities Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do open and consistent communication between lecturer and students influence academic performance of students in public universities in Anambra State?
2. To what extent do mutual trust and respect between lecturer and students influence academic performance of students in public universities in Anambra State?

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Lecturer-students' relationship does not significantly influence students academic performance in public universities Anambra State.

Methodology

The research design adopted in this study was descriptive survey. It was conducted in Anambra State. The population of the study comprised 212 (400 level) students of Educational Management and Policy and Educational Foundations Department in the 2023/2024 academic session in Public universities in Anambra State and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus. The entire population of the study was used without sampling because it is manageable. The instrument for data collection was two questionnaires. The first questionnaire was titled "Influence of Lecturer-Student Relationship on Students Academic Performance Questionnaire (ILSR SAPQ)". The questionnaire contains 14 items in two clusters, 1 and 2 based on the research questions. Cluster 1 contains eight items on the extent open and consistent communication influence academic performance of students in public universities; Cluster 2 contains six items on the extent mutual trust and respect influence academic performance of education students in public universities. The instrument was structured on a five point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Moderate Extent (ME), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE). The second Instrument was a standardized questionnaire by Birchmeier et al. (2015). The instrument is titled "Academic Performance Scale (APS)." It contains eight items on students' academic performance. The instrument was structured on a five point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D) And Strongly Disagree (SD). The ILSRSAPQ was validated by two experts in the Department of Educational Management and Policy, Nnamdi Azikiwe University and one expert in the Department of Educational Foundations, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus. The ILSRSAPQ was administered on 10 students in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach Alpha reliability method. It yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.84 and 0.82 for cluster 1 and cluster 2 respectively with an overall reliability co-efficient of 0.83 for internal consistency. Out of 212 copies of questionnaire administered, 193 copies were returned in good condition and used for the analysis of data. To answer the research questions, the mean value was used to determine the perceived influence of lecturer-students relationship on students' academic performance. The standard deviation was used to check the homogeneity or disparity in the respondents mean ratings. The decision rule was based on the real limits of numbers on the 5- point rating scale as shown below;

Response	Values	Real Limit of numbers
Very High Extent	4	4.00 – 5.00
High Extent	4	3.50 – 4.00
Moderate Extent	3	2.50 – 3.49
Low Extent	2	1.50 – 2.49
Very Low Extent	1	0.50 – 1.49

For the hypotheses, t-test was used at 0.05 level of significance. Where the p-value was less than the significant alpha level of 0.05, it means that the variable significantly affected respondents mean ratings and the hypothesis was rejected. Conversely, where the p-value was equal to or greater than the significant alpha level of 0.05, it means that the variable did not significantly influence the respondents' mean ratings and hypothesis was accepted.

Results

Research Question 1

To what extent do open and consistent communication between lecturer and students influence academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State?

Table 1:

Respondents Mean Ratings on the Extent Open Consistent Communication between Lecturer and Students Influence Academic Achievement of Students in Public Universities (N=193)

S/N	Item Description	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Regular communication encourages students to actively engage with course material.	3.64	.87	High Extent
2.	Open communication between lecturers and students helps clarify academic expectations	3.89	.82	High Extent
3	Regular communication encourages students to actively seek clarification on concepts they find challenging	3.52	.97	High Extent
4	Open communication creates a supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts	3.80	.83	High Extent
5	Consistent communication allows lecturers to provide timely feedback on students' assignments	3.70	.88	High Extent
6	Open communication fosters a sense of accountability among students as they receive feedback on their progress	3.81	.94	High Extent
7	Clear communication helps to minimize students misinterpretations of course content	3.66	.77	High Extent
8	Creating a culture of open and regular communication prepares students for long-term academic achievement by providing them with necessary communication skills.	3.88	.70	High Extent
Cluster Mean		3.74		High Extent

Data in Table 1 revealed the extent open and consistent communication between lecturer and students influence academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State. Data in Table 1 revealed that open and consistent communication between lecturer and students influence academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State to a high extent with mean ratings ranging between 3.52 and 3.89 as reflected in items 1-8. The standard deviation scores ranging between 0.70 and 0.97 indicate that the respondents' opinions were close. The cluster mean of 3.74 indicates that open and consistent communication

between lecturer and students influence academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State to a high extent.

Research Question 2

To what extent do mutual trust and respect between lecturer and students influence academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State?

Table 2:

Respondents Mean Ratings on the Extent Mutual Trust and Respect between Lecturer and Students Influence Academic Achievement of Students in Public Universities in Anambra State (N=193)

S/N	Item Description	Mean	SD	Remarks
9.	Mutual trust and respect between lecturers and students foster a positive learning environment which leads to increased student engagement in class activities.	3.55	0.81	High Extent
10.	Students who feel appreciated and trusted by their lecturers are more encouraged to actively engage in learning activities and strive for academic achievement.	3.83	0.84	High Extent
11	Students who gains the respect of their lecturers are more likely to feel comfortable asking questions which results to greater confidence in their academic abilities	3.90	0.80	High Extent
12	Mutual trust and respect between lecturers and students create a supportive classroom atmosphere where students feel valued.	3.65	0.77	High Extent
13	Strong relationships built on trust and respect enable lecturers to better understand their students' strengths, weaknesses, and individual learning needs allowing for more personalized instruction.	3.52	0.91	High Extent
14.	Mutual respect discourages disruptive behavior in the classroom, as students are more invested in maintaining a positive learning environment.	3.62	0.85	High Extent
Cluster Mean		3.68		High Extent

Data in Table 2 revealed the extent mutual trust and respect between lecturer and students influence academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State. Data in Table 2 revealed that mutual trust and respect between lecturer and students influence academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State to a high extent with mean ratings ranging between 3.52 and 3.90 as reflected in items 9-14. The standard deviation scores ranging between 0.77 and 0.91 indicate that the respondents' opinions were close. The cluster mean of 3.68 indicates that mutual trust and respect between lecturer and students influence academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State to a high extent.

Hypothesis

Lecturer-students' relationship does not significantly influence students academic performance in public universities in Anambra State.

Table 3: Summary of t-test Analysis on the significant influence of Lecturer-Students Relationship on Students Academic Performance in Public Universities in Anambra State

Variables	Mean	SD	df	α	t-value	P-value	Decision
Lecturer-students' relationship	3.23	0.81	192	0.05	14.61	0.00	Significant
Students Academic Performance	3.89	0.84					

Data in Table 3 showed that the p-value of 0.00 is less than 0.05 alpha level of significance. This means that lecturer-students' relationship significantly influences students academic performance in public universities in Anambra State. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion

The finding of the study revealed that open and consistent communication between lecturer and students influence academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State to a high extent. Furthermore, the finding of the study further showed that the influence of open and consistent communication between lecturer and students on academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State is that it encourages students to actively engage with course material, helps clarify academic expectations, encourages students to actively seek clarification on concepts they find challenging, creates a supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and helps to minimize students misinterpretations of course content among others. This finding is in agreement with Nonyelum et al (2022) who reported that consistent communication between students and their teachers has a high influence on the academic performance. In the same vein, Shaibu, et al. (2024) reported that good interpersonal relationship which is manifested in lecturers' ability to use effective communication in their interaction with students influences students' academic achievement. Furthermore, the finding of the study revealed that lecturer-students' relationship significantly influence students academic performance in public universities in Anambra State. This is in agreement with Nonyelum et al (2022) who revealed that lecturer-students relationship has a significant relationship with students' academic performance. Apeh and Dagwa (2019) revealed that open and consistent communication is a very important component of lecturer-students relationship as it fosters understanding among students with regards to their understanding of course content, learning objectives and lecturers expectations which facilitate positive academic achievement.

The finding of the study revealed that mutual trust and respect between lecturer and students influence academic achievement of students in Public universities in Anambra State to a high extent. The finding of the study further showed that the influence of mutual trust and respect between lecturer and students on academic achievement of students in Public universities in Anambra State are that it foster a positive learning environment which leads to increased student engagement in class activities, encourages students to actively, makes students feel comfortable asking questions which results to greater confidence in their academic abilities, create a supportive classroom atmosphere where students feel valued and enables enable lecturers to better understand their students' strengths, weaknesses, and individual learning needs allowing for more personalized instruction. This finding is in line with

Seth and Buyan (2023) who revealed that mutual trust and respect which is components of lecturer-teacher relationship influences academic achievement of students. Apeh and Dagwa (2019) stated that when lecturer treats students with trust and fairness it ultimately improves students' academic achievement. Similarly, Shaibu, et al. (2024) revealed that there is a significant relationship between lecturers and student relationship on improving student's academic performance. Shaibu, et al. stated that improving lecturers' perception towards creating an enabling classroom environment which is built on mutual trust and respect is imperative for achieving students' academic achievement.

Conclusion

The researcher concludes based on the findings of the study that lecturer-students relationship significantly influences students' academic performance in public universities in Anambra State. The finding of the study revealed that components of lecturer-students relationships such as open and consistent communication between lecturer and students, mutual trust and respect between lecturer and students influence academic achievement of students in public universities in Anambra State. It is therefore imperative that efforts are made by administrators and stakeholders in the public universities to improve the relationship between lecturers and students so as to foster better students' academic performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher proffers the following recommendations:

1. Administrators of public universities should prioritize initiatives aimed at fostering open and consistent communication between lecturers and students by implementing regular feedback mechanisms, establishing clear communication protocols and providing training for lecturers on effective communication strategies.
2. Administrators of public universities should focus on creating opportunities for building mutual trust and respect between lecturers and students. This could involve organizing team-building exercises, fostering collaborative projects, and promoting transparency in decision-making processes.

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