TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NORTH - CENTRAL, NIGERIA.

By

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Abstract

This investigated teachers' professional standard and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North – Central, Nigeria. This study adopted the correlational survey and ex-post facto research designs and the target population comprised teachers, principals from the 586 public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria. The sample size for the study consisted of 370 teachers and 226 principals. Questionnaires and proforma Instrument were adopted for the study. The validation of the research instruments was carried out by researcher through the input of the thesis supervisors and other experts in the Department of Educational Management. Thus, face and content validity were conducted by the validators. The reliability indexes of 0.68 and 0.73 were obtained. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were adopted for data analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SSPS Version 23). Percentage, and mean scores were used to answer the research questions while linear regression analysis was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significant. The study revealed that teachers' professional standard enhances effective students' academic performance. The study also indicated that the teachers' professional standard includes dimensions of teachers' professional knowledge, professional skills and professional conduct. Based on the findings of the study, the school principals should emphasis regular organization of professional development and in-service training programmes for teaching staff in order to enhance teachers' professional knowledge of contemporary trends and practices in the teaching profession.

Keywords: Teachers' Professional Standards, Students' Academic Performance, Public Senior Secondary Schools.

1.0 Introduction

Secondary education in Nigeria has been identified as a critical aspect and component of the educational system. According to FRN (2013) in its National Policy on Education, the broad objectives of secondary education are to prepare students for higher education and useful living in Nigeria. The researcher therefore believed that in this era of technological revolution and contemporary changes in secondary education, actualizing the objectives of secondary education is dependent upon adherence and commitment of teachers to their professional standards.

Teachers' professional skills refers to their capacity: to develop instructional plans, be resourceful, teach and communicate effectively, evaluate learner's performance, provide feedback on students' performance, keep records of students' performance, monitor and evaluate learning programmes, implement education policies concerning health, safety and human rights; manage learning environment, collaborate and work as team members (TRCN, 2010). The professional standards of teachers in terms of their professional knowledge, professional skills and professional conduct are inseparable from the academic performance of students in secondary schools as acknowledged by the TRCN Act on professional standards. However, it has been observed by educational stakeholders that some secondary school teachers in North - Central States have demonstrated nonchalant attitude towards adherence to the professional standards stipulated by the TRCN Act and this may be a direct consequence of the recurring dismal performance of secondary school students in the SSCE result. The quality of students' academic performance remains a top concern for education stakeholders. Thus, educators, and researchers have long been interested in exploring variables contributing effectively to the quality of performance of learners.

The poor performance of secondary school students in public examinations especially the WASSCE has shown that the broad objectives of secondary education which include preparing individuals for higher education and useful living in the society seems to be far from being actualized. This is due to the fact that academic performance of students is a key indicator of the success or failure of secondary education in Nigeria. According to the chief examiner's report, (2023), there has been a consistent decline in academic performance of students generally in Nigeria and the North - Central is not an exception. The recurring decline in students' academic performance has elicited concern from educational stakeholders, educational institutions and examination bodies who seem to have the perception that the poor performance of students may not be unconnected with the adherence and commitment of teachers to their professional standards.

From the researcher's experience and observation as a teacher and the responses of some education stakeholders show that in most public senior secondary schools in North - Central states, some teachers seems not to be able to measure up with their professional standard, this reflects in the lack of capacity of some teachers to exhibit mastery of subject content, prepare good lesson plan, evaluate lesson logically and sequentially based on set behavioural objectives, could not demonstrate administrative and academic leadership skill, could not communicate regularly with

parents and guardians regarding the academic and progress of their children or wards, could not collaborate with colleague to improve quality of instruction.

The continuous decline in secondary school students' academic performance in the North Central states has aroused the interest of the researcher with regards to ascertaining the teacher related variables that seem to predict the academic performance of students. Also, considering the paucity of research works that have established the interdependence of the multivariate on teachers' professional standards in relation to students' academic performance, this study was therefore undertaken to investigate in empirical terms; teachers' professional standards and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria.

1.2   Purpose of Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate Teachers' Professional Standards and Students' Academic Performance in Public Senior Secondary Schools in North - Central, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives are to:

i   ascertains the level of professional knowledge among teaching staff in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria.

ii   find out the level of professional skills among teaching staff in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria.

iii   find out the level of professional conduct among teaching staff in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria.

iv   ascertain the trend in students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North – Central, Nigeria from 2014 to 2023.

1.3   Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in this study:

1. What is the level of professional knowledge among teaching staff in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria?

2. What is the level of professional skills among teaching staff in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria?

3. What is the level of professional conduct among teaching staff in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria?

4. What is the trend of students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools I North - Central, Nigeria from 2014 to 2023?

1.4 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.5 level of significance for this study.

$H0_1$: There is no significant relationship between teachers' professional knowledge and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria.

$H0_2$: There is no significant relationship between teachers' professional skills and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria.

$H0_3$: There is no significant relationship between teachers' professional conduct and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria.

2.0 Method

This study adopted the correlational survey and ex-post facto research designs in view of the study variables. The target population of this study comprised 11,806 teachers, 586 principals from the 586 public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria. The sample size for the study consisted of 370 teachers and 226 principals drawn from the 226 public senior secondary schools in Nasarawa, Kwara and Kogi States. The sample size of the public secondary schools and the teachers was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1917) table for determining samples from a finite population. The multistage sampling technique was adopted as it enables a step by step sampling process and equally incorporates various sampling procedures. Simple random sampling is a method of selecting a representative subset of individuals or items from a larger population whereby every individual or item has an equal chance of being selected and no specific criteria or pattern influence the selection. Three sets of research instruments were structured for the study. These instruments were structured questionnaire and proforma. Instrument 1 consists of questionnaire on teacher's professional knowledge, teacher's professional skill and teacher's professional conduct. The students' academic performance proforma (SAPP) was designed to enable the researcher to collect students' academic records in SSCE from 2014 to 2023 from the 226 public senior secondary schools covering Nasarawa, Kwara, and Kogi State. The validation of the research instruments was carried out by researcher through the input of the thesis supervisors and other experts in the Department of Educational Management. Thus, face and content validity were conducted by the validators to ensure that the items in the research instruments were suitable to measure the variables of the study. The reliability of the research instrument was determined through a pilot test conducted using 24 teachers and 4 principals from 4 public senior secondary schools in FCT, Abuja. The split half method and Pearson product moment correlation (PPMC) were adopted to determine the reliability indexes of the research instruments. Thus, the reliability indexes of 0.68 and 0.73 were obtained. For the SPAC and TPSQ therefore, Spearman Brown Prediction formula, which estimates the reliability of a test or measurement when lengthened or shortened was applied to determine the actual reliability estimate of the research instruments and

this yielded reliability indices of 0.81 and 0.84 for the SPAC and TPSQ respectively. This indicates that the instruments were reliable. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were adopted for data analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SSPS Version 23). Percentage, and mean scores were used to answer the research questions, while linear regression analysis was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

3.0 Data Analysis

Research Question one

What is the level of professional knowledge among teaching staff in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria?

Table 1: **Analysis of the Level of Professional Knowledge among Teaching Staff in Public Senior Secondary Schools in North - Central, Nigeria**
n = 226

S/N	Items: In my school, the teachers	VHL	HL	LL	VLL	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Decision
1	exhibit mastery of instructional content to facilitate effective learning experiences for students.	81	72	39	34	2.88	.72	High Level
2	quickly identify students' learning challenges and proffer solutions.	53	85	36	52	2.62	.87	High Level
3	are able explain difficult subject matter content to students.	75	65	52	34	2.80	.75	High Level
4	demonstrate willingness towards re-teaching some difficult area of content not well understood by students.	68	69	36	54	2.67	.84	High Level
5	are able to guide learners appropriately during the teaching-learning process to actualize instructional objectives.	75	68	35	48	2.75	.80	High Level
	Section Mean					**2.74**	**.80**	**High Level**

Table 1 presents the analysis of the level of professional knowledge among teaching staff in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria. According to the results, the section means of 2.74 is greater than the criterion means of 2.50 and fall within the range of mean values of 2.50

to 3.24. This indicates that teachers in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria exhibit high level of professional knowledge.

Research Question two

What is the level of professional skills among teaching staff in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria?

Table 2: **Analysis of the Level of Professional Skills among Teaching Staff in Public Senior Secondary Schools in North - Central, Nigeria**

n = 226

S/N	Items: In my school, the teachers	VHL	HL	LL	VLL	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Decision
6	manage their classrooms to achieve set instructional objectives.	77	86	31	32	2.92	.70	High Level
7	communicate instructional contents to their students in an effective manner.	79	61	64	22	2.87	.73	High Level
8	develop their lesson plans to achieve instructional objectives.	80	69	39	38	2.85	.74	High Level
9	evaluate learner's performance based on the set behavioural objectives.	65	81	36	44	2.74	.81	High Level
10	provide adequate feedback on students' performance when the need arises.	60	92	44	30	2.81	.75	High Level
	Section Mean/Standard Deviation					**2.84**	**.75**	**High Level**

Table 2 presents the analysis of the level of professional skills among teaching staff in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria. According to the results, the section means of 2.84 is greater than the 2.50 decision rule and falls within the range of mean values of 2.50 to 3.24. This implies that teachers in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria, exhibit high level of professional skill.
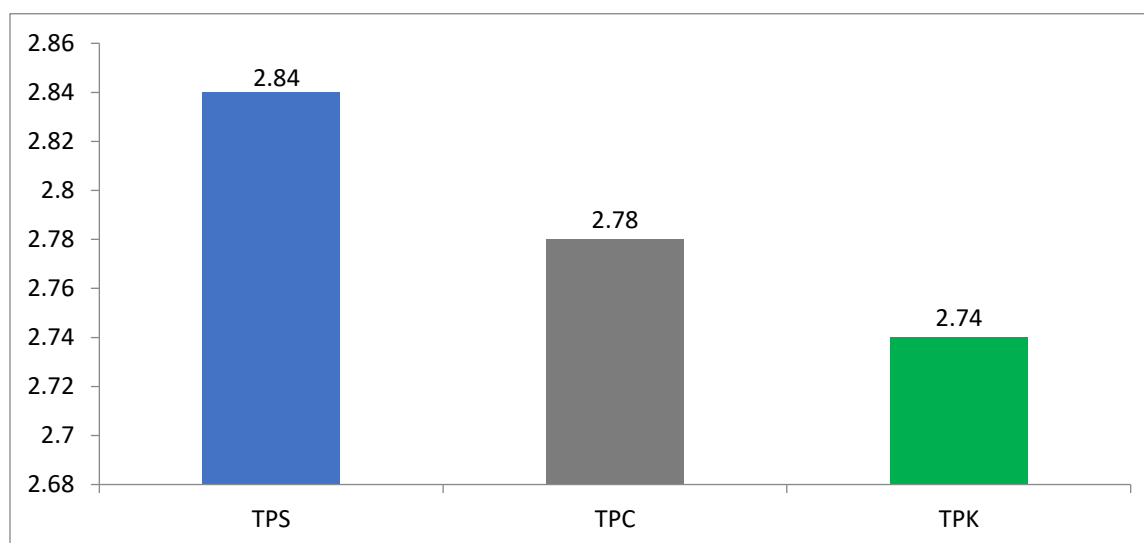
Research Question three

What is the level of professional conduct among teaching staff in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria?

Table 3:   Analysis of the Level of Professional Conduct among Teaching Staff in Public Senior Secondary Schools in North - Central, Nigeria
n = 226

S/N	Items: In my school, the teachers	VHL	HL	LL	VLL	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Decision
11	demonstrate commitment towards building positive relationship with colleagues and students	71	57	33	65	2.60	.92	High Level
12	uphold the reputation of the teaching profession by acting appropriately.	93	61	42	30	2.96	.68	High Level
13	adhere to school regulations to achieve organizational goals.	84	67	35	40	2.86	.72	High Level
14	communicate professionally with parents and guardians.	71	75	31	49	2.74	,81	High Level
15	collaborate with their colleagues to improve the quality of instruction.	69	89	33	43	2.74	.80	High Level
	Section Mean/Standard Deviation					**2.78**	**.79**	**High Level**

Table 3 presents the analysis of the level of professional conduct among teaching staff in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria. According to the results, the section means of 2.78 is greater than the criterion means of 2.50 and falls within the range of mean values of 2.50 to 3.24. This implies that teachers in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria, exhibit high level of professional conduct.

Fig. 1 shows the mean rank order distribution of professional standards in public senior secondary schools in North- Central, Nigeria from 2014 to 2023.

Key: TPS   ▆ (blue)   Professional Skills

       TPC   ▆ (grey)   Professional Conduct

       TPK   ▆ (green)   Professional Knowledge

Figure 1:   **Mean Rank Order Distribution of Professional Standards in Public Senior Secondary Schools in North - Central, Nigeria.**

Research Question four

What is the trend of students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria from 2014 to 2023?

Table 4:   **Analysis of Trend of Students' academic performance in North – Central, Nigeria from 2014 to 2023**

Year	No. of Candidates	4	3	2	1	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Decision
2014	45,774	7,938	6,956	16,986	13,894	2.20	1.14	Poor Performance
2015	48,876	9,235	9,389	13,673	16,579	2.23	1.08	Poor Performance
2016	47,273	11,135	7,689	12,765	15,684	2.30	1.05	Poor Performance
2017	49,352	13,887	6,452	19,775	9,238	2.51	.92	Good Performance
2018	50,987	14,972	19,866	6,341	9,808	2.78	.83	Good Performance

|							
2019	49,429	15,389	18,973	7,025	8,042	2.84	.79	Good Performance
2020	52,837	17,967	16,428	8,139	10,303	2.80	.81	Good Performance
2021	51,724	17,565	19,862	6,362	7,935	2.91	.74	Good Performance
2022	54,651	18,772	20,783	7,409	7,687	2.92	.70	Good Performance
2023	57,839	19,886	25,694	3,221	9,038	2.98	.65	Good Performance
Total	**508,742**	**146,746**	**152,092**	**101,696**	**108,208**	**2.65**	**.87**	**Good performance**
	(100%)	**(29%)**	**(30%)**	**(20%)**	**(21%)**			

Highest mean score = 2.98

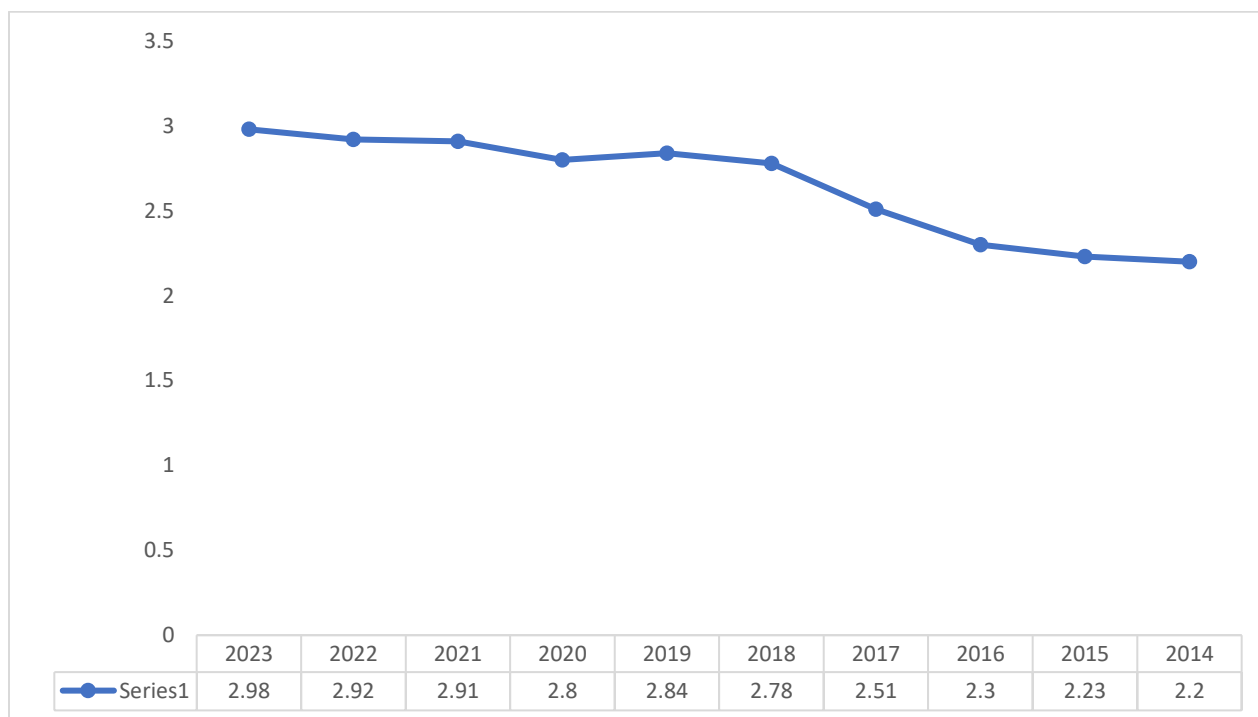Average mean score = 2.65

Lowest mean = 2.20

Table 4 presents the analysis of the trend in students' academic performance in SSCE results in North - Central, Nigeria from 2014 to 2023. According to the results of the analysis, a total of 508, 742 students sat for the SSCE in the sampled public secondary schools from 2014 to 2023. Out of this number, 146,746 students (29%) had 5 credits and above including Mathematics and English Language; 152,092 students (30%) had 5 credits with either Mathematics or English Language; 101,696 students (20%) had 5 credits with neither Mathematics nor English Language; while 108,208 students (21%) had less than 5 credits or no credit.

As observed in the results, the highest mean academic performance of 2.98 was recorded in 2023; while the lowest mean academic performance of 2.20 was recorded in 2014. Cumulatively, from 2014 to 2023, the average mean academic performance for students was 2.65. This indicates that there was a good academic performance of students in the SSCE results in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria from 2014 to 2023.

Fig. 1 shows the rank Order Distribution of Students' Mean Academic Performance Scores in SSCE Results in North - Central from 2014 to 2023
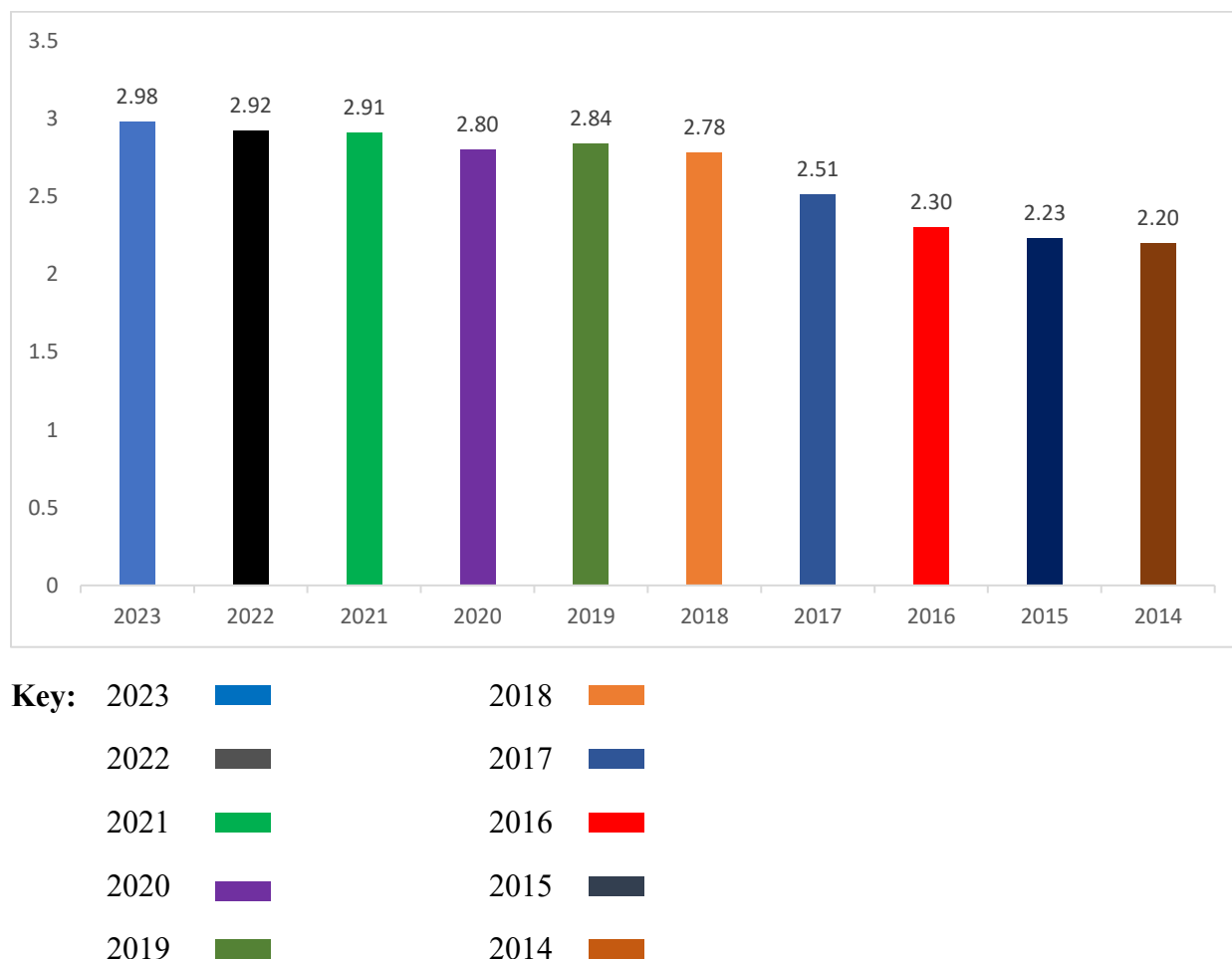
Figure 1: **Rank Order Distribution of Students' Mean Academic Performance Sores in SSCE Results in North - Central from 2014 to 2023**

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Series1	2.98	2.92	2.91	2.8	2.84	2.78	2.51	2.3	2.23	2.2

Figure 2: Graphical Representation of the Students' Mean Academic Performance Scores in SSCE Results in North - Central from 2014 to 2023

3.0 Test of Hypotheses

H0$_1$: There is no significant relationship between teachers' professional knowledge and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria.

Table 5: Linear Regression Analysis of Significant Relationship between Teachers' Professional Knowledge and Students' Academic Performance in Public Senior Secondary Schools in North - Central, Nigeria

R	R square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Extent of Prediction	Sig.	Decision
.609	.371	.368	.001728	37.1%	.016	Rejected

* $p < 0.05$ = Significant relationship

The computed correlation coefficient of .609 in Table 5 shows that there is a high positive relationship between the variables. With the probability value ($p = .016 < 0.05$) less than the alpha

level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship between teachers' professional knowledge and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria. The R^2 value of .371 shows that 37.1% of the variance in students' academic performance is predicted by teachers' professional knowledge.

H0₂: There is no significant relationship between teachers' professional skills and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria.

Table 6: **Linear Regression Analysis of Significant Relationship between Teachers' Professional Skills and Students' Academic Performance in Public Senior Secondary Schools in North - Central, Nigeria**

R	R square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Extent of Prediction	Sig.	Decision
.658	.433	.430	.002641	43.3%	.027	Rejected

* p < 0.05 = Significant relationship.

The correlation coefficient of .658 indicates a strong positive relationship between teachers' professional skills and students' academic performance. Since the probability value (p = .027) is less than the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows that teachers' professional skills significantly affect students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria. The R^2 value of .433 further indicates that teachers' professional skills explain 43.3%** of the variation in students' performance.

H0₃: There is no significant relationship between teachers' professional conduct and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria.

Table 7: **Linear Regression Analysis of Significant Relationship between Teachers' Professional Conduct and Students' Academic Performance in Public Senior Secondary Schools in North - Central, Nigeria**

R	R square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Extent of Prediction	Sig.	Decision
.632	.399	.396	.03875	39.9%	.032	Rejected

* p < 0.05 = Significant relationship

The correlation coefficient of .632 indicates a strong positive relationship between teachers' professional conduct and students' academic performance. Since the probability value (p = .032)

is less than the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that teachers' professional conduct significantly influences students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria. The R^2 value of 399 shows that teachers' professional conduct accounts for 39.9% of the variation in students' performance.

3.3 Summary of Findings

1. Teaching staff in public senior secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria have a high level of professional knowledge.

2. Teachers also demonstrate a high level of professional skills.

3. Teachers maintain a high level of professional conduct.

4. Students show a consistently good trend in SSCE performance across the years.

3.4 Discussion and Findings

The study revealed that teaching staff in public senior secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria possess a high level of professional knowledge. This result aligns with Williams et al. (2018) and Aliyu et al. (2022), who found similarly high levels of professional knowledge among teachers in Kwara State and Borno State, respectively.

Findings also showed that teachers demonstrated a high level of professional skills. This outcome is consistent with the studies of Abiodun et al. (2020) and Aliyu et al. (2022). Abiodun et al. reported that teachers in Ogun State possessed strong professional skills, while Aliyu et al. found similar results in public secondary schools in Maiduguri, Borno State. In addition, the study found that teachers exhibited a high level of professional conduct. This supports earlier findings by Amadi and Amadi (2020), Akinwarere (2021), and Ayeni (2018), who reported that teachers in various parts of Nigeria—such as Port Harcourt, Rivers State, and other secondary schools nationwide—consistently adhered to professional codes of conduct and ethics.

Furthermore, the study showed that students in North-Central Nigeria recorded good performance in SSCE results from 2014 to 2023. This is similar to the findings of Aniekop (2023), who reported good SSCE performance among students in public secondary schools in South-South Nigeria. The study also identified a significant relationship between teachers' professional knowledge and students' academic performance. This finding agrees with the works of Williams et al. (2018) and Aliyu et al. (2022), who both reported that professional knowledge strongly influences students' academic outcomes.

Similarly, there was a significant relationship between teachers' professional skills and students' academic performance. This aligns with Abiodun et al. (2020), who found that teachers' professional skills significantly predicted students' achievement in Mathematics in Ogun State.

The study found a significant relationship between teachers' professional conduct and students' academic performance. This is consistent with Ayeni (2018) and Amadi and Amadi (2020), who reported that adherence to professional ethics and proper conduct positively influenced students' performance in senior secondary schools.

This study has investigated teachers' professional standard and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North – Central, Nigeria. The study revealed that teachers' professional standard aided effective students' academic performance. Thus, teachers' professional standard dimensions of teachers' professional knowledge, professional skills and professional conduct showed positive relationship with students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North – Central, Nigeria. This indicated a good trend in general performance of secondary school students in public senior secondary schools in North – Central, Nigeria, from 2014 to 2023 academic session. In addition, the study revealed a good trend in students' academic performance in SSCE results in public senior secondary schools in North - Central, Nigeria from 2014 to 2023. Therefore, students' academic performance is a function of teachers' professional standards. Hence, the teachers' professional standard enhances students' academic performances in public senior secondary schools in North – Central, Nigeria.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. School principals should emphasis regular organization of professional development and in-service training programmes for teaching staff in order to enhance teachers' professional knowledge of contemporary trends and practices in the teaching profession.

2. School principals should provide adequate professional support to teaching staff through strategic workshops to enable their acquisition of professional skills.

3. School principals and the TRCN should collaborate towards organizing seminars that help broaden teachers' understanding of the ethics, values and conducts associated with the teaching profession in 21st century, Nigeria.

4. School principals should ensure school plant management and adherence of teachers to TRCN regulations to sustain the good trend of students' academic performance in SSCE results in Public senior secondary schools in North – Central, Nigeria, from 2014 – 2023 academic sessions.

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