

# PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS' PROFESSIONALISM ON PUPILS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN MORO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KWARA STATE

<sup>1,3</sup> **KOLAWOLE, Segun**

Department of Early Childhood Care Education, Kwara State College of Education, Oro  
08061642792

[kolawolesegun2016@gmail.com](mailto:kolawolesegun2016@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> **BAMIDELE, Ifelayo Esther**

Department of General Studies in Education, Kwara State College of Education, Oro.  
08102078881

[bamideleifelayo@gmail.com](mailto:bamideleifelayo@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup> **AGBANA, Oluwafemi David**

07030075600

[davidmikefemi@gmail.com](mailto:davidmikefemi@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup> **OGUNDELE, Helen Feyisayo**

Department of Primary Education, Kwara State College of Education, Oro  
07037393348

[Ogundelehelen@gmail.com](mailto:Ogundelehelen@gmail.com)

## Abstract

*Academic achievement at the elementary level forms the foundation for future educational success, and teachers remain a critical determinant of pupils' learning outcomes and academic achievements. In recent years, concerns have emerged regarding the declining academic performance of pupils in primary schools across Moro Local Government, Kwara State. Thus, this study investigated the perceived influence of teachers' professionalism on pupils' academic achievement in Moro LGA, Kwara State. One research question was raised and one null hypothesis was formulated for the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted and the population was all public primary school teachers in Moro Local Government. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 100 primary school teachers as respondents within the study area. The instrument used for data collection was a researcher structured questionnaire. The instrument was validated and reliability of 0.85 was obtained using PPMC. The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypothesis was analyzed with independent sample t-test. The findings revealed that the perceived influence of teachers' professionalism on pupils' academic achievement was positive with weighted mean of 3.20, among others. The study concluded that teachers professionalism plays a pivotal role in enhancing pupils' academic achievements in Moro LGA, and stakeholders must prioritize policies that foster ongoing professional development for teachers. The study recommended that teachers should be encouraged and supported to participate in professional development programs to update their knowledge and enhance their teaching and learning. Teachers' motivation and job satisfactory should be enhanced through digital technology, better remunerations and conducive working environment to promote professionalism.*

**Keywords:** Teachers Professionalism, Pupils, and Academic Achievement

## Introduction

It is common knowledge that education is the cornerstone of national development, and teachers continue to play a significant role in the learning and academic success of their students. Primary education serves as the foundation for the entire educational system in Nigeria. Its success greatly depends on the competence and professionalism of the teachers who facilitate learning. The role of teachers is paramount, serving as the cornerstone of educational and societal development (Karle *et. al.*, 2020). Beyond the transmission of knowledge, teachers play a pivotal role in shaping children's character, values, attitudes, behaviours and academic achievement. In this setting, students' academic performance has emerged as a crucial metric for assessing the efficacy of educational procedures, particularly at the foundational levels of learning (Carr *et. al.*, 2024).

The academic success of its students is fundamental to the success of any educational system. According to Saadu, Sulyman, and Segun (2024), academic achievement is the degree to which a student demonstrates mastery of various academic skills and knowledge. According to Gess-Newsome *et. al.*, (2019), academic achievement can also be defined as a student's performance in the subject they are studying at school. A key indicator of educational quality and efficiency is academic achievement, which is frequently measured by standardised tests, classroom assessments, and overall academic performance. It reflects how well pupils have acquired knowledge, developed intellectual skills, and met curriculum objectives. Given its centrality in evaluating learning outcomes, improving pupils' academic achievement has become a priority for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders globally. As a result, academic success in primary school sets the stage for all subsequent educational success (Saadu *et. al.*, 2024). However, the pursuit of this goal is heavily influenced by the quality of teaching pupils receive, which in turn is deeply rooted in the professionalism of teachers.

Teachers' roles in society and their responsibilities are recognised by the general public. 2021; Vrazhnova *et al.*, The teacher's influence extends beyond the classroom, contributing to forming responsible, informed, and morally grounded members of the society. According to Lesmana (2023), teachers play a crucial role in facilitating the transfer of knowledge and technical skills between generations and in preserving and expanding the nation's perspective. Teachers are the nation's builders and young people's source of knowledge and values. They uphold cultural values and pass these from one generation to another (Karlen *et al.*, 2020). Teachers provide the foundation for language, social, cognitive and emotional development of the young children. They prepare the students for success in school and beyond. Thus, they are widely regarded as the primary stakeholders within the educational system, given that their performance is vital in shaping the academic (Abdallah & Alkaabi, 2023).

As noted by Jimenez and Menendez (2021) teachers are the backbone of the educational process, serving not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as role models, mentors, evaluators, and facilitators of learning. Their professional behavior defined by competencies, ethical standards, pedagogical skills, commitment to duties, and continuous personal development has far-reaching implications for learners' academic success. The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN, 2018) defines professionalism as the consistent application of knowledge, skills, and ethical principles to ensure effective teaching and learning. Teachers' professionalism refers to the conduct, aims, and qualities that characterize a professional educator, including subject matter expertise, pedagogical skills, ethical behavior, and commitment to professional development. It encompasses a broad range of attributes including mastery of subject content, instructional expertise, integrity, effective communication, classroom management, punctuality, and dedication to pupil's progress. A professional teacher is expected to create a supportive learning environment, adopt learner-centered teaching strategies, and evaluate pupils' progress objectively and constructively (Canuto *et. al.*, 2024). These elements of professionalism play a vital role in stimulating students' interest, encouraging their participation, and improving their academic outcomes.

Teacher professionalism is multidimensional. It includes not just qualifications and certifications, but also the disposition, ethical stance, commitment to excellence, responsiveness to pupils' needs, and continuous engagement in reflective practice. A professional teacher is one who not only imparts knowledge but also cultivates learners' critical thinking abilities, provides emotional support, upholds discipline, and models the values expected in society. Professionalism also entails teachers' participation in ongoing training, adherence to the code of ethics, and demonstration of a strong work ethic. These traits, when consistently displayed, can instill a sense of discipline, motivation, and academic focus in learners (Karlen *et. al.*, 2020).

Extant literature has consistently shown that teachers who demonstrate high levels of professionalism tend to create engaging, supportive, and effective learning environments. (Jimenez *et. al.*, 2023). Such teachers are more likely to employ innovative teaching methods, assess learners fairly, provide constructive feedback, and adapt their instructional strategies to accommodate diverse learning needs. In contrast, unprofessional conduct among teachers such as frequent absenteeism, lateness to class, lack of lesson preparedness, favoritism, and low enthusiasm can significantly hinder pupils' learning experiences, reduce pupils' motivation, and ultimately result in poor academic performance. As such pupils may feel unsupported, disengaged, or confused, leading to decreased academic interest and poor performance (Papadakis *et. al.*, 2021). Thus, the professional behavior of teachers is not only central to the delivery of curriculum content but also influences the classroom climate, learner attitudes, and academic performance.

However, in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State, reports of low academic performance among pupils in primary schools across the local government have raised concerns about the quality and the professionalism of teachers in public primary schools. This declining in the academic achievement of the pupils had been a serious concern to all the stakeholders and this was evident in the report of 2023/2024 national common entrance extermination results where only 40% of pupils performed above average while about 60% performed below average. Also, Lukman *et. al.*, (2022) reported the poor academic performance of pupils in the Local Government where about 45% of total number of pupils who sat for the examination scored above 50 marks and about 55% of pupils scored below 50 marks in the 2020/2021 common entrance extermination. Therefore, among the factors cited for this attrition in the academic achievement of pupils was unfavorable school environment and the diminishing in the standard of teachers' professionalism.

Teachers' professionalism has been identified as one of the vital factors in promoting pupils' academic success in Nigeria. Saaduet. *al.*, (2024) reiterated that in many educational systems around the world, particularly in developing nations, the academic achievement of pupils has been a subject of concern, with performance often falling below expected standards. While numerous factors such as family background, school infrastructure, socioeconomic status, and curriculum quality have been identified as contributors, the teacher factor remains the most influential in-school determinant of student success. The professionalism of teachers stands out not only as a mediator of instructional quality but also as a predictor of sustained academic improvement.

Educational theorists such as Lev Vygotsky and Jean Piaget emphasize the importance of guided learning and social interaction in cognitive development. Teachers, through professional conduct, act as the more knowledgeable other (MKO) in Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD), providing scaffolding that helps learners achieve academic tasks they would otherwise be unable to complete independently. Similarly, Albert Bandura's social learning theory stresses the power of modeling, pupils learn not only by being taught but also by observing the behaviors and attitudes of their teachers (Ahmad *et. al.*, 2023). A teacher who models professionalism encourages learners to internalize positive academic behaviors. Furthermore, recent global education policy frameworks such as the UNESCO Teacher Policy Development Guide and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education, underscore the need to improve teacher quality and professionalism as a means of achieving better learning outcomes. Countries investing in teacher capacity building and professionalism often report higher pupil engagement, better academic results, and reduced dropout rates (Vrazhnova *et. al.*, 2021).

Arguably, one of the critical goals of primary education is to ensure learner access quality and relevant education (UNESCO, 2022), there is undeniable need to determine how teachers in primary schools in Moro Local Government are effecting professionalism in the classroom to enhance teaching and learning. This study is intended to explore the parameter of teachers' professionalism on pupils' activities and its possible impacts on the academic achievement of pupils. Hence, This study examines the perceived influence of teachers' professionalism on pupils' academic achievement in Moro Local Government, Kwara State.

### Statement of the Problem

Academic achievement at the primary school level forms the foundation for all future educational success. However, in recent years, concerns have emerged regarding the declining academic performance of pupils in primary schools across Nigeria, including in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State. Despite the implementation of teacher training programs and education reforms at state and national levels, the expected improvement in pupils' academic achievement has not been consistently realized and one of the reasons cited for this decline in pupils' academic achievement is the diminishing standard of teacher professionalism. Parents, educators, and policymakers alike have expressed concerns about whether the teachers engaged in these schools meet the professional expectations required to drive pupils' success. Undeniably, accumulation of these challenges can make pupils to become low achievers, depressed, misbehave and dropout of schools. More so, there is limited empirical data on how teachers' professional behaviors and attitudes directly influence learning outcomes at the study area. Understanding this relationship is essential for informing strategies to improve teacher quality and, consequently, learning outcomes in the local government. Thus, it is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine the perceived influence of teachers' professionalism on the pupils' academic achievement in Moro Local Government.

## Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

- examine the perceived influence of teachers' professionalism on pupils' academic achievement in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State.
- find out the difference in the perceived influence of teachers' professionalism on the pupils' academic achievement based on gender in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State.

## Research Question

One research question was raised to guide the study:

- What is the perceived influence of teachers' professionalism on pupils' academic achievement in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State?

## Research Hypothesis

One null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in the perceived influence of teachers' professionalism on the pupils' academic achievement based on gender.

## Methodology

Research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey research design. The target population for the study was all public primary school teachers in Moro Local Government Areas of Kwara State. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 100 primary school teachers as respondents from a pool of 10,105 teachers, ensuring diverse representation across both urban and rural schools within the study area and 20 schools out of 157 schools participated in the study. The instrument used for data collection for the study was a researcher self structured questionnaire titled, "Perceived Influence of Teachers' Professionalism on Pupils' Academic Achievement Questionnaire (PITPPAAQ)". The instrument was validated by experts in the field of early childhood and primary education. The reliability of the instrument was tested using test-retest method after which Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to correlate the result and the score yielded 0.85. The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation while the null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significant with independence sample t-test.

## Results

**Research question one:** What is the perceived influence of teachers' professionalism on pupils' academic achievement in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State?

**Table 1:** Perceived influence of teachers' professionalism on pupils' academic achievement in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State.

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Teacher's level of professionalism directly affects pupils' learning outcomes	3.62	.544	
2	Teachers' mastery of subject matter influences pupils' academic success.	3.46	.519	
3	Continuous teacher training and development enhance academic performance in pupils.	3.46	.590	
4	Teachers who act professionally serve as positive role models for their pupils.	3.17	.715	
5	Pupils feel more motivated and engaged with a professional teacher.	2.94	.725	



6	A teacher's attitude and commitment can either improve or hinder pupils' performance.	3.41	.603
7	Pupils achieve better results when taught by professional and well-trained teachers.	2.91	.780
8	Lack of teacher professionalism negatively affects pupils' academic development.	3.39	.645
9	Teachers who communicate effectively enhance pupils' understanding of subjects.	2.99	.678
10	Professional teachers manage classroom discipline better, which supports learning.	3.43	.666
11	Pupils benefit academically when their teacher is well-prepared and organized.	3.16	.837
12	Ethical behavior by teachers encourages respect and academic seriousness among pupils.	3.39	.645
13	Pupils thrive academically in classrooms led by respectful and responsible teachers.	2.84	.742
14	Teachers who uphold educational ethics help pupils develop better academic discipline.	3.40	.745
15	Teachers who maintain integrity and honesty boost pupils' academic discipline.	2.62	.768
16	Professional collaboration among teachers positively influences classroom performance.	2.99	.786
17	Teachers' punctuality and regular attendance contribute to pupils' academic stability.	3.44	.652
18	Teachers who maintain confidentiality and fairness boost pupils' academic confidence.	3.41	.603
19	Teachers' self -reflection and improvement efforts promote pupils' academic growth.	3.43	.666
20	Professional development activities keep teachers updated and improve learning outcomes.	3.44	.652
21	Professionalism helps teachers create inclusive learning environments for all pupils.	3.39	.645
<b>Weighted Mean</b>		<b>3.20</b>	

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Decision rule: 0.00-2.49 (negative), 2.50-4.00(positive)

Table 1 shows the perceived influence of teachers professionalism on pupils' academic achievement in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State. The finding shows the teachers' perception of the influence of teacher professionalism on pupils' academic achievement in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State, with a weighted mean score of 3.20 indicating a positive perceived impact. The teachers agreed that teachers' mastery of subject matter; continuous teacher training and development; teacher's attitude and commitment; professional class management; teachers' ethical behavior encourages respect and academic seriousness; teachers who uphold educational ethics; teachers' punctuality and regular attendance; teachers who maintain confidentiality and fairness; teachers' self-reflection and improvement efforts, professional development activities keep teachers updated and improve learning outcomes; professionalism helps teachers create inclusive learning environments for all pupils and also that lack of teacher professionalism negatively affects pupils' academic development/ achievement, all with a mean rating more than 3.20 has a positive influence on the pupil's academic performance. which indicates that the perceived influence of teachers professionalism on pupils academic achievement in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State is high. In the light of this, the Perceived influence of teachers professionalism on pupils' academic achievement in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State is positive.

### Test of Hypothesis:

**Ho1:** There is no significant difference in the perceived influence of teachers professionalism on pupils academic achievement based on gender in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State

**Table 2:** Summary of t-test Analysis on the significant difference in the perceived influence of teachers professionalism on pupils academic achievement based on gender

Perceived Influence	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	df	Sig.	Remark
Female	52	62.6667	5.98888	.265	88	.422	
Male	48	62.3462	6.26501				

Variable: Perceived influence of teachers professionalism

Table 2 shows the significant difference in the perceived influence of teachers professionalism on pupils academic achievement based on gender. The findings shows that there was no significant difference ( $t = .265$ ;  $df = 88$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ), suggesting that both male and female teachers perceive the influence of professionalism on academic achievement similarly. The hypothesis was therefore not rejected in the light of the results since the significant value is more than 0.05. This simply implies that female teachers perception of the influence of teachers professionalism on pupils academic achievement (Mean= 62.67) is not significantly different from that of male teachers perception (Mean= 62.35). This simply implies that there is no significant difference in the perception of both gender on the influence of teachers professionalism on pupils academic achievement in the Local Government.

### Discussion of findings

This study examined the perceived influence of teachers' professionalism on pupils' academic achievement in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State. The finding of the study revealed that the perceived influence of teachers' professionalism on pupils' academic achievement in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State was positive. This is evident in Table 1 as the mean rating of all the items was more than 3.20 and standard deviation respectively. The finding revealed that teachers professionalism on pupils educational matters have a significant influence on their academic achievement. This finding implies that when teachers demonstrate high levels of professionalism such as mastery of subject content, adherence to ethical practices, effective communication, commitment to continuous development, and the ability to employ appropriate teaching methods it significantly enhances pupils' learning outcomes. This aligns with the assertion of Jimenez and Menendez (2021) who emphasized that qualified and professionally trained teachers are critical to students' academic success.

Similarly, Canuto *et al.*, (2024) found that teacher quality, including qualifications, pedagogical skills, and professional behavior, had a direct positive impact on pupils' performance in basic education. The positive perception by respondents underscores the importance of investing in teacher training and professional development, particularly in rural and underserved areas like Moro LGA, to enhance educational outcomes. It further suggests that pupils are more likely to achieve academic success when they are guided by teachers who not only possess the necessary academic qualifications but also model ethical and professional behavior. This finding reinforces the premise of the social learning theory by Bandura (1977), which posits that learners tend to model the behaviors of those they perceive as competent and authoritative traits often attributed to professional teachers. Furthermore, the finding aligns with Nigerian educational policy thrusts, which emphasize the role of qualified and professional teachers in achieving the goals of Universal Basic Education. Hence, education stakeholders must continue to promote policies that enhance teacher professionalism, including enforcing minimum qualification standards, offering regular in-service training, and encouraging professional certification. In addition, Ahmad *et al.* (2023) also found that teachers professionalism has a significant influence on children academic achievement as it enhances not only their academic performance but it also had positive influence on their attitude and behavior to the society at large. This implies that the teachers level of professionalism plays a vital role on the academic success of the primary school pupils and enhance teaching and learning.

The finding of the study also revealed that there is no significant difference in the perceived influence of teachers' professionalism on pupils' academic achievement based on gender in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State. This is evident in table 2 as the t-test analysis shows no significant difference in the perceived influence of teachers professionalism on pupils academic achievement based on gender ( $t = .265$ ;  $df = 88$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ). The table shown that the female teachers (Mean= 62.67) is not significantly different from that of male teachers (Mean= 62.35). The study found that both male and female respondents had a similar perception of the impact of teacher professionalism on pupils' academic performance. The finding suggests that gender does not mediate how pupils or stakeholders perceive the role of teachers' professionalism in academic outcomes. It also implies that professionalism in teaching is universally appreciated and recognized, regardless of the gender of the teacher. This finding is consistent with the study of Lesmana (2023), who found no significant gender differences in attitudes toward teachers' effectiveness and professionalism among primary school pupils. The result also reflect a growing awareness of gender equity in educational settings, especially in Kwara State, where various initiatives have been put in place to promote inclusive and equitable education for all. It suggests that efforts to improve teaching standards are reaching a broad audience and that pupils, regardless of gender, benefit equally from professional teaching practices. This finding also aligns with the principles of the Gender Neutrality Theory in education, which advocates that educational experiences, including the perception of teacher effectiveness, should not be influenced by gender. Thus, teacher training and professional development programs should continue to be structured in ways that enhance universal teaching competencies rather than focusing on gender-specific strategies.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the perceived influence of teachers' professionalism on pupils' academic achievement in Moro Local Government was positive. This implies that, teachers' professionalism plays a critical role in shaping pupils' academic achievement in the local government. The study concluded that, aspects of professionalism such as teachers' qualifications, pedagogical skills, adherence to ethical standards, and continuous professional development significantly affect pupils' academic outcomes. Professional and competent teachers tend to apply effective teaching methods, manage classrooms efficiently, and inspire learners, all of which contribute to improved academic performance. Therefore, Stakeholders in the education sector like government agencies, school administrators, and teacher training institutions must prioritize policies and initiatives that promote professional development and accountability among teachers. When teachers are adequately prepared and motivated, the benefits are reflected in the academic success of their pupils.

## Recommendations

Based on the above conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

1. Teachers should be encouraged and supported to participate in professional development programs to update their knowledge and enhance their teaching and learning. These professional development initiatives should focus on instructional strategies, classroom management, pedagogical content knowledge, ethics and learner-centered methodologies to improve teaching effectiveness and boost pupil achievement.
2. School administrators and education boards should ensure that only qualified, licensed, and well-trained individuals are engaged to teach, particularly at the foundational level of education where early learning is critical.
3. Teacher's motivation and job satisfactory should be enhanced through the provision of digital technology, better remunerations and conducive working environment to promote professionalism and enhance teaching and learning.
4. Teacher's training and professional development programs should continue to be structured in ways that enhance universal teaching competencies rather than focusing on gender-specific strategies.

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