Influence of the Prevailing Work Environment on the Productivity of Public Primary School Teachers in Abia State, Nigeria

Kalu Udodirim Anya

Department of Sociology/Anthropology Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka – Anambra State, Nigeria E-mail: udosamuelanya@gmail.com

** Bonaventure Chigozie Uzoh

Department of Sociology/ Anthropology Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka – Anambra State, Nigeria bc.uzoh@unizik.edu.ng

****Corresponding Author**

Abstract

Teachers are the most important professionals in national development; consequently, their satisfaction at work is paramount to the educational development of any nation. Unfortunately, in Nigeria and in Abia State in Particular, the work environment and working conditions for public primary school teachers are to say the least poor and deplorable. The objective of this study therefore is to examine the influence of the prevailing work environment on the productivity of public primary school teachers in Abia state, Nigeria. Herzberg's two-factor theory formed the theoretical framework for the study. The study adopted cross – sectional survey research design. The study population was 6,219, comprising of all the teachers in public primary schools in Abia State, while the sample size for the study was 609. The multi – stage sampling technique was used to select the respondents for the study. Questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. Data collected was processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software application while frequency tables and simple percentages were used to present, interpret, and analyze the data. The stated hypothesis was tested using the Chi-square (χ^2) inferential statistics. The findings revealed that majority of teachers in public primary schools in Abia State see the teaching profession as frustrating. They do not receive their salaries timely and regularly and facilities in most of the public primary schools are dilapidated and inadequate. The study recommends the need for government to make and implement policies that will improve teachers' welfare and ensure that they are treated equally like other workers in other sectors of the economy.

Keywords: Work Environment, Productivity, Salary, Teachers, Public Primary Schools.

Introduction

Education is a lifelong affair aimed at bringing positive changes to the individual, his family, and the society at large (Obineli, 2013). A sound educational system is the bedrock of human development and progress. This statement taken together with the maxim that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers and that no nation can rise above the level of its teaching staff, serve to prove the key role teachers play in any progressive society (Obara, 2001).

A teacher is a person who helps others to acquire knowledge, competences, or values. Teachers are the backbone of schools and the spinal cord of every educational system. The success of the educational system depends upon them (Ballantine & Spade, 2007). Whenever the teacher becomes broken, education becomes paralyzed or broken too. Through the utilization of various pedagogies, teachers mold and educate both the world's newest members and the older generations.

The above statement supports the fact that the source of failure of any nation's educational system depends on the quality of its teachers. Indeed, teachers can affect how pupils and students perceive a subject or course, dedication to knowledge acquisition or how they will turn out in the future. The progress of a nation reflects the quality of its people modeled by teachers for being the source of inspiration and guidance in their academic life. Primary school teachers have variety of duties beyond just teaching and lesson planning. It is a varied role that can be incredibly rewarding. To be a successful primary school teacher you need a passion to inspire young minds and a commitment to ensuring that every child achieves his or her potentials.

Primary education is invaluable and the foundation for any further engagement at informal or formal levels. It is very important to provide teachers with needed facilities so that they can function well. There may be many factors that can contribute to better performance of teachers, and they may include work environment . Succinctly, teachers' productivity could be described as the duties performed by a teacher at a particular period in the school system in achieving the desired goals. It could also be described as the ability of teachers to combine relevant inputs for the enhancement of teaching and learning processes. Productivity on the part of the teachers is determined by their level of participation in the day to day running of the school, regularity in school, class attendance, students' level of discipline, proper use of instructional materials to facilitate learning process. It is noted that teachers behave differently under different situations. School administrators can therefore encourage effective productivity of their teachers by identifying their needs trying to satisfy or meet them through appropriate, relevant, and adequate motivational strategies (Maicibi, 2005; Orodho, 2013; Ouma, 2007).

There seem to be a declining productivity of teachers in public schools, and this is becoming a major source of worry among stakeholders in education sector. This is so because it is the teachers that implement all policies in the educational system which eventually lead to the achievement of the goals of the school system (Ogbu, 2015). Teachers who are motivated are likely to go the extra mile to improve pupils' performance and ensure that the learning outcomes are achieved. Unfortunately, teachers in Sub- Saharan African (SSA) countries, particularly those teaching in primary schools have been reported to have poor motivation and low job satisfaction (Wolf, Torrente, Mccoy, & Rasheed, 2015).

Part of Nigeria's philosophy of education is to provide equal opportunities for its citizens to achieve basic, secondary, and tertiary education (National Policy on Education, 2013). Nevertheless, the country struggled to meet the United Nations Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3 relating to increasing primary education completion rate and eliminating gender disparity in education access. Comparative studies put Nigeria among the 10 countries with the lowest levels of primary school enrolment in the world (Antoninis, 2014). Effective teachers are important in addressing some of the challenges of education in Nigeria, but this can only partly be achieved through increasing teachers' motivation and job satisfaction.

In view of the foregoing, this study examines the influence of the prevailing work environment on the productivity of public primary school teachers in Abia State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

According to Iwu, Ezeuduji, Iwu, Ikebuaku, and Tengeh (2017) within basic primary education, there have been reports of poor work environment, lack of teaching and learning materials, poor remuneration, poor human resource development and delay in payment of teachers' salaries. These often manifest in a dissatisfied group of teachers. Reports of this nature are common in sub-Saharan Africa (Richardson 2014). The worst hit based on most accounts is Nigeria (Adesulu, Youdeowei, Ekwenuya, Iruoma, & Enwere, 2019). The case of Nigeria is mostly fueled by a number of factors namely a continuously downward economy (Edet, 2014), bad governance (Ogunnubi & Okeke-Uzodike, 2016), a pervasively high scale of dilapidated infrastructure (Iwu & Iwu, 2013), massive disregard for the teaching profession by successive governments who refuse to pay teachers' salaries (Teacher Solidarity 2016; Ololube 2006) and several other factors. These factors often drive Nigerian teachers to seek alternative means of livelihood (Akyeampong & Bennell, 2007) which the researchers believe leads to high rate of teacher absenteeism, inability to adequately prepare lesson materials and consequently ill-prepared classes.

According to Mba (2019), Abia state has taken education as a matter of priority in its yearly budgetary statement. The state has maintained the policy of tuition free education at primary and secondary school levels and has also introduced free lunch program for pupils in public primary schools in the state. This indeed is laudable, however, despite the said government priority measures, there has been public outcry as a result of non-commitment of the government to attending to some of the major problems bedeviling primary school education and primary school teachers in the state. These include fluctuation in cross net pay of staff salaries; teachers not promptly promoted; non-adjustment of teachers' salaries after acquiring additional qualification; acute shortage of teaching personnel, poor remuneration and non-payment of salaries and allowances.

It has been observed that there are always stressful agitations for better working conditions which usually end up in strikes; hence, much harm has been done to the education system. The government in Nigeria and the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) are in constant stand-off over increase in salaries, benefits, and improvements in working condition of teachers. This may be the reason why Public primary school teachers in Abia State frequently embark on industrial action. In 2018, the (NUT) Abia State chapter embarked on industrial action on four different occasions for non-payment of teachers' salaries.

The work environment is also an important issue that can affect the job satisfaction of teachers. Obineli (2013) argued that inspired workplace will result in inspired workers and draws attention to the importance of work performance, the atmosphere, quality and style of buildings and offices. When an employee enjoys the work environment and the various tasks that characterize, they job situation, it is expected that such a worker would have a strong desire to come to work and perform assigned duties diligently. But the contrary is the case with some teachers in public primary schools as a lot of negative work behavior such as lateness, absenteeism, lack of zeal in carrying out assigned tasks, sneaking out of school to run private businesses, trading in the school premises are exhibited by them on a daily basis.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine the influence of the prevailing work environment on the productivity of public primary school teachers in Abia State, Nigeria.

Study Hypothesis

This hypothesis has been formulated to guide the study.

1. There is a significant relationship between the prevailing features of work environment and the level of productivity amongst public primary school teachers in Abia state, Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

In line with the perceptive of Adelabu (2008) job environment can be re-classified under three main categories, namely job context, job content, and reward system.

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Job context

Public schools in Nigeria are a collection of dilapidated buildings, many without toilets and other basic facilities. The schools are staffed by tired and frustrated teachers and attended by poorly fed, disenchanted pupils. This environment does not engender high job morale.

Job content

Teachers, particularly in elementary schools, are seriously overworked. A typical teacher in public school is required to teach between seven to eight periods each day to classes, which frequently have more than forty pupils. Teachers are also expected to assist with other school-based activities that are sometimes highly demanding.

Reward system

The reward system in terms of pay package and promotion does not appear to have job motivation as its goal.

Lack of adequate motivation in a system has negative effects on staff performance. In every organization, activities and programmes are planned and executed for the purpose of accomplishing the goals and objectives of the organization. The issue and problem of how to motivate teachers so that they work hard for the interest of the school and also raise their socio-economic status have occupied the attention of educational administrators. It is believed that hard work and commitment on the part of the teachers will bring about good job performance. Teachers will work hard and show high level of commitment when adequately motivated. Motivation, according to Odor (1995), is the force or condition within the organization that makes workers to willingly work for the progress of the organization. Human beings generally require some sort of internal and external drives, incentives, encouragement and satisfaction of basic needs to get the best from them towards the accomplishment of the group goals and objectives (Odor,1995).

Motivation according to Nwachukwu (1998) is an energizing force that produces and maintains behaviour. A good work environment therefore is that kind of environment where staff is highly motivated to work hard and show commitment in order to achieve good job performance. Salaries and allowances are not as important to most staff as good job environment and job satisfaction. Several teachers leave the teaching profession not because of poor salaries but because of lack of job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is a function of the general aura of the work environment.

This attitude negatively affects staff morale and encourages high attrition rate. The lack of enthusiasm and professional commitment among many primary school teachers that accompanies their poor work environment is more damaging to the system than the lack of professional training of such teachers. As a result of poor work environment, primary school teachers incessantly embark on industrial actions, which has become the only means of getting government to respond to their needs and frustrations. During such periods, pupils stay at home, roam the streets hawking and engaging in criminal activities. Furthermore, because of delays in payment of salaries, many primary school teachers get involved in trading even inside their classroom. When such salaries are eventually paid they continue with their trading because they do not know when the next salaries would be paid. The resultant effect is that primary school teachers hardly teach. They do not prepare their lessons and they do not care whether pupils learn or not. To cover up their lapses, they get all the pupils to pass at the end of the school year. Such pupils cannot read or write nor show any evidence of learning. Many of the pupils fail their national common entrance examinations and are of very low in discipline and morals. Many primary school teachers even send their children to private schools instead of the public schools in which they teach because public school products are poor in quality. Teachers' lack of interest in their job results in low productivity and lack of attainment of the laudable goals of primary education. The productivity of the teachers can be measured in terms of the quality of their pupils. However, because of the lack of motivation, the attrition rate among primary school teachers is very high and their productivity, very low.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical thrust of this study is Herzberg's Two-Factor theory. Herzberg's two-factor theory is based essentially on the satisfaction and dissatisfaction expressed by workers at the workplace. Herzberg argued that there are job-satisfier (motivators) related to the job contents and job-dissatisfiers (hygiene factors) concerned with the job context. Motivators

include achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, and advancement. The hygiene factors on the other hand do not motivate or satisfy but rather prevent dissatisfaction. These factors are contextual such as, company policy, administration, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations and work conditions (Saif, Nawaz, Jan & Khan, 2012). They are essentially critical factors in that their neglect leads to dissatisfaction (Huczynski & Buchanan 2011).

The researchers employed the Herzberg's Two-Factor theory for the present study because it addresses the measures employers or school administrators could take to increase teachers' job environment and ultimately their job performance. The measures include providing those factors that breed a likeable job environment (motivators) and those that prevent dissatisfaction in the job (hygiene). This is very essential in the teaching profession considering the crucial roles teachers play in the lives of children who are leaders of tomorrow. The motivators and hygiene factors when provided to teachers will likely increase teachers' productivity, facilitate learning, and cultivate positive relationships with students which to a large extent improves societal growth.

Methods

The research design used in this study was the cross – sectional survey research design. The study was conducted in Abia State, one of the thirty – six (36) States in Nigeria located in the southeastern part of the country. The choice of Abia State for the study was informed by the observed challenges facing primary education in the state. The study population was six thousand and two hundred and nineteen (6,219) which comprised of all the teachers in public primary schools in Abia State during the 2018 – 2019 academic session. A sample size of six hundred and twenty -five (625) respondents which was obtained statistically using the formula developed by Taro Yamane was used for the study. These respondents were selected using multi- stage sampling technique which entailed successive use of simple random sampling technique, particularly the balloting method. The questionnaire schedule was used to collect data for the study. Data collected from the field was processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) while the data was presented,

interpreted and analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequency tables and simple percentages. The hypothesis formulated for the study was tested using the chi-square inferential statistics.

Data Presentation and Analysis

In this study, 625 copies of questionnaires were administered to the respondents but only 609 (97.0%) copies of the questionnaires were correctly filled and returned while the remaining 16 (2.6%) were not returned. Consequently, the data analysis for this study was carried out based on the 609 correctly filled and returned questionnaires.

Personal Data of Respondents

This section dealt with personal data of the respondents such as; sex, age, marital status, occupation, education qualification and religious affiliation. The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in table 1 below

Characteristics	Variables Frequency		Percentage		
Distribution of	Male	272	44.7		
respondents by sex	Female	337	55.3		
	Total	609	100		
Distribution of	18-27	133	21.8		
respondents by age	28-37	150	24.6		
	38-47	185	30.4		
	48 and above	141	23.1		
	Total	609	100		
Distribution of	SSCE/GCE	5	.8		
respondents' level of	NTI & TTC	165	27.1		
educational attainment	OND/NCE	184	30.2		
	B.SC/HND	203	33.3		
	M.SC/PhD	52	8.5		
	Total	609	100		

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by socio-demographic characteristics

Distribution of	Single	271	44.5	
respondents by marital	Married	309	50.7	
status	Divorced	13	2.1	
Status	Widowed	5	.8	
	Separated	8	1.3	
	No response	0 5	.8	
	No response	5	.0	
Distribution of	Christian	577	94.7	
respondents by	African traditional	28	4.6	
religious affiliation	religion	2	.3	
5	Islam	2	.3	
	No response	609	100	
	Total			
Distribution of	8-15	216	35.5	
respondents by years	15-22	201	33.0	
spent in the profession	23-29	110	18.1	
	30-36	67	11.0	
	37-45	15	2.5	
	Total	609	100	
Distribution of	18,000 - 38,000	342	56.2	
respondents by level of	39,000 - 58,000	112	18,4	
income	59,000 - 78,000	63	10,3	
	79,000 - 98,000	67	11.0	
	99,000 and above	25	4.1	
	Total	609	100	

Source field survey 2019

Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents by sex, 272(44.7%) of the respondents were males while 337(55.3%) were females. This means that there were more females than male participants in the study. With regards to age, majority of the respondents 185(30.4%) were aged between 38-47 years while 141(23.1%) were aged 48 years old and above. The level of education of the respondents as shown in table 1 reveals that 203 (33.3%) have BSc/ HND whereas 165(27.1%) and 184 (30.2%) have NTI/TTC and OND/NCE. Furthermore, the marital status data indicated that 271 (44.5%) of the respondents were single while 309 (50.7%) were married. A few of the respondents (.8%,

1.3% and 8%) were divorced, separated and widowed respectively. The table equally shows that majority of the respondents are Christians 577 (94.7%) while 28 (4.6%) practice African traditional religion. On the years of experience 216 (35.5%) have between 8-15 years of experience while 201 (33.0%) have put in between 15-22 years in the teaching profession. While (18.1%, 11.0%, 2.5%) have spent 22-29, 30-36, and 37-45 respectively. Finally, on annual income, 342 (56.2%) of the respondents earn 18,000-38,000 whereas 112(18.4%) earn between 39,000-56,000 every month.

Analysis of Research Question

Research question: what are the influence of the prevailing features of work environment and treatment meted to teachers in public primary schools in Abia state on their performance?

Table 2: Respondents' views on how well Abia state government provides teachingand learning materials in public primary schools

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Adequately provided	5	.8
Not adequately provided	200	32.8
Not provided	398	65.4
Don't know	6	1.0
Total	609	100

The table above shows respondents' assessment of how well teaching and learning materials are provided in public primary school in Abia state. Majority 398(65.4%) of the teachers affirmed that teaching and learning materials are not provided in public primary schools in Abia state while a substantial number of the teachers 200(32.8%) agreed that teaching and learning materials are provided but not adequately provided by government.

Table 3: Respondents' views on what they think are the consequences of poor remuneration in public primary schools in Abia State

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Lack commitment	190	31.2
Dissatisfaction	199	32.7
Teachers engaging in other	195	32
activities		
High rate of labour turnover	25	4.1
Total	609	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The result presented in table 3 shows that there is a slight difference in respondents' views of what they think is the consequence of poor remuneration. 199(32.7%) of the respondents agreed that poor remuneration breeds dissatisfaction amongst teachers. This is closely followed by 195(32%) of the respondents who were of the view that teachers engaging in other activities is a consequent of poor remuneration while 190(31.2%) of the

respondents affirmed that poor remuneration causes lack of teachers' commitment to work.

Table 4: Respondents' views on physical work environment condition that would influence the productivity of public primary school teachers' in Abia State

Frequency	Percentage
194	31.9
24	3.9
186	30.5
205	33.7
609	100
	194 24 186 205

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 4 presents views of the respondents on the aspects of the physical work environment that influence the productivity of public primary school teachers in Abia State. 205(33.7%) of the respondents affirmed that lack of teaching and learning materials mostly influence the productivity of public primary school teachers while 194(31.9%) agreed that dilapidated classrooms influence the productivity of teachers. Additionally, 186 representing 30.5% of the respondents opined that lack of equipment has a major influence on the productivity of public primary school teachers in Abia state.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Poor remuneration	101	16.6
Salaries not paid as and when due	468	76.8
Inadequate teaching material	2	0.3
Teachers not satisfied with their job	38	6.2
Total	609	100

Table 5: Respondents' views on factors that can influence the productivity of public primary school teachers in Abia state

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 5 shows that majority of the respondents 468(76.8%) identified that salaries not paid as and when due is the major factor that negatively affects the productivity of public primary school teachers while substantial number 101(16.6%) of the respondents were of the view that poor remuneration is a factor that negatively affects the productivity of public primary school teachers' in Abia state.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between the prevailing features of the work environment and treatment meted out to teachers and low productivity amongst public primary school teachers in Abia state. Data from table 2 formed the basis upon which this hypothesis was tested. Table 6: Relationship between treatments meted to teachers and low productivity

amongst public	primary	school	teachers	in Abia state
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Are you in support that delay in payment of salary affects productivity?	Influen salary	Influence of delay in payment of salary				X ²
	Frequent strike action	Teachers absenteeism	Teachers combining their job with other profession	low job satisfaction	TOTAL	
Yes	315	75	204	10	604	X ² (3, N=604)
No	0	0	0	0	0	=366.64
Total	315	80	204	10	604	P=0.05

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Chi-Square value of 366.64 and degree of freedom (df) of 3 and P-value of 0.05 shows that there is a significant relationship between the prevailing features of the work environment and treatment meted to teachers and low productivity amongst public primary school teachers in Abia state. This means that teachers treatment (delay in payment of salary, lack of promotion, lack of training) influence the productivity of public primary school teachers' in Abia state.

Decision Rule: Reject the null hypothesis if the chi-square (χ 2) calculated is greater than chi-square tabulated at 0.05 α -level of significance, otherwise accept the null hypothesis.

Discussion of Findings

It was discovered from the study that most classrooms and buildings in public schools in Abia State are dilapidated. Most of the public primary schools have not seen any form of renovation for many years. Consequent upon this, primary school pupils learn in conditions unfit for learning and teachers find it difficult to teach under such condition. The finding that facilities in most schools are dilapidated and inadequate supports the works of Sanusi (1998), Adelabu (2008) and Kazeem (1999). They all share the opinion that work environment has serious influence on job performance of teachers. A good example of this scenario was found in City and Township primary schools in Aba South Local Government. Apart from the fact that the two schools share the same premises, they are clustered by shops, making them look like a market place. Most of the facilities in the schools have collapsed while hoodlums and homeless persons use the classrooms as a hideout to smoke illicit drugs.

The study also found that poor remuneration negatively influences the productivity of teachers in public primary schools in Abia State. Majority of the respondents agreed that teachers in Abia state are underpaid more especially, when one puts into consideration their contributions to the development of the society. The respondents agreed that teachers deserve more than they are receiving from the government. This finding is in support of the views of (Ingersoll, 2003) who said that it is undeniable that monetary compensation is major rationale for working, no matter what other motivations or passions co-exist with the job. Baraza (2008) further supported Ingersoll's findings that money is the main reason for working in many cases in developing countries, although

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there are many other factors that people take into account when deciding to take or remain in a job.

From the study, it was also discovered that lack of teaching and learning materials is another factor that influences job satisfaction and productivity of teachers in public primary school in Abia state. This finding is in line with that of Abdu-Reheen (2016) who noted that instructional materials are essential and significant tools needed for teaching and learning and that instructional materials have direct contact with sense organs. This direct contact makes for easy assimilation and understanding of things taught in school.

It was found that a significant relationship exists between level of productivity and treatment meted to teachers at p = 0.05 level. This implies that treatment meted to teachers (poor salary, delay in payment of salary, lack of promotion, lack of training) negatively influences the productivity of public primary school teachers in Abia state. This also implies that if teachers in public primary schools in Abia state are treated well (receive their salaries, promotion, training and incentives promptly), their level of job satisfaction will increase and it will have a positive influence on their productivity and pupils' academic performance.

In all, the finding further strengthened Herzberg's Two-Factor theory which is based essentially on the satisfaction and dissatisfaction expressed by workers at the work place. In the context of Herzberg's Two- Factor theory, job- satisfiers (motivators) are related to job contents and they include achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility and advancement while job-dissatisfiers (hygiene factors) are concerned with the job context. In the theoretical framework, the researchers stated that employing Herzberg's Two-Factor

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theory for the present study was necessary because it addressed the measures employers or school administrators could take to increase teachers' job satisfaction and ultimately work productivity. The findings revealed that majority of teachers indicated that their present job was frustrating. The finding further showed that they were not satisfied with their promotion. The study revealed that providing motivators as propounded by Herzberg is essential for teachers' job satisfaction. The researcher also stated in the theoretical framework that providing the motivators and hygiene factors are very essential in teaching profession considering the crucial roles teachers played in the lives of children who are the leaders of tomorrow. The hygiene factors such as salary, conducive working environment are very essential to prevent teachers' job dissatisfaction. According to Huczynski and Buchanan (2011), hygiene factors are critical factors in that their neglect leads to dissatisfaction.

In the final analysis, the central point of Herzberg's Two-Factor theory used as the theoretical framework is important in analyzing teachers' job satisfaction in Abia state. It has also helped in analyzing teachers' opinions on what should be done to improve their job satisfaction. The responses given by teachers (increase teachers' salary, incentives, conducive working environment and promote teachers and pay salary as and when due) gave credence to the measures (motivators and hygiene factors) Herzberg believe can increase job satisfaction and consequently lead to higher productivity.

Conclusion

Majority of public primary school teachers in Abia State are not satisfied with their job. Their salaries are poor and are not paid as and when due and they do not receive any other

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incentives apart from their salary. Their work environment is not conducive and majority of the respondents indicated that they are willing to leave the teaching profession if they get a better job. To this end, the government should quickly rise up to their responsibilities of going beyond salary payment to providing other work incentives and conducive working environment for teachers. More so, they should devise means of addressing problems associated with teachers' job satisfaction as revealed in this study so as to increase teachers' productivity which by extension enhances pupils' academic performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been made;

- Government should make and implement policies that will improve teachers' welfare and ensure that they are treated equally like others workers in other sectors of the economy.
- 2. Government should also try to increase teachers' salary and pay them their salary as and when due.
- Government and other agencies should constantly provide teaching and learning materials in public primary schools.
- The government should embark on massive renovation of public primary schools in the state and make the classrooms conducive for learning.

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