



TEACHERS CHALLENGES IN SENIOR PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BORNO STATE: IMPLICATIONS ON STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated challenges confronting teachers in public senior secondary schools in Borno State and their implications for students' academic performance in Geography and Literature, given the prolonged insurgency disrupting education in Northeastern Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was employed. Using Yamane's (1967) formula, 150 respondents were purposively sampled from 20 schools. Data were gathered primarily through a structured questionnaire and analyzed descriptively and inferentially using SPSS version 25; supplementary interviews and focus group discussions were held to inform the researchers' contextual understanding of the issues but were not formally analyzed or reported as a separate qualitative strand in this paper. Teachers reported insecurity (95.3%), low salaries (93.7%), poor infrastructure (93.4%), overcrowded classrooms (80%), and burnout (75.3%) as major challenges, leading to reduced curriculum coverage and rote learning. WASSCE results (2022–2024) showed persistently low credit pass rates in both subjects. Teacher burnout correlated negatively with performance ($r = -0.61$, $p < 0.001$), insecurity with curriculum coverage ($r = -0.66$, $p < 0.001$), while infrastructure adequacy correlated positively with performance ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$). Teacher-related challenges significantly undermine teaching effectiveness and student outcomes in Borno State. The study recommends improved teacher welfare, upgraded infrastructure, psychosocial support, flexible conflict-sensitive curricula, and stronger government–NGO collaboration.

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INTRODUCTION

Northeastern Nigeria has endured over a decade of armed conflict that has severely disrupted the region's education system. The insurgency has resulted in the destruction of more than 1,400 public secondary schools and the displacement of thousands of educators (Shuaibu et al., 2025; Abdulrahman,



2019), with widespread suspension of classes, teacher absenteeism driven by fear and relocation, and a generally hostile learning environment. Beyond the direct effects of insecurity, teacher attrition has intensified as a result of poor remuneration, with some teachers earning as little as twelve thousand five hundred naira monthly, delayed promotions, and limited opportunities for career advancement (The Nation, 2024; Ogunode, 2021). These conditions have produced professional burnout, declining morale, and, in some cases, outright career abandonment among qualified educators.

Even schools that remain operational are not insulated from the crisis. Many function under overcrowded classrooms, poor ventilation, and an acute shortage of instructional materials, conditions that discourage innovative teaching practices and constrain the delivery of core curriculum content (Olujuwon et al., 2022). For subjects such as Geography and Literature, which depend heavily on fieldwork, discussion-based learning, and access to texts and instructional resources, these constraints are particularly damaging. Teachers in these subject areas are often compelled to abandon practical or interactive methods in favour of rote instruction, a shift that directly undermines the depth of learning and, ultimately, students' performance in examinations such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). While the broad effects of insurgency on education in Northeastern Nigeria have been documented, there remains limited subject-specific evidence on how these challenges translate into measurable academic outcomes for students. This study addresses that gap by focusing on the experiences of teachers and the resulting performance trends in Geography and Literature within Borno State's public senior secondary schools.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Despite ongoing efforts by government and humanitarian actors to restore education services in Borno State, public senior secondary schools continue to record persistently low credit-level pass rates in Geography and Literature in WASSCE. Anecdotal and institutional reports suggest that this underperformance is closely tied to the working conditions of teachers, conditions shaped by insecurity, inadequate compensation, overcrowded classrooms, deteriorating infrastructure, and psychological strain. However, there is a paucity of empirical research that systematically links these specific teacher-related challenges to subject-level academic outcomes in the conflict-affected context of Borno State. Without such evidence, policy responses and intervention programmes risk being poorly targeted, addressing the symptoms of educational decline rather than its underlying causes. It is this gap that the present study seeks to fill.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study sought to answer the following research questions:



1. What are the key challenges faced by teachers in public senior secondary schools in Borno State?
2. How do teacher-related challenges influence instructional strategies and curriculum coverage in public senior secondary schools in Borno State?
3. What is the trend in students' academic performance in Geography and Literature, as reflected in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) credit-level pass rates in selected public senior secondary schools in Borno State from 2022 to 2024?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Identify the key challenges faced by teachers in public senior secondary schools in Borno State.
2. Examine how teacher-related challenges influence instructional strategies and curriculum coverage in public senior secondary schools in Borno State.
3. Determine the trend in students' academic performance in Geography and Literature, as reflected in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) credit-level pass rates in selected public senior secondary schools in Borno State from 2022 to 2024.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

The null hypothesis stated below was formulated and tested in the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between teacher-related challenges and students' academic performance (SSCE credit-level pass rates) in selected public senior secondary schools in Borno State.

METHODOLOGY

Study Setting

The study was conducted in Borno State, located in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria. The state has experienced prolonged insecurity due to insurgency, which has negatively affected the education sector. The study focused on selected public senior secondary schools within Maiduguri Metropolis and other relatively accessible Local Government Areas of the state.

Educational institutions in Maiduguri include primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, such as the University of Maiduguri, Ramat Polytechnic, and hundreds of public and private schools. Many of these facilities were adversely affected during the 2024 flood disaster, leading to school closures, damage to facilities, and interruptions in learning

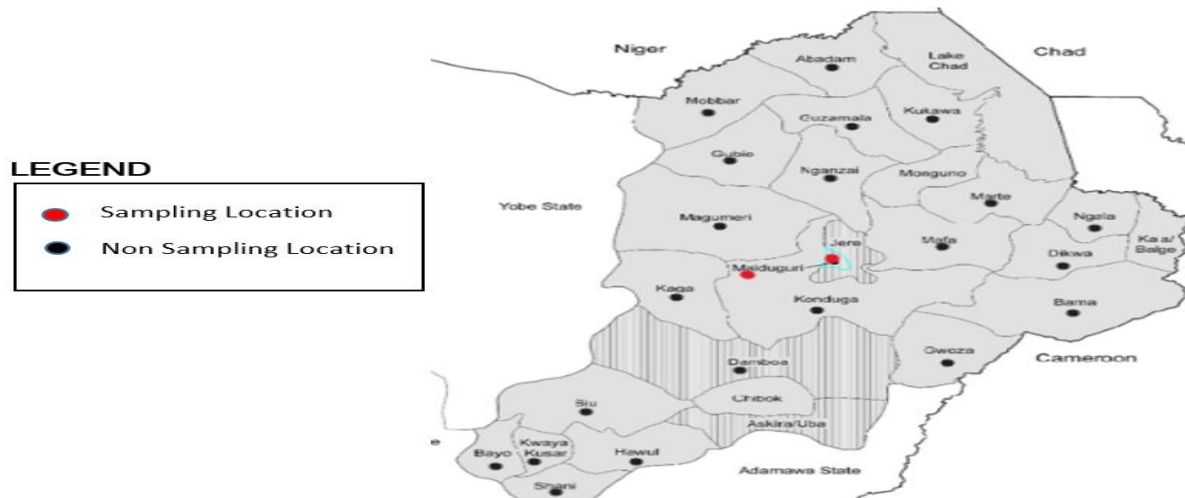


Figure 1: Location Showing the Data collection Areas in Maiduguri Borno State.

Study Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design is appropriate because it enables the researcher to collect data from a large population to describe the current status of teachers' challenges and how these challenges affect students' academic performance without manipulating any variable (Creswell, 2014).

Population

The population of the study comprised all public senior secondary schools in Borno State, including their teachers, students, and school administrators. According to the Borno State Ministry of Education (2024), there are approximately 172 public senior secondary schools, with an estimated 7,000 teachers and 254,572 students across the 27 Local Government Areas of the state.

Sample and Sampling Methods

A total of 150 respondents, comprising 75 students, 60 teachers, and 15 school administrators, were selected from 15 senior public secondary schools across Borno State using purposive and convenience



sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to select the 15 schools based on their location in relatively secure and accessible Local Government Areas and their offering of Geography and Literature at the senior secondary level.

The 75 students and 60 teachers were distributed proportionately across the 15 selected schools based on their student and teacher populations, with schools having larger populations contributing more respondents than those with smaller populations. Convenience sampling was then used to recruit teachers and students who were available and willing to participate during the period of data collection. In addition, one school administrator (the principal or vice-principal) was purposively selected from each of the 15 schools, resulting in 15 administrators. This produced a final sample of 150 respondents, which was considered adequate to achieve the objectives of the study within the security, time, and resource constraints.

Instrument for Data Collection

Three instruments were used for data collection in this study: the Teacher Challenges Assessment Questionnaire (TCAQ), an interview guide, and a school records extraction form. The Teacher Challenges Assessment Questionnaire (TCAQ) was designed by the researcher to obtain quantitative data on teacher-related challenges. The instrument was validated by experts in Educational Administration and Measurement and Evaluation, while a pilot test conducted outside the study area yielded a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.81, indicating that the instrument was reliable for data collection. An interview guide was used to obtain qualitative information from selected teachers and school administrators on the challenges affecting teaching and learning in senior public secondary schools. In addition, a school records extraction form was used to collect students' academic performance data from the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) results in Geography and Literature for the 2022-2024 academic sessions in the selected schools. These instruments provided complementary data for addressing the study's research questions and testing the hypotheses.

Method for Data Analysis

Data collected through interviews, and school records were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Data obtained from school records of the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) in Geography and Literature for the 2022–2024 academic sessions in the selected schools were summarized using frequencies and percentages to determine trends in students' credit-level pass rates. The findings were presented in tables for ease of interpretation.



Data collected through the Teacher Challenges Assessment Questionnaire (TCAQ) were coded, entered, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 27. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was employed to test the study hypotheses by examining the relationship between selected teacher-related challenges (teacher burnout, insecurity, and infrastructure adequacy) and students' academic performance at the 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Table 1: Gender Distribution of All Respondents (n=150)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	98	65.3
Female	52	34.7
Total	150	100

Source: field survey 2025

The results in the Table above shows that 98 which represents (65.3%) of the respondents are male, while 52 which represents (34.7%) of the respondents are female. The data reveals that majority of the overall sample were male, consistent with the proportion of male respondents observed across the teacher, student, and administrator sub-groups reported in Tables 2 to 4.

Table 2: Gender Distribution of Students (n = 75)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	49	65.3
Female	26	34.7
Total	75	100

Source: field survey 2025

The gender distribution of students shows that male students constituted the majority of the respondents, with 49 (65.3%) participants, while female students accounted for 26 (34.7%) of the respondents. This indicates that the study had a higher representation of male students compared to female students, although both genders were adequately represented in the sample.



Table 3: Gender Distribution of Teachers (n = 60)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	39	65.0
Female	21	35.0
Total	60	100

Source: field survey 2025

The distribution of teachers by gender revealed that 39 (65.0%) of the respondents were male, whereas 21 (35.0%) were female. The findings suggest that male teachers formed the larger proportion of the teaching respondents, indicating a gender imbalance in favour of male teachers within the selected senior secondary schools.

Table 4: Gender Distribution of School Administrators (n = 15)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	10	66.7
Female	5	33.3
Total	15	100

Source: field survey 2025

The gender distribution of school administrators indicates that 10 (66.7%) respondents were male, while 5 (33.3%) were female. This shows that male administrators represented the majority of the school management respondents, suggesting a greater participation of male administrators in the sampled schools.

Table 5: Years of Teaching Experience of respondents

Years of Experience	Frequently	Percentage (%)
1-5 Years	24	16
6-10 Years	46	30.7
11-15 Years	50	33.3
16+ Years	30	20
Total	150	100

Source: field survey 2025



The Table above shows that out of respondents 24 which represents (16%) of the teachers have 1 to 5 years teaching experience, 46 which represents (30.7%) have 6 to 10 years teaching experience, so which represents (33.3%) of the respondents have 11 to 15 years teaching experience, 30 which represents (20%) of the respondents have 16 years and above working experience. This shows that majority of the teachers have adequate experience to answer the research questions.

DISCUSSION

The study examined the challenges faced by teachers in public senior secondary schools in Borno State and their implications for students' academic performance in Geography and Literature. The findings indicate that teachers experience several challenges that adversely affect instructional delivery and, ultimately, students' academic achievement.

The findings from Research Question One revealed that insecurity (95.3%), low salary (93.7%), and lack of infrastructure (93.4%) were the most significant challenges reported by teachers, followed by overcrowded classrooms (80.0%) and mental stress and burnout (75.3%). These findings suggest that teachers operate under difficult working conditions that hinder effective teaching. The findings are consistent with those of Shuaibu et al. (2025) and The Nation (2024), who reported that insecurity and poor remuneration continue to undermine teacher effectiveness in North-Eastern Nigeria. Similarly, Ogunode et al. (2021) observed that inadequate school infrastructure negatively affects teachers' motivation and instructional effectiveness.

The findings from Research Question Two showed that these challenges significantly influenced teachers' instructional practices. Most respondents reported avoiding fieldwork (81.3%), increasing the use of rote teaching methods (76.0%), reducing student engagement (72.7%), and omitting advanced curriculum topics (68.7%). These findings imply that the prevailing challenges have limited the use of learner-centred instructional approaches and reduced curriculum coverage. This finding agrees with RSIS International (2025) and Dahiru (2022), who observed that insecurity and inadequate teaching resources constrain effective curriculum implementation, particularly in Geography and Literature.

The results of Research Question Three showed that students' academic performance remained generally low in both Geography and Literature between 2022 and 2024. Geography recorded credit-level pass rates of 38.5%, 41.0%, and 36.2%, while Literature recorded 33.3%, 34.5%, and 30.7% over the same period. Although slight improvements were observed in 2023, the overall performance remained poor and fluctuated across the three years, suggesting persistent challenges affecting teaching and learning in the selected schools.



The hypothesis testing further revealed a significant negative relationship between teacher-related challenges and students' academic performance ($r = -0.61$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that an increase in teacher-related challenges is associated with a decline in students' academic performance. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. This finding corroborates the work of Gasi, Dakur, and Istifanus (2025), who found that insecurity-related disruptions negatively affected the implementation of the senior secondary Geography curriculum and students' achievement in Maiduguri, Borno State. It also supports the findings of Istifanus, Dakur, and Gasi (2025), who reported that insecurity-induced challenges experienced by teachers contributed to declining student achievement. Overall, the findings reinforce the view of Ogunode et al. (2021) that improving teachers' working conditions, particularly in conflict-affected areas, is essential for enhancing instructional effectiveness and students' learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that teacher-related challenges, particularly insecurity, low salaries, and inadequate infrastructure, adversely affect instructional delivery and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Borno State. It further established a significant negative relationship between teacher-related challenges and students' academic performance, highlighting the need to improve teachers' working conditions to enhance learning outcomes.

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