

Teacher Feedback Quality and Students' Academic Achievement in Public Secondary Schools in Imo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study explored how the quality of teacher feedback affects students' academic success in public secondary schools across Imo State, Nigeria. It was structured around five research questions and four null hypotheses, all tested at a significance level of 0.05. A correlational survey research design was employed, focusing on a population of 22,155 SS2 students and 5,576 teachers from 308 public secondary schools in the region. Using a multistage sampling technique, a sample of 1,200 SS2 students and 300 teachers was selected. For data collection, three instruments were utilized: the Teacher Feedback Quality Questionnaire, the Students' Academic Achievement Record Sheet, and the Challenges to Feedback Provision Scale. These tools were validated by experts and demonstrated Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients of 0.84 and 0.79. The data analysis involved mean, standard deviation, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and Independent Samples t-test, all conducted with SPSS Version 27. The results indicated that teachers provided feedback to a high degree in terms of specificity ($M = 3.12$) and clarity ($M = 3.05$), but were less timely ($M = 2.41$). Key challenges to delivering quality feedback included large class sizes ($M = 3.45$), heavy workloads ($M = 3.38$), and insufficient training ($M = 3.21$). A significant moderate positive relationship was found between the timeliness ($r(1198) = 0.42, p < 0.001$), specificity ($r(1198) = 0.56, p < 0.001$), and clarity ($r(1198) = 0.51, p < 0.001$) of feedback and students' academic performance. Additionally, students who received high-quality feedback ($M = 64.82, SD = 11.34$) outperformed those who received low-quality feedback ($M = 57.19, SD = 12.01$), $t(1198) = 6.87, p < 0.001, d = 0.65$. The study concluded that the quality of teacher feedback—specifically its timeliness, specificity, and clarity—plays a significant role in influencing students' academic achievement in English and Mathematics. It was recommended that the Imo State Ministry of Education organize regular in-service training sessions for teachers focused on assessment and feedback literacy, school administrators should reduce class size and workload, and teachers should ensure timely, specific, and clear feedback.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is often seen as a vital force behind national development, and the practices of teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' learning outcomes (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). One of the most important of these practices is feedback, as it offers learners valuable insights into their progress and helps steer them toward their learning objectives (Hattie & Clarke, 2019).

Feedback is essentially the information given to students about how they are performing in relation to their learning goals (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In the context of Nigerian secondary schools, teacher feedback is described as the way teachers share information with students regarding their academic performance, all aimed at fostering improvement. It offers learners a comparison between their performance and their educational objectives to support the achievement of the objectives. Thus, it has the role of contributing to the awareness of one's own learning and the self-assessment of the level of competence (Ilie, 2024).

Teachers, whether they realize it or not, are constantly offering immediate feedback during class. This feedback often comes through facial expressions, gestures, or verbal comments. It is crucial that this feedback is always constructive. Additionally, it is important to pay attention to how students respond to the teacher's feedback, as it truly enhances learning when they take the time to reflect on the lesson and focus on the key takeaways (Ilie, 2024). Olatoye (2011) added that in Nigerian classrooms, feedback is typically delivered through written comments on students' work, verbal remarks during lessons, and discussions after tests.

Brookhart (2021) highlighted three essential aspects of quality feedback: timeliness, specificity, and clarity. Timeliness refers to how quickly feedback is provided after an assessment, specificity pertains to how well the feedback targets specific elements of students' work, and clarity is about how easily students can understand the feedback they receive. In Nigeria, Awofala (2017) found that while many teachers strive to provide clear feedback, the reality of large class sizes often means that feedback isn't as timely as it should be. Ajogbeje (2015) echoed this sentiment, emphasizing that in subjects like Mathematics, it is crucial for students to receive specific feedback so they can pinpoint exactly where they went wrong and identify ways to improve future performance. Hence, Ugochukwu, Adufe, Jesse, and Muhammad (2026) maintained that students who receive regular and meaningful feedback are more likely to identify their strengths and weaknesses, develop confidence, and achieve better academic outcomes than those who receive limited or delayed feedback.

Academic performance is all about how well students can show what they have learned in class, whether through written tests or speaking up in discussions (Ohanyelu, 2020). Typically, it is gauged by the grades or marks given by teachers or examination boards like the West African Examination Council, which rely on specific standards to evaluate students (Adeyemi, 2021; Agi, Emaikwu, & Ahua, 2026). In Nigeria, secondary school academic success is usually assessed through scores from both internal and external exams, such as those conducted by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and the National Examination Council (NECO). The Chief Examiners' Reports from the West African Examinations Council (2022, 2023, 2024) have repeatedly highlighted a troubling trend of mass failures in English Language and Mathematics in public secondary schools, underscoring the need to explore factors like feedback that can impact student achievement.

The National Policy on Education in Nigeria advocates for continuous assessment and remediation as essential strategies for enhancing learning (FRN, 2013). However, the success of this policy largely hinges on how effectively teachers deliver feedback in their classrooms. Recent research indicates that many teachers still resort to vague comments like "good work" or "try harder," rather than providing the diagnostic feedback that addresses specific mistakes (Olatoye, 2011; Awofala, 2017).

Researches from around the world show that high-quality feedback can have a significant impact on academic success, with studies by Hattie and Clarke (2019) and Wisniewski, Zierer, and Hattie (2020) highlighting a moderate to large effect. In Nigeria, Ajogbeje (2015) discovered that students who received detailed written feedback in Mathematics performed notably better on subsequent tests compared to those who only got their scores. Similarly, studies on assessment in Sub-Saharan Africa show that timely feedback improved senior secondary students' performance (UNESCO, 2021).

However, despite this compelling evidence, delivering quality feedback in public secondary schools in Imo State is fraught with challenges. The WAEC Chief Examiners' Reports from 2022, 2023, and 2024 repeatedly highlight issues like poor responses to feedback and the failure to correct mistakes as key reasons for widespread failures in Mathematics and English. Contributing factors include large class sizes, which often range from 60 to 80 students, insufficient teacher training on assessment practices, and overwhelming workloads (Olatoye, 2011; Imo State Secondary Education Management Board, 2025).

While there are studies focusing on feedback in higher education and other Nigerian states, there is a noticeable lack of empirical data regarding how the quality of teacher feedback specifically influences academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo State. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring the impact of teacher feedback quality on students' academic performance in public secondary schools across Imo State, Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The academic performance of students in public secondary schools across Nigeria, especially in Imo State, has become a significant concern for everyone involved in education. Reports from the WAEC Chief Examiners over the years (2022, 2023, 2024) have highlighted a troubling trend of mass failures in essential subjects like Mathematics and English Language. A key issue identified is students' struggle to understand and rectify their mistakes. This ongoing poor performance prompts serious questions about how effective the teaching and assessment methods in schools really are.

Globally, feedback is recognized as one of the most impactful factors influencing learning and achievement (Hattie & Clarke, 2019; Wisniewski, Ziere, & Hattie, 2020). Quality feedback is crucial as it informs learners about their strengths, areas needing improvement, and how to bridge the gap between where they are and where they want to be (Brookhart, 2021). In Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) emphasizes the importance of continuous assessment and remediation, both of which rely heavily on effective feedback from teachers.

Unfortunately, recent studies indicate that the feedback provided by teachers in many Nigerian public secondary schools often falls short. Awofala (2017) discovered that many teachers tend to offer vague and non-specific comments that fail to guide students on how to enhance their performance. Additionally, (Olatoye, 2011) pointed out that heavy workloads and large class sizes hinder teachers from delivering timely and detailed feedback. In the Southeast region, Imo State Secondary Education Management Board (2025) observed that an average public-school teacher manages over 60 students per class, making it quite challenging to provide personalized feedback.

In Imo State, there's a noticeable lack of solid data on how the quality of teacher feedback affects students' academic success. While Ugochukwu, Adefe, Jesse, and Muhammad (2026) looked into feedback practices in Niger State, and Awofala (2017) concentrated on Lagos, there has not been a recent study focusing on Imo State. This leaves a significant gap in research, especially considering the State's ongoing struggle with below-average performance in WAEC (West African Examinations Council, 2024)

With this in mind, this study aims to explore how the quality of teacher feedback influences students' academic achievement in public secondary schools across Imo State, Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The foundation of this study is built on Feedback Intervention Theory, developed by Kluger and DeNisi in 1996. This theory suggests that feedback can significantly impact performance by guiding learners' focus toward the task at hand, their own self-awareness, or the processes involved in the task. When feedback emphasizes the task itself, it tends to boost performance.

In Nigeria, Olatoye (2011) utilized this theory to illustrate that when teachers provide timely and specific feedback, it captures students' attention on the learning task, leading to improved outcomes. Thus, this theory is particularly relevant to our study as it highlights how effective feedback can elevate students' academic success.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on Teacher Feedback and Academic Achievement in Nigeria

Empirical studies conducted across Nigeria and other countries have confirmed that effective feedback contributes significantly to students' academic achievement.

Olatoye (2011) carried out a study on the effect of feedback on students' academic performance in Mathematics in Nigeria. The study adopted a quasi-experimental design with 400 SS2 students in Ogun State. Findings revealed that students who received timely and specific feedback performed significantly better in Mathematics than those who received scores only. The study concluded that prompt feedback enhances students' academic performance.

Ajogbeje (2015) investigated the effect of feedback strategy on students' achievement in Mathematics in public secondary schools in Ondo State. Using a quasi-experimental design with 240 SS2 students, the study found that students taught with specific and corrective feedback had higher mean achievement scores than those taught with general feedback. The difference was statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. The author recommended that mathematics teachers should adopt specific feedback strategies to improve achievement.

Awofala (2017) examined assessment and feedback practices of mathematics teachers and senior secondary students' academic achievement in Lagos State. The study used a descriptive survey design with 600 SS2 students. Results showed a significant positive relationship between quality of teacher feedback and students' academic achievement. The study further revealed that clarity and specificity of feedback were significant predictors of students' achievement in Mathematics.

Fyfe, Borriello, and Merrick (2022) investigated how the timing of feedback interacts with students' prior knowledge to influence learning and motivation. They found that immediate process-focused feedback was particularly effective for students with lower prior knowledge, enhancing both engagement and self-regulatory behaviours. This study underscores that not only the type of feedback but also its timing can significantly influence students' ability to regulate their own learning.

Ignacio, Julhamid1, and Asiri (2024) carried out research on teachers' feedback and English academic achievement of grade 8 and 9 students at Sulu State College Laboratory High School, Philippines. The results showed a strong relationship between students' academic achievement in English in Grades 8 and 9. Students' levels of academic accomplishment and English proficiency were higher when they received timely and constructive feedback from their teachers. Students' academic growth in English was found to be significantly influenced by effective feedback mechanisms, including encouragement, targeted suggestions for improvement, and personalized comments. The study emphasized the significance of high-quality feedback in promoting student learning and academic development, particularly in English language subjects.

Ugochukwu, Adefe, Jesse, and Muhammad (2026) conducted a study on the feedback practices and student academic improvement in secondary schools of Minna Metropolis, Niger State. The findings indicated that timely, specific, and constructive feedback significantly correlates with enhanced student performance, motivation, and self-efficacy.

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Studies on Challenges to Feedback Provision in Nigerian Secondary Schools

While the benefits of feedback are well-documented, there are several challenges associated with its implementation in educational settings (Zahid & AlManiam, 2025).

Awofala (2017) studied assessment practices of mathematics teachers in Nigerian public secondary schools. Findings revealed that major challenges to effective feedback provision include large class size, heavy teaching workload and inadequate training on feedback strategies. The study recommended reduction of class size and organization of in-service training for teachers.

Another challenge is that students may not understand and act upon the feedback they received. Research by Nicol (2020) indicates that students do not always interpret feedback in the way it was intended, which can lead to confusion and a lack of improvement. They went further to suggest that educators should consider using strategies such as feedback dialogues, where students have the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification, as well as incorporating peer feedback to encourage collaborative learning.

Ugochukwu, Adufe, Jesse, and Muhammad (2026) conducted a study on the feedback practices and student academic improvement in secondary schools of Minna Metropolis, Niger State. The findings indicated that challenges such as large class sizes, inadequate teacher training, and resource constraints limit effective implementation of feedback.

Additionally, the WAEC Chief Examiners' Reports from 2022, 2023, and 2024 have consistently pointed out the poor performance of students in English Language and Mathematics. These reports have linked some of the issues to inadequate teacher preparation and ineffective assessment practices, particularly the lack of meaningful feedback provided to students following tests and exams.

The literature reviewed indicates that teacher feedback plays a crucial role in influencing students' academic success in Nigerian secondary schools. However, most of the empirical studies conducted so far have focused on Ogun, Ondo, Lagos and Niger States. There is a noticeable lack of empirical research specifically investigating how the three key aspects of feedback quality-timeliness, specificity, and clarity-affect students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo State. This gap in the existing literature highlights the need for the current study.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between teacher feedback quality and students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo State, Nigeria. The study is specifically aimed to achieve the following:

- i. Determine the extent to which teachers in public secondary schools in Imo State provide quality feedback to students.
- ii. Determine the relationship between the timeliness of teacher feedback and students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo State.
- iii. Examine the relationship between the specificity of teacher feedback and students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo State.
- iv. Investigate the relationship between the clarity of teacher feedback and students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo State.
- v. Identify the challenges teachers face in providing quality feedback in public secondary schools

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. To what extent do teachers in public secondary schools in Imo State provide quality feedback to students?
- ii. What is the relationship between timeliness of teacher feedback and students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo State?
- iii. What is the relationship between specificity of teacher feedback and students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo State?
- iv. What is the relationship between clarity of teacher feedback and students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo State?
- v. What challenges do teachers face in providing quality feedback in public secondary schools in Imo State?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant relationship between timeliness of teacher feedback and students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo State.

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H₀₂: There is no statistically significant relationship between specificity of teacher feedback and students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo State.

H₀₃: There is no statistically significant relationship between clarity of teacher feedback and students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo State.

H₀₄: There is no statistically significant difference in students' academic achievement based on the quality of feedback received from teachers in public secondary schools in Imo State.

METHOD

Research Design: The study adopted a correlational survey research design. This design was considered appropriate because it seeks to examine the relationship between teacher feedback quality and students' academic achievement without manipulating any variable (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The design also allowed for the collection of data from a large number of respondents within a short period.

Area of the Study: The study was carried out in public secondary schools in Imo State, Nigeria. Imo State is one of the five states in the Southeast Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The State has 27 Local Government Areas and 308 public secondary schools according to the Imo State Secondary Education Management Board (2025). The choice of Imo State was informed by the consistent poor performance of students in WAEC as reported in the Chief Examiners' Reports (WAEC, 2022, 2023, 2024) and the dearth of empirical studies on feedback practices in the State.

Population of the Study: The population of the study comprised all SS2 students and all teachers in public secondary schools in Imo State. According to the Imo State Secondary Education Management Board (2025), there are 308 public secondary schools with an estimated population of 22,155 SS2 students and 5,576 teachers in the state.

Sample and Sampling Technique: A sample size of 1,200 SS2 students and 300 teachers was used for the study. This represents approximately 5.42% of students and 5.38% of teachers, which is considered adequate for a survey study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). A multistage sampling technique was used. First, stratified sampling was used to select 3 out of the 6 Education Zones in Imo State: Owerri I, Okigwe I and Orlu II. Second, simple random sampling was used to select 10 public secondary schools from each of the selected zones, making a total of 30 schools. Third, purposive sampling was used to select 40 SS2 students and 10 teachers from each of the 30 selected schools.

Instruments for Data Collection: Three instruments were used for data collection:

- i. **Teacher Feedback Quality Questionnaire - TFQQ:** This was a 12-item questionnaire designed by the researcher. It was divided into 3 sections measuring timeliness, specificity and clarity of feedback on a 4-point Likert scale: Very High Extent = 4, High Extent = 3, Low Extent = 2, Very Low Extent = 1. It was administered to students.
- ii. **Students' Academic Achievement Record Sheet - SAARS:** This was used by the researcher to collect students' first term 2025/2026 continuous assessment (C. A.) and Examination scores in English Language and Mathematics from school records.
- iii. **Challenges to Feedback Provision Scale - CFPS:** This was a 10-item questionnaire administered to teachers to identify challenges to providing quality feedback. It also used a 4-point Likert scale.

Validation of the Instruments: The face and content validity of TFQQ and CFPS were established by three experts: two from Measurement and Evaluation and one from Educational Psychology in Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education Owerri, Nigeria. Their corrections and suggestions were incorporated in the final draft of the instruments.

Reliability of the Instruments: To determine the reliability of TFQQ and CFPS, a pilot test was conducted on 30 SS2 students and 20 teachers in 2 public secondary schools in Imo State, who were not part of the study. Data gathered were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha. The reliability coefficients obtained were 0.84 for TFQQ and 0.79 for CFPS. Since both values were above 0.70, the instruments were considered reliable (Pallant, 2020).

Method of Data Collection: The researcher, with the help of three research assistants, administered the questionnaires to students and teachers in their respective schools during school hours. Permission was obtained from the principals before administration. The SAARS was used to extract students' scores from the school records with the help of class teachers. All copies of the questionnaire were retrieved immediately after completion to ensure a 100% return rate.

Method of Data Analysis: Research Questions 1 was analysed using mean and standard deviation. Research Questions 2, 3 and 4 were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. Research Question 5 was analysed using mean and standard deviation. The null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using Pearson r for H_{01} , H_{02} and H_{03} , while H_{04} was tested using Independent Samples t -test. All analyses were done using SPSS Version 27.

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DATA ANALYSES AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The collated data were analyzed and the results were presented in Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 based on the stated research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question 1: To what extent do teachers in public secondary schools in Imo State provide quality feedback to students? Data from TFQQ was used. A mean of 2.50 was used as the decision benchmark.

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of Teacher Feedback

Dimension	N	Mean	SD	Decision
Timeliness	1200	2.41	0.87	Low Extent
Specificity	1200	3.12	0.79	High Extent
Clarity	1200	3.05	0.81	High Extent
Grand Mean	1200	2.58	0.72	High Extent

Table 1 shows that Teachers provide feedback to a high extent in terms of specificity and clarity, but to a low extent in terms of timeliness.

Research Questions 2 Relationship between feedback dimensions and academic achievement. Pearson r was used. Academic achievement was measured as average score in English and Mathematics.

Table 2. Correlation between Feedback Quality Dimensions and Students' Academic Achievement

Variable	N	R	p-value	Decision
Timeliness & Achievement	1200	0.42	<0.001	Significant
Specificity & Achievement	1200	0.56	<0.001	Significant
Clarity & Achievement	1200	0.51	<0.001	Significant

Table 2 shows that there is a moderate positive and significant relationship between each dimension of feedback quality and students' academic achievement.

Research Question 5: What challenges do teachers face in providing quality feedback?

Table 3. Mean and SD of Challenges to Feedback Provision

Item	N	Mean	SD	Decision
Large class size prevents detailed feedback	300	3.45	0.68	Agreed
Heavy teaching workload limits time for feedback	300	3.38	0.71	Agreed
Lack of training on how to give effective feedback	300	3.21	0.82	Agreed
Grand Mean	300	3.29	0.46	Agreed

Table 3 shows that all the items had mean score greater than 2.5, which is the mean value of the four-point scale. The implication is that the teachers agreed that large class size, workload and lack of training are major challenges.

Test of Hypotheses

All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

Table 4. Summary of Pearson Correlation Analysis on Relationship between Feedback Dimensions and Students' Academic Achievements

Variable	N	R	r ²	p	Decision
Timeliness & Achievement	1200	0.42	0.18	<0.001	Rejected
Specificity & Achievement	1200	0.56	0.31	<0.001	Rejected
Clarity & Achievement	1200	0.51	0.26	<0.001	Rejected

Note. N = 1200. r² = Coefficient of determination. Decision at p < 0.05.

Table 5. Independent Samples t-test of Students' Academic Achievement by Feedback Quality Level

Feedback Group	N	M	SD	T	df	P	Cohen's d	Decision
High Feedback Quality	687	64.82	11.34	6.87	1198	<0.001	0.65	Rejected
Low Feedback Quality	513	57.19	12.01					

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant relationship between timeliness of teacher feedback and students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo State.

As presented in Table 4, the result showed a significant positive relationship between timeliness and academic achievement, $r(1198) = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$, $r^2 = 0.18$. Since $p < 0.05$, H_{01} was rejected. The r^2 value of 0.18 indicates that 18% of the variance in students' academic achievement can be explained by timeliness of feedback. This represents a moderate relationship.

H₀₂: There is no statistically significant relationship between specificity of teacher feedback and students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo State.

Table 4 shows a significant positive relationship between specificity and academic achievement, $r(1198) = 0.56$, $p < 0.001$, $r^2 = 0.31$. Since $p < 0.05$, H_{02} was rejected. The r^2 value of 0.31 indicates that 31% of the variance in students' academic achievement can be explained by specificity of feedback. This represents a strong relationship.

H₀₃: There is no statistically significant relationship between clarity of teacher feedback and students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo State.

The result in Table 4 revealed a significant positive relationship between clarity and academic achievement, $r(1198) = 0.51$, $p < 0.001$, $r^2 = 0.26$. Since $p < 0.05$, H_{03} was rejected. The r^2 value of 0.26 indicates that 26% of the variance in students' academic achievement can be explained by clarity of feedback. This represents a moderate relationship.

H₀₄: There is no statistically significant difference in students' academic achievement based on the quality of feedback received from teachers in public secondary schools in Imo State.

As shown in Table 5, students who received high-quality feedback had a mean achievement score of 64.82 with a standard deviation of 11.34, while students who received low-quality feedback had a mean achievement score of 57.19 with a standard deviation of 12.01. The result of the independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference, $t(1198) = 6.87$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = 0.65$. Since $p < 0.05$, H_{04} was rejected. The Cohen's d value of 0.65 indicates a medium effect size. This implies that the difference in academic achievement between the two groups is not only statistically significant but also practically meaningful. Therefore, students who received high-quality feedback performed significantly better academically than those who received low-quality feedback.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study explored how the quality of teacher feedback impacts students' academic success in public secondary schools in Imo State, Nigeria. The results are examined in relation to the research questions and hypotheses. One key finding is that teachers tend to provide timely feedback only to a limited extent ($M = 2.41$), suggesting that feedback is often delayed in these schools. This is concerning because such delays can diminish the effectiveness of the feedback. This aligns with Olatoye (2011) who found that delayed feedback negatively affected students' performance in Mathematics in Nigeria. It also supports Awofala (2017) who reported that heavy workload and large class size prevent teachers from returning scripts on time. According to Feedback Intervention Theory (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996), feedback is most beneficial when delivered right away, while students still have the task fresh in their minds.

On a more positive note, the study found that teachers provided specific feedback to a high extent ($M = 3.12$), indicating that they effectively identify precise errors and offer suggestions for improvement. This is a promising finding and aligns with Ajogbeje (2015) who found that specific feedback strategy led to higher achievement in Mathematics in Ondo State. Specific feedback is crucial as it helps students understand exactly what they need to correct.

The finding that teachers often provide clear feedback ($M = 3.05$) suggests that they communicate in a way that is easy to understand. This backs up the claims of Awofala (2017) that clarity of feedback was a significant predictor of students' academic achievement in Lagos State. When students grasp the feedback, they are much more likely to put it to good use.

The main challenges that came to light were large class sizes ($M = 3.45$), heavy workloads ($M = 3.38$), and a lack of training ($M = 3.21$). This aligns with the observations of Awofala (2017) who also identified these as major barriers to effective feedback in Nigerian public schools. These findings of the current study also agreed with the findings Ugochukwu, Adafe, Jesse, and Muhammad (2026) which indicated that challenges such as large class sizes, inadequate teacher training, and resource constraints limit effective implementation of feedback in Niger State. Additionally, the WAEC Chief Examiners' Reports (2022, 2023, 2024) connected poor student performance to inadequate assessment practices stemming from these challenges.

Looking at the hypotheses, the first finding showed a significant moderate positive relationship between the timeliness of teacher feedback and students' academic achievement, $r(1198) = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$. This means that the faster teachers return graded work and provide feedback, the better students tend to perform academically. This finding is in line with studies on assessment in Sub-Saharan Africa that timely feedback improved senior secondary students' performance (UNESCO, 2021). It also supports Fyfe, Borriello, and Merrick (2022) who emphasized that immediate process-focused feedback was particularly effective for students with lower prior knowledge, enhancing both engagement and self-regulatory behaviours. This can be explained by Feedback Intervention Theory (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996), which suggests that immediate feedback keeps learners focused on the task while the information is still fresh in their minds. Delayed feedback, on the other hand, diminishes its effectiveness since students may have already moved on to other subjects. However, the study found a low level of timeliness ($M = 2.41$), which did not go down well with the submissions of Ugochukwu, Adufe, Jesse, and Muhammad (2026) who were of the opinion that timely feedback significantly correlates with enhanced student performance, motivation, and self-efficacy.

The second finding revealed a strong and positive connection between the specificity of teacher feedback and students' academic success, $r(1198) = 0.56$, $p < 0.001$. This suggests that when feedback highlights specific mistakes and offers suggestions for improvement, students tend to achieve more. This aligns with the work of Ajogbeje (2015) which found that students taught with specific and corrective feedback had higher mean achievement scores than those taught with general feedback in Ondo State. Specific feedback enables students to pinpoint their misunderstandings and take steps to correct them. The high level of specificity ($M = 3.12$) observed in this study indicates that many teachers in Imo State are already providing detailed comments, which is quite encouraging.

The third finding showed a moderate yet significant positive relationship between the clarity of teacher feedback and students' academic performance, $r(1198) = .51$, $p < .001$. This means that when feedback is expressed in clear, straightforward language, students are better equipped to use it for improvement. This backs up the submissions of Awofala (2017) which reported that clarity of feedback was a significant predictor of students' mathematics academic achievement in Lagos State. If students cannot grasp their teachers' comments, the feedback loses its value, no matter how timely or specific it may be. The high level of clarity ($M = 3.05$) found in this study suggests that teachers in Imo State are making a concerted effort to communicate feedback in ways that students can easily understand.

The fourth finding revealed a notable difference in academic performance between students who received high-quality feedback ($M = 64.82$, $SD = 11.34$) and those who got low-quality feedback ($M = 57.19$, $SD = 12.01$), with $t(1198) = 6.87$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.65$. An effect size of 0.65 suggests a medium practical impact, highlighting that the quality of feedback truly matters when it comes to student performance. This aligns with the work of Ignacio, Julhamid1, and Asiri (2024) which emphasized the significance of high-quality feedback in promoting student learning and academic development, particularly in English language subjects. Additionally, it echoes the WAEC Chief Examiners' Reports (2022, 2023, 2024), which pointed out that poor performance is often tied to insufficient feedback practices.

The findings of this study confirm that teacher feedback quality in terms of timeliness, specificity and clarity significantly influences students' academic achievement in English and Mathematics in public secondary schools in Imo State. This is in line with Ugochukwu, Adufe, Jesse, and Muhammad (2026) who maintained that students who receive regular and meaningful feedback are more likely to identify their strengths and weaknesses, develop confidence, and achieve better academic outcomes than those who receive limited or delayed feedback.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the quality of feedback from teachers plays a crucial role in shaping students' academic success in public secondary schools in Imo State, Nigeria. It showed that while teachers often give specific and clear feedback, they tend to fall short when it comes to providing it in a timely manner. The research highlighted that timely, specific, and clear feedback is positively linked to students' achievement in subjects like English and Mathematics. Additionally, students who receive high-quality feedback tend to excel academically compared to those who get lower-quality feedback. However, several challenges hinder the delivery of quality feedback, including large class sizes, heavy workloads, and a lack of training for teachers on effective feedback strategies. Therefore, focusing on improving the timeliness and overall quality of teacher feedback is essential for boosting students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- i. To the Imo State Ministry of Education: It would be beneficial to organize regular in-service training sessions for teachers focused on assessment and feedback literacy, as highlighted by Brookhart (2021).

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- ii. To School Administrators: Consider reducing class sizes to a more manageable level and lightening the teacher workload, which will create space for more thorough feedback.
- iii. To Teachers: Make it a priority to return scripts promptly and ensure that the feedback provided is specific and actionable, rather than just general remarks.
- iv. To the Government: Increasing the number of teaching staff in public secondary schools would help tackle the issue of overcrowded classrooms.

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