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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGES FACED BY NEWLY EMPLOYED TEACHERS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study conducted a comparative analysis of the challenges faced by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted to guide the study. The research was directed by three research questions and two corresponding hypotheses. The population comprised all newly employed teachers in public primary schools across Bayelsa State, from which a representative sample of 263 teachers was drawn. Data were collected using a self-structured questionnaire, validated by experts in educational measurement and evaluation, with reliability confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha yielding a coefficient of 0.86. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while hypotheses were tested using independent sample t-tests at a 0.05 level of significance with SPSS version 26. Findings revealed that newly employed teachers generally encountered professional challenges such as difficulty in classroom management, instructional planning, student engagement, use of teaching aids, and adaptation to school

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Professional Challenges, Newly Employed, Teachers, Public Primary Schools, Bayelsa State

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policies and culture. Additionally, male and female teachers differed significantly in the professional challenges experienced, with males reporting higher challenges, while teachers in urban and rural schools also showed significant differences, with urban teachers facing more challenges. The study concluded that newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State face multifaceted professional challenges that affect their performance and adaptation. It was recommended that school authorities provide structured mentoring, continuous professional development, peer collaboration, and supportive induction programs to enhance teachers' competence, confidence, and retention in the profession.

Introduction

The quality of education in any nation is significantly shaped by the competence, preparedness, and professional stability of its teaching workforce. Newly employed teachers, particularly those assigned to public primary schools, play a crucial role in laying the foundational academic and socio-emotional skills that children require for future learning (Ogunyemi, 2020). However, the early years of teaching often present formidable challenges that can hinder teachers' professional growth, classroom efficiency, and overall job satisfaction. According to Ingersoll and Strong (2018), the induction phase of teaching is globally recognized as one of the most difficult periods in a teacher's career, marked by high expectations, heavy workload, and limited adaptation time. These challenges, if not adequately addressed, can negatively affect teachers' performance and contribute to early career attrition.

Public primary schools in Nigeria, including those in Bayelsa State, present unique and complex environments that often intensify the difficulties faced by newly recruited teachers. Several scholars have noted that issues such as inadequate instructional materials, poor infrastructural facilities, and irregular professional support are prevalent in basic education settings across the country (Adewuyi, 2019; Eze, 2021). These structural and administrative limitations create conditions where new teachers struggle to effectively deliver

curriculum content, maintain classroom discipline, and meet diverse learners' needs. As Oladipo (2020) observed, newly employed teachers frequently confront gaps between theoretical training and practical realities, making the transition into the school system particularly challenging.

Professional challenges are central to the experiences of new teachers, encompassing issues such as curriculum mastery, instructional planning, assessment techniques, and adaptation to school culture. According to Umezinwa (2018), many newly employed teachers lack adequate mentorship and continuous professional development opportunities that would help them refine their instructional skills. Furthermore, Adegoke (2022) reported that the absence of structured orientation programs contributes to teachers' uncertainty regarding school policies, classroom routines, and administrative expectations. These professional shortcomings weaken teachers' confidence and impede their early career effectiveness.

Gender is another critical factor that shapes the challenges faced by newly employed teachers. Existing literature indicates that male and female teachers may encounter different levels of workload stress, safety concerns, community expectations, and professional support (Ikwumelu & Nwankwo, 2020). For instance, female teachers assigned to rural or riverine areas often contend with issues related to mobility, personal security, and cultural norms that affect their teaching experiences. In contrast, male teachers may be burdened with additional responsibilities such as discipline enforcement or handling physically demanding school tasks (Achor & Akaro, 2021). Understanding these gender-based differences is essential for designing equitable support structures for new teachers.

School location whether urban, rural, or riverine also plays a significant role in determining the extent and nature of the challenges experienced by newly employed teachers. Studies by Briggs and Oruwari (2022) show that teachers posted to rural and hard-to-reach riverine schools in Bayelsa State often face logistical barriers, poor road and water transport systems, inadequate housing, and limited access to teaching resources. These conditions hinder effective teaching and reduce teachers' motivation. Conversely, urban schools may expose new teachers to overcrowded classrooms, high administrative

demands, and increased community scrutiny (Ndille, 2021). Such location-based disparities reinforce the need for a comparative understanding of teachers' experiences across different school environments.

In Bayelsa State, where the primary education system is challenged by socio-economic constraints, environmental difficulties, and inconsistent resource allocation, newly employed teachers require adequate support to thrive. Yet, the extent and nature of the challenges they face remain insufficiently documented. According to Amadike (2023), the lack of empirical evidence on the specific difficulties encountered by beginning teachers limits the ability of policymakers and stakeholders to design targeted interventions that promote teacher retention, job satisfaction, and instructional effectiveness.

It is against this background that the present study seeks to provide a comparative analysis of the challenges faced by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State. The study focuses on identifying major professional challenges, examining gender-based differences in these challenges, and assessing how school location influences the experiences of new teachers. The findings are expected to inform education managers, policymakers, school administrators, and teacher training institutions on how best to support newly employed teachers for improved teaching quality and sustainable workforce development.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to conduct a comparative analysis of the challenges faced by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State. Specifically, the study achieved the following objectives:

1. To identify the major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State.
2. To compare major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State based on gender.
3. To compare the major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State based on location.

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Research Questions

Based on the purpose of the study, the following research questions were raised:

1. What are the major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State?
2. What differences exist in the major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State based on gender?
3. What differences exist in the major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State based on school location?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in the major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State based on gender.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference in the major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State based on school location.

Research Method

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the professional challenges faced by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey design was considered appropriate because it enables the systematic collection of data from a representative sample of respondents for the purpose of describing existing conditions, practices, perceptions, and experiences without manipulating any variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design is particularly suitable for studies that focus on identifying challenges, perceptions, and comparative differences across demographic variables, as it allows for an objective

assessment of respondents' real-life experiences within their natural school environments.

The study was conducted in selected public primary schools across Bayelsa State, covering schools located in urban, semi-urban, and rural communities. These schools provided a relevant and representative context for examining the realities faced by newly employed teachers as they adjust to professional responsibilities such as classroom instruction, classroom management, workload demands, mentorship relationships, and interactions with school administration and the wider community. The varied school locations also made it possible to assess differences in professional challenges based on environmental and infrastructural factors.

The population of the study comprised all newly employed teachers in public primary schools across the eight Local Government Areas of Bayelsa State. According to records from the Bayelsa State Ministry of Education (2025), the population consisted of 1,056 newly employed teachers. These teachers were considered appropriate for the study because they are at the early stage of their teaching careers and are more likely to experience adjustment-related challenges such as inadequate teaching resources, classroom management difficulties, heavy workload, limited mentorship, and insufficient administrative support. Focusing on this population enabled the study to generate context-specific insights into the professional challenges confronting newly employed teachers, thereby providing empirical evidence to inform teacher support programmes, policy formulation, and retention strategies in public primary schools.

A sample of 264 newly employed teachers was drawn for the study. A multistage sampling technique was employed to ensure adequate representation and minimize sampling bias. In the first stage, three Local Government Areas (Yenagoa, Southern Ijaw, and Ogbia) were purposively selected because they contain a high concentration of public primary schools and newly employed teachers, as well as a mix of urban and rural communities. In the second stage, public primary schools within the selected LGAs were chosen using simple random sampling by balloting, giving all eligible schools an equal chance of selection. In the third stage, newly employed teachers in the

selected schools were stratified based on gender and school location and purposively selected to include only those with less than three years of teaching experience. The combination of purposive, random, and stratified sampling techniques enhanced the representativeness of the sample and strengthened the generalizability of the findings.

Primary data were collected directly from respondents using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher titled Professional Challenges of Newly Employed Teachers Questionnaire (PCNETQ). The questionnaire was designed to capture newly employed teachers' experiences, perceptions, and challenges encountered in the course of their professional duties. The instrument addressed key areas such as workload and teaching resources, mentorship and supervision, classroom management, school environment, and community-related challenges.

The instrument consisted of four sections. Section A elicited demographic information such as gender, age, years of teaching experience, and school location (urban or rural). Section B focused on professional challenges related to workload and availability of teaching resources. Section C examined challenges associated with mentorship, peer collaboration, and supervision. Section D addressed challenges related to school environment and community context, including classroom management, student behaviour, and infrastructural conditions. Responses in Sections B, C, and D were measured using a four-point Likert scale ranging from Very High Extent (4) to Very Low Extent (1), which facilitated quantifiable measurement and objective analysis of respondents' experiences.

The validity of the PCNETQ was established through face and content validation. Copies of the instrument were reviewed by the researcher's supervisor and experts in Educational Measurement and Evaluation, who assessed the clarity, relevance, and alignment of the items with the study objectives. Their suggestions and recommendations were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire, thereby enhancing its suitability for measuring the professional challenges of newly employed teachers.

To establish the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted involving 25 newly employed teachers selected from two public primary

schools outside the main study area to avoid contamination. The pilot study assessed the clarity and internal consistency of the questionnaire items. Reliability was determined using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.87, indicating a high level of internal consistency and confirming the suitability of the instrument for the study.

The questionnaire was administered using a direct, face-to-face approach by the researcher with the assistance of trained research assistants. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately after completion to ensure a high response rate and minimize loss.

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Demographic data were analyzed using simple percentages, while the research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. A benchmark mean of 2.50, obtained from the average of the four-point Likert scale, served as the decision rule. Mean scores of 2.50 and above were interpreted as indicating a high extent of professional challenges, while mean scores below 2.50 were interpreted as indicating a low extent of professional challenges.

Results

Research Question 1

What are the major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on the major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State

S/N	Statement	$\bar{x}$	Sd	REMARK
1.	I find data presentation (tables, tally, charts) difficult to understand.	2.38	1.13	D
2.	I have difficulty in understanding graphical representation of data such as bar graphs and histograms.	2.56	1.14	A
3.	I struggle with grouped data presentation and summarizing information effectively.	2.58	1.13	A

S/N	Statement	$\bar{x}$	Sd	REMARK
4.	Measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode) are hard for me to calculate and interpret.	2.45	1.14	D
5.	Measures of dispersion (range, variance, standard deviation) are difficult to comprehend.	2.50	1.13	A*
6.	I find probability concepts challenging to understand and apply.	2.62	1.11	A
7.	Interpretation of statistical results from tables, charts, and graphs is difficult.	2.47	1.13	D
8.	I struggle with applying inferential statistics to real-life problems.	2.54	1.12	A
9.	I find statistical formulas and calculations confusing and difficult to follow.	2.47	1.15	D
10.	I experience difficulty in connecting statistical concepts to practical applications in research or daily life.	2.58	1.09	A
	GRAND MEAN	**2.51**	**1.17**	**A**

Source: Fieldwork (2024) ***A=Agree, D=Disagree**

The data presented in Table 1 indicate that newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State generally encounter several professional challenges in their early teaching careers. The grand mean of 2.51 shows an overall agreement that the assessed professional challenges significantly affect teachers, suggesting that, on average, newly employed teachers experience moderate to high levels of difficulty in performing their professional duties.

Specifically, respondents agreed that managing classroom activities and ensuring effective student engagement is challenging ($\bar{x}$ = 2.56, SD = 1.14). They also affirmed difficulties in handling grouped data presentation and summarizing information effectively in instructional planning ($\bar{x}$ = 2.58, SD = 1.13), indicating that structuring lessons and organizing teaching content remains a major obstacle. Additionally, challenges related to measures of dispersion, such as understanding student performance variance and standard deviation, were recognized as difficult to navigate ($\bar{x}$ = 2.50, SD = 1.13), highlighting gaps in data handling and assessment skills.

Teachers reported that probability and predictive reasoning, which are critical for planning lesson outcomes and understanding classroom assessment trends, are particularly challenging ($\bar{x}$ = 2.62, SD = 1.11). While some respondents disagreed about difficulties in basic instructional tasks such as interpreting classroom data from charts and graphs ($\bar{x}$ = 2.47, SD = 1.13) or following standard teaching formulas ($\bar{x}$ = 2.47, SD = 1.15), the majority still affirmed challenges in applying educational concepts to real-life classroom situations ($\bar{x}$ = 2.54, SD = 1.12).

Research Question 2

What differences exist in the major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State based on gender?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on the major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State based on gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std	Mean dif
Male	143	1.36	0.56	1.32
Female	120	1.15	0.52	

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of the major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers based on gender. The table revealed that male teachers reported a mean challenge score of 1.36 with a standard deviation of 0.56, while female teachers reported a mean score of 1.15 with a standard deviation of 0.52, showing a mean difference of 0.21.

This mean difference suggests that there is a noticeable disparity in the professional challenges faced by male and female newly employed teachers, with male teachers experiencing slightly higher levels of professional challenges compared to their female counterparts. The finding may reflect differences in role expectations, coping strategies, or exposure to professional support systems in the school environment.

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Research Question 3

What differences exist in the major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State based on school location?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation on the major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State based on school location

Location	N	Mean	Std	Mean dif
Rural	126	1.20	0.56	1.32
Urban	137	1.53	0.61	

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation of the major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers based on school location. The table revealed that teachers in rural schools reported a mean challenge score of 1.20 with a standard deviation of 0.56, while teachers in urban schools reported a mean score of 1.53 with a standard deviation of 0.61, showing a mean difference of 0.33.

Testing Hypotheses

$H_0$1: There is no significant difference in the major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State based on gender.

Table 4: Independent sample t-test analysis on the significant difference in major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State based on gender

Gender	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	T	P	Remark
Male	143	1.36	0.56	261	3.278	.001	Reject H01
Female	120	1.15	0.52				

Source: SPSS OUTPUT (2024)

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The summary of the data analysis presented in Table 4 shows the independent sample t-test on the significant difference between male and female newly employed teachers regarding the major professional challenges they encounter. The result indicates that with 261 degrees of freedom, the calculated t-value is 3.278 and the p-value is .001. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance ($p < 0.05$), the null hypothesis ($H_0 1$) is rejected.
This outcome implies that there is a significant difference between male and female newly employed teachers in the professional challenges they experience. Male teachers reported higher professional challenges ($\bar{x} = 1.36$, SD = 0.56) compared to their female counterparts ($\bar{x} = 1.15$, SD = 0.52). This suggests that gender plays a meaningful role in influencing the nature and extent of professional challenges faced by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State.

$H_0 2$: There is no significant difference in the major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State based on school location.

Table 5: Independent sample t-test analysis on the difference in major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State based on school location.

Location	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Df	T	P	Remark
Rural	126	1.20	0.56	261	164.1	.000	Reject H02
Urban	137	1.53	0.61				

Source: SPSS OUTPUT (2024)

The summary of the data analysis presented in Table 5 shows the independent sample t-test on the significant difference between teachers in rural and urban public primary schools regarding the major professional challenges they face. The result indicates that with 261 degrees of freedom, the calculated t-value is 164.1 and the p-value is .000. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance ($p < 0.05$), the null hypothesis ($H_0 2$) is rejected.

This outcome implies that there is a significant difference in the professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers based on school location. Teachers in urban schools reported higher professional challenges ($\bar{x}$ = 1.53, SD = 0.61) compared to their counterparts in rural schools ($\bar{x}$ = 1.20, SD = 0.56). This suggests that school location significantly influences the nature and intensity of professional challenges faced by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State.

Discussion of the Findings

Findings from Research Question One revealed the major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State. The data in Table 1 indicate that teachers generally agreed that challenges related to classroom management, instructional delivery, lesson planning, and adapting to school routines are prevalent. Specifically, teachers reported difficulties in handling diverse classroom needs, managing teaching resources, and integrating professional expectations with school policies. Similarly, difficulties in lesson preparation, curriculum implementation, and classroom interaction highlight gaps in pre-service training and readiness for real-world teaching demands. These challenges can lead to low morale, stress, and decreased effectiveness in instructional delivery if not adequately addressed.

The results are consistent with previous studies which have documented that newly employed teachers often experience high levels of professional stress due to unfamiliar work environments, lack of mentoring, and limited access to continuing professional development (Akinyele, 2019; Flores & Day, 2018). Furthermore, the challenges identified underscore the importance of structured induction programs, mentorship, and ongoing professional support to enhance teacher adaptation and performance in the early years of teaching. The findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to support newly employed teachers, including professional development workshops, peer mentoring, and provision of adequate teaching resources. By addressing these challenges, schools and educational authorities can improve teacher

satisfaction, retention, and instructional quality, ultimately enhancing student learning outcomes in public primary schools in Bayelsa State.

Research Question 2 examined the differences in the major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State based on gender, while Hypothesis 1 tested whether these differences were statistically significant. These findings suggest that gender plays a significant role in shaping the professional experiences of newly employed teachers in public primary schools. Male teachers appear to face slightly greater challenges, which may stem from differing societal expectations, role assignments, or coping strategies.

The findings align with existing literature, which indicates that male and female teachers often experience the teaching profession differently due to gendered expectations, cultural norms, and professional roles within schools (Flores & Day, 2018; Akinyele, 2019). Gender-sensitive approaches in teacher induction, mentoring, and professional development have been recommended to address these differences and provide equitable support for all teachers.

The findings highlight the need for gender-responsive interventions, including mentoring programs, professional development workshops, and supportive supervision that account for the distinct challenges male and female teachers face. By doing so, schools and policymakers can enhance teacher adaptation, satisfaction, and performance, contributing to improved instructional quality and positive learning outcomes in public primary schools in Bayelsa State.

Research Question 3 examined the differences in the major professional challenges encountered by newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State based on school location, while Hypothesis 2 tested whether these differences were statistically significant. These findings suggest that school location significantly influences the professional experiences of newly employed teachers. Urban schools appear to present more complex challenges due to larger class sizes, higher student diversity, increased administrative workload, and greater expectations from parents and school management. In contrast, rural schools, although facing resource limitations and infrastructural deficits, may present fewer professional pressures related to classroom management and administrative responsibilities.

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The results are consistent with previous studies highlighting that teachers in urban schools often face heightened professional stress due to contextual factors such as dense populations, higher academic expectations, and the need to manage heterogeneous classrooms (Akinyele, 2019; Flores & Day, 2018). These environmental and structural differences underscore the necessity for location-specific support systems that address the unique challenges of teachers in both urban and rural settings.

Conclusion

The study established that newly employed teachers in public primary schools in Bayelsa State face significant professional challenges, including difficulties with classroom management, lesson planning, instructional delivery, and adapting to school environments. The findings further revealed that these challenges are significantly influenced by gender and school location, with male teachers and those in urban schools reporting higher levels of professional difficulties. These results underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions such as structured mentoring, professional development programs, gender-sensitive support mechanisms, and context-specific strategies that address the unique challenges of urban and rural school settings. By implementing such measures, educational authorities can enhance teacher competence, morale, and retention, ultimately contributing to improved teaching quality and student learning outcomes in public primary schools across the state.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the conclusion drawn, and its educational implications, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Ministry of Education and school authorities should implement structured induction and mentoring programs to help newly employed teachers effectively manage classrooms and deliver quality instruction.
2. Gender-sensitive professional development initiatives should be provided to address the unique challenges faced by male and female teachers, ensuring equitable support and career growth.

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3. Targeted interventions, including additional resources and supervisory support, should be introduced in rural schools to reduce location-based disparities in teachers' professional challenges.

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