

School Climate as Determinant of Students' Academic Performance in Secondary Schools in South West, Nigeria

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Abstract

Education is regarded as an investment and as an asset. Literature showed that secondary school students' academic achievement is low, it means that investment in education does not produce the desired results. This study will investigate the state of the school climate in relation to student's academic performance in secondary schools in South West, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was adopted in the study. A total of 825 participants (comprising 750 teachers and 75 principals) from 75 secondary schools were selected for the study. The participants were selected through a multistage sampling procedure. Two sets of instruments School Climate Questionnaire (SCQ) and Secondary Certificate Examination Results Pro- forma (SSCERP) were used in the study for data collection. The instruments were validated by experts in educational management while reliability test was carried out using the test-retest method. The reliability coefficient of 0.71 obtained from the statistical analysis of the two tests was considered high enough for the SCQ. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Finding showed that students' academic performance was poor and this could be associated with the prevailing school climate in the secondary schools. It was concluded that student's achievement in the school is a product of the environment available to both teachers and the learners. It was recommended among others that School administrators and other stakeholder in the secondary education system should be more concerned about the academic achievement of the students by providing favourable work environment for teacher and learners.

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Introduction

Schools play vital role in developing the skills of young people in education. Schools serve as centers that help students develop community understanding and political commitment and engagement. There have been concerns by education stakeholders on the effectiveness of secondary education in Nigeria and Southwest in particular. This concern stemmed from the downward trend of students' performance in externally conducted certificate examination like WAEC/NECO. Observers and regulatory body's reports shows that the performances of students in the examinations have not been consistently good over the years. For instance, the percentage of students that passed WASSCE with 5 credits including English and Mathematics were 30.99%, 38.81%, 36.57%, 22%, 38.68%, 59.22% and 49.98% for 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2014, 2017 and 2018 respectively (WAEC website).

In the Southwest geopolitical zone, the performance of students is gradually deteriorating despite the fact that the states within the zone are known for outstanding performance in the past. States in the zone were reputed for occupying the first ten positions in WAEC until recently when only one state out of the six was numbered among this stratum. In 2019, only Lagos State occupied the 6th position while Ekiti, Ondo, Ogun, Oyo and Osun state got 11th, 13th, 19th, 26th and 26th position respectively (WAEC, 2019).

According to Tawyer-Purta and Vermeer (2014), schools can help to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that young people need in order to develop into politically and socially responsible individuals.

School features, like the physical structure of the school building and the interaction between students and teachers, are two different factors that affect and help define the broader concept of the school climate. The school climate according to Gary (2015), school climate is the beliefs and expectations of members of the school community about their school as a learning environment, their coherent behavior and the symbols and institutions that represent behavioral patterns. It includes a clear goal and policies that are expected to build positive relationships, attitudes or situations and ideas. To Kupolati (2015) school climate is a series of workplace structures as seen by the people who work there and who act as a major force influencing their work ethic. Chamberlin (2017), views school climate as the, status, culture, tone, mood, or internal quality of

an organization, especially as it is acquired by its members and viewed by the organization's guests. It should be remembered that the success or failure of the education system depends on many factors such as student characteristics and working attitudes, economic realities, political leadership, school leadership, teaching strategies and availability of building materials, (Okeke, 2017)). Also, it is the responsibility of the education system to facilitate learning by creating a conducive environment for the child to discover things, especially with a good school environment that should create challenges that can stimulate students' interest in learning.

Musaasi (2019), argues that the way a person perceives his or her surroundings affects the way that person treats those places, and that certain places are more appropriate than others. This goes a long way in showing that the environment or the school climate can certainly have a profound effect on the people in it. For example, the location of the school or the climate may indicate a great deal of cooperation between the various groups at school while the other may indicate a situation of disagreement, disagreement and even a lack of cooperation between the groups.

As the teaching and learning environment in schools appears to be a function of the school environment, the school environment is a set of unique school features. These factors often distinguish one school from another. In one school, the principal, teachers and students can find joy in working together while at another school; there may be dissatisfaction with these school staff. And in one school, teachers may appear orderly, competent, and confident in whatever they do while at another school, there may be some disagreement as the principal fails to control himself (Clinton, 1999). This means that the school environment of any school influences the performance of teachers and students in a positive or negative way because the joy of the school is passed on to the students and when the school is in turmoil, it may affect the performance of the students in the school.

Hoy and Miskel (2017) view school climate as a set of internal factors that distinguish one school from another and that influence the behavior of the people in it. They pointed out that climate is at the end of the productivity of school teams - students, teachers, administrators working to balance organizational and individual aspects of the social system. Their final products include shared prices, community beliefs and standards. This view was in line with Silver's (2013) view, which considered school climate to be the place, status, culture, feeling, voice or internal quality of an organization, especially as its members were recognized and recognized by the organization. From the various descriptions of the school climate above, it can be found that the school climate is what

people consider as an organization or school.

In the words of Silver (2019) types of school climate can be identified in any school organization. These are open weather, closed weather, independent weather, controlled climate, and normal weather.

The open climate reflects a situation where members enjoy high respect. An open-air school has a sign of non-participation, low delay, negligence, low productivity emphasis, very high intensity, and high concentration. Both the principal and the teacher are comfortable with their behavior. The principal leads by example by providing a combination of structure and direction as well as support and consideration.

Closed climates, on the other hand, are the ones that show the highest inconsistencies, hindrance, high intensity, indifference, high productivity emphasis, the lowest focus and the lowest consideration. Closing focus marks a situation where group members find little satisfaction in fulfilling a task or community needs. The principal does not succeed in directing the activities of the teachers and at the same time, does not tend to focus on the personal well-being of the teachers. Independent climate defines a state of almost total freedom for teachers to do their job and fulfill their needs as they wish. Teacher behavior and closeness are relatively high and there is little co-operation or barrier. The principal, despite his hard work, does not mind being monitored.

A controlled climate means a state of hard work with the loss of public health, although the esprit is very high. Teachers are responsible for their work, but there is an excessive paperwork and little personal communication. The principal governs and directs the affairs of the organization but is also distant and not particularly considerate. It is characterized by high productivity, high barrier and low proximity.

In Nigeria where the opportunities to education are unequal and where school equipment and infrastructure are inadequate, such factors could impose considerable constraints on the academic performance of students. For example, Kupolati (2015) noted that access to a type of school and ability to purchase basic necessities such as textbooks combine strong determinants of final performance at school.

In the light of the foregoing, many parents and guardians often want their children or wards to be adequately educated by attending certain schools in preference to public schools not minding the cost. To this end, parents scramble for Federal Government Schools (Unity Schools, Model Colleges and even Private Secondary Schools in preference to State Public Schools. It is their

belief that most of the unity schools, state model colleges and private schools have adequate learning facilities and conducive environment. They are believed to be adequately staffed with teachers of high quality and notable sense of commitment. Teachers in these institutions are believed to be better catered for than those in the public schools where they are serving under poor working conditions and environment.

The role of teachers in the school system is very important and teachers occupy a unique position in any educational system. Despite the importance of teachers in any educational system, it appears that many of them are not performing well in their academic works. Some teachers do not go for lesson regularly and even some that go regularly do not teach well. It has been observed that some teachers especially females, engage in buying and selling during school hours while some of their male counterparts engage in farming. These behaviours have resulted into poor academic performance due to lack of thorough supervision of teachers in schools. Moreover, it was observed that many schools in the South West Nigeria lacks adequate qualified teachers. The numbers of teachers in most of the schools are not enough to the population of the students. This shortage of teachers may lead to ineffective teaching and this may lead to poor academic performance of the students.

A good school climate motivates readiness to learn as well as promoting better learning in pupils. The physical structure of the school as classrooms, buildings, laboratories, games field, assembly hall, chairs and tables, chalkboards and other infrastructural facilities directly or indirectly contribute to the teaching-learning process. The adequacy or use of these physical structures produces a conducive learning situation or its reverse. The interaction between the pupils and the teachers should be friendly and cordial. Also, the intellectual environment of the school serves as a motivational force and reinforcement inherent in the school environment for these students. The intellectual environment includes the experiences gained from the teachers, the library, games field and the laboratories.

Adaralegbe (2013) stated that without a positive social, physical and psychological environment, students would not be able to do well in their studies. That is, if the environment is bad, poor or ineligible, it can have a very negative and lasting impact on students' academic achievement. Schragar (2016) in his study of the impact of livelihood / community climate on students' academic performance, pointed out that the environment was closely linked to the success rate of new members, Keefe (1986) in his study of teacher development - student relationships and school

climate indicated and student and school climate. Olaogun (1991) investigated the impact of the school environment on overall student achievement at Junior Secondary School and found that there were no major infrastructure and teaching and learning resources in many schools. This has impacted on students' performance in key subject areas.

Aderounmu (2017), believed that the school environment plays an important role in influencing and motivating students to learn. They complained that the school climate had an impact on student performance. Musasi (2019) has the opposite viewpoint and argues that something outside of schools is more important than what is inside school. From the above findings, the researcher is of the view that if there is good environment with adequate learning materials in schools, it will affect students' academic performance, though, Musaasi (2019) has a contrary view that things outside the schools matter. In view of the conflicting findings of these studies, the present is set out to find out whether school climate affects students' academic performance.

However, one is well aware of the fact that there is indiscipline in schools among staff and students, things are no more what they used to be the primary and secondary schools in Nigeria because much of the authority, power with which manager could have run the school more effectively have been seriously eroded. Aderonmu (2017) in his own contributions to the powers, functions and authority of the school principal stated that it was common knowledge in Nigeria that the former powers of principal had been restricted and that his control over funds and his capacity to formulate policies for his school are seriously limited.

It must be noted that secondary education determines the academic professional career of students. There is urgently therefore need to point out through research, the correlation that exists between school climate and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in South-West Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The attainment of secondary education dual goal of preparing students for tertiary education and provision of Para-professionals for economic activities are been threatened by the poor academic performance. It has been observed that resources, especially classrooms, are inadequate in many schools, with the result that overcrowding of classrooms is hampering academic performance. It is also noteworthy that in many schools, some teachers teach other subjects that are not in their field of specialization. Due to a shortage of qualified teachers and this may hamper effective teaching and learning.

The rotten environment of many schools leaves much to be desired. Visits to many schools show dilapidated buildings, obsolete laboratories, outdated tools, empty libraries, inadequate human resources and inadequate learning space. The leadership styles of some principals need to be highly coveted; some principals may use independent styles while others use democratic styles. Lack of ability to motivate other teachers by the principals in schools may disappoint teachers who work tirelessly in schools.

Many scholars have worked on climate for example Keefe (1986) worked on improving teacher-student relationships and school climate in secondary schools in Imo state. This work is in southern states of Nigeria and also the environmental variables is going to be considered to fill the gap left by the researcher. Also Olaogun (1991) investigated the effect of the school environment on the overall academic achievement of students at the Junior Secondary school level in Lagos State Nigeria. While the present work is going to be all secondary schools students in southern states of Nigeria to fill the gap left by previous researchers. Shuaib (2010) investigated school climate and academic staff performance in Ramat polytechnics Maiduguri Bornu state. Shuaib work is on students from polytechnics and also in Bornu State while this study is going to be on secondary school students and also the study area is southwest Nigeria to fill the gap left by previous researchers. However this study will investigate the school climate and student's academic performance in Southwest Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study are:

- B. To find out the level of academic performance of secondary school students in South-west, Nigeria.
- C. To identify the predominant school climate in secondary schools in Southwest, Nigeria.
- D. To examine the relationship between school climate and students' performance in Southwest, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of academic performance of Secondary school students in South-West Nigeria?
2. What is the predominant school climate in South-West Nigerian Secondary schools?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between school climate and students' academic performance?

Methodology

The research design adopted in this study was descriptive of survey type. The population of the study includes all public secondary schools and teachers in public schools in South-West Nigeria. The sample of this study consisted of 825 respondents, comprising 75 principals and 750 teachers selected from 75 secondary schools. Multi-stage sampling procedure was followed in arriving at this number. The first stage involved a random selection of 3 states out of the 6 states in the south west Nigeria. The second stage involved the use of proportional random sampling technique to selected 18 local government areas from the 3 states. From the selected local government areas, 75 schools were selected using proportional random sampling technique. The third stage involved the use of simple random sampling technique to select 10 teachers from each school, making a total of 250 teachers from each state. Finally, 75 principals from the selected 75 schools involved in this study to complete the Students' Secondary Certificate Examination Results Pro- forma (SSCERP) and the questionnaire designed to collect data on school climate. The instruments used in this study are "School Climate Questionnaire (SCQ)". The questionnaire was divided into sections. Section A was on information about the school such as the name of the school, location of the school, school type, sex and school size. While Sections B dealt with the school climate variables using the adapted Likert four-point scale, the extent of agreement or disagreement to the statements in the questionnaire to which respondents were to react was coded in the order of magnitude indicated as follows: Strongly agree 4 points, Agree 3 points, Disagree 2 points, Strongly Disagree 1 point. The instruments were validated by experts in educational management while reliability test was carried out using the test-retest method. The reliability coefficient of 0.71 obtained from the statistical analysis of the two tests was considered high enough for the SCQ. Data collected was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What is the level of academic performance of Secondary school students in South-West Nigeria?

To answer this question, the results of public secondary school students in a period of three sessions (i.e. 2018/2019, 2019/2020 and 2020/2021) were subjected to descriptive analysis involving frequency counts and percentages. To determine the performance, 5 credits with English and Mathematics was rated high, 4 Credits in any of English and mathematics was rated fair while Below 4 Credits was rated poor. The result obtained is presented in the Table 1 below.

Table 1: level of academic performance of Secondary school students in South-West Nigeria

SESSION	Total Candidate	5 credits and above with Eng and Maths (High performance)		4 credits in any subject (Fair Performance)		Below 4 Credits (Poor Performance)	
		NO	%	NO	%	NO	%
2018/2019	3581	1279	35.7	1395	38.95	907	25.35
2019/2020	3400	1148	33.78	1225	36.03	1026	30.19
2020/2021	3461	1227	35.46	1105	31.93	1129	32.61
TOTAL	10442	3654	34.98	3725	35.67	3062	29.32

Table 1 shows the level of academic performance of secondary schools students in Southwest, Nigeria over a period of three academic sessions. As related in the table, of all 3581 candidates that participated in the terminal examination in 2018/2019 academic session, 1279(35.70%) had 5 credits and above, 1395(38.95%) had 4 credits while 907(25.35%) had below 4 credits. During the 2019/2020 academic session, of the 3400 candidates that participated in the examination, 1148(33.78%) had 5 credits, 1225(36.03%) had 4 credits while 1026(30.19%) had below 4 credits. In 2020/2021 academic session, out of 3461 candidates that attempted the examinations, 1227(35.46%) had 5 credits, 1105(31.93%) had 4 credits while 1129(32.61%) had below 4 credits. In all, out of the 10442 candidates that completed secondary education during these periods in the selected schools, 3654(34.98%) had 5 credits, 3725(35.64%) had 4 credits while 3062(29.38%) had below 4 credits. Thus, Majority of the students had 4 credits and below 4 credits, this indicated that the level of academic performance of students was poor during the period investigated.

Research Question 2: What is the predominant school climate in South-West Nigerian Secondary schools?

In order to answer this question, frequency counts and percentage scores on items 1-20, Section B of the School Climate Questionnaire (SCQ) were computed. The result is presented in Table 2.

The average responses on teaching and research were obtained together with the mean scores of each. The average mean score was rated as predominant and not predominant. Mean Score that fall below the Criterion mean of 2.00 was rated as not predominant while predominant was determined by scores above the aggregate average mean score (that is 2.00). The result obtained is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Predominant School Climate in Secondary Schools in Southwest, Nigeria

S/ N	school climate	SA		A		D		SD		Total score	Mean Score	Decision
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
1	Open climate	75	10	97	12.9 3	24	32.0 0	33	45.0 7	1409	1.88	not prominent
2	Closed climate	72	9.6	93	12.4 0	24	32.1 3	34	45.8 7	1393	1.86	not prominent
3	Controlle d climate	10 8	14. 4	27 6	36.8 0	29 3	39.0 7	73	9.73	1919	2.56	predomina nt

Table 2 shows the predominant school climate in Southwest, Nigeria. The result shows that 75(10%) of the respondent strongly agreed the climate in their school is open, 97 (12.93%) agreed the climate was open while 240(32.00%) and 338(45.07%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagree respectively. On closed climate, 72(9.6%) and 93(12.40%) strongly agreed and agree while 241(32.13%) and 344(45.87%) disagreed and strongly disagree. 108 (14.40%) and 276 (36.80%) agreed the school climates are controlled while 293(39.07) and 73(9.73%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. The table showed that the school climate were rated not opened with an average mean score of 1.88(47%), they were rated not closed with average mean score of 1.86(46.5%) and rated controlled with 2.56(64%) respectively. In all, the predominant school climate in Southwest Nigeria public secondary schools was controlled during the period investigated.

Research Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between school climate and students' academic performance?

In order to test this hypothesis scores on items 1-20 Section B of the SCQ and percentage scores on students' academic performance were computed and subjected to statistical analysis involving Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.05 level of significance. The result obtained is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Relationship between school climate and student's academic performance

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-cal	p-value
School climate	750	31.5011	7.5443	0.489	0.000
Student academic performance	75	34.4052	6.5934		

Table three shows that r-cal (0.489) is significant with a p-value of 0.000. The result is significant and the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, there was significant relationship between school climate and student academic performance in secondary schools in Southwest, Nigeria.

Discussion

Finding from this study indicated that students' academic performance was poor during the period investigated. Discoveries from this study showed that majority of the students who participated in external examination between the three academic session considered had 4 credits and below 4 credits. This implies that secondary schools in southwest Nigeria were not able to equip the secondary school leavers with the needed skills and knowledge required for further study in tertiary institutions and as such could not be adjudged effective. This contradicted the objectives of the secondary education which is to prepare the younger ones for higher education and possibly train manpower in the applied sciences, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades. The observed ineffectiveness could be attributed to lack of efforts by all stakeholders within the education system to tackle the managerial challenges of poor school climate. This finding confirmed observations of the National Education Quality Assurance (2011) and WAEC (2011) observations that the effectiveness of secondary schools in southwest, Nigeria has not been encouraging. The finding equally affirmed the position WAEC (2019) that the academic performance of students in WAEC examination has declined in Southwest, Nigeria. According to WAEC (2019) the academic performance of Southwest state secondary school has dropped from between 1st - 10th position and presently ranked between 6th -29th.

Finding further revealed that the predominant school climate in public secondary schools in southwest, Nigeria during the period investigated was the controlled climate. This implies that there is hard work with little interaction with the school administrator. The predominance of controlled climate may be attributed to the increasing demand for teachers to be allowed to use their initiative especially in performing instructional tasks. This finding corroborated the position of Silver (2019) that a controlled school climate make teachers to take responsibility for their work in order to encourage high productivity

In testing the hypothesis, finding revealed that there was a significant and positive relationship between school climate and student academic performance in southwest Nigeria secondary schools. This implies that the quality of physical, psychosocial and social atmosphere provided in the school environment greatly influence the performance of the students. This finding could be attributed to the fact that students depend on the knowledge, skills and guidance of other resources within the school to learn. This finding corroborated the submission of Aderounmu (2017), that the school environment plays an important role in influencing and motivating students to learn. It equally affirmed the position of Hoy and Miskel (2017) school climate is a set of internal factors that distinguish one school from another and that influence the behavior of the people in it. They pointed out that climate is at the end of the productivity of school teams - students, teachers, administrators working to balance organizational and individual aspects of the social system.

Conclusion

Based on the findings from this study, it was concluded that the downward trend of students' performance in external examination requires an urgent actions from all relevant stakeholders in the education system. It was also inferred that the school environment where student receive education should be free from all encumbrances that could impede learning. It was equally concluded that student's achievement in the school is a product of the environment available to both teachers and the learners

Recommendations

The followings were recommended based on the findings from the study:

1. School administrators and other stakeholder in the secondary education system should be more concerned about the academic achievement of the students by providing favourable

work environment for teacher and learners. This will ultimately make teachers and students to be more serious with teaching-learning activities

2. Education quality assurance unit in each state should extend their supervisory and assessment activities to cover the psychosocial aspect of the school life. This is to ensure the productive and positive interaction take place between staff and the management of each of the schools.
3. School administrators should be magnanimous in providing opportunities for teachers and students to interact in a healthy manner within the school. This will make transfer of knowledge easy.
4. School administrators should run an open door system by making themselves available to attend to issues that could interrupt teaching-learning activities in the school. This is necessary to remove the barrier of lack of proximity between teacher and principals.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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