

School Climate of Public Secondary Schools in Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: Effect on Learning Outcomes

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ABSTRACT

The school climate, encompassing the physical, social, and emotional environment of educational institutions, plays a pivotal role in shaping students' learning outcomes. This study investigates the impact of school climate on the academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, focusing on the Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State. A descriptive survey research methodology was employed, the research was conducted in the Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State, encompassing a population of fifteen (15) operational public senior secondary schools with a total of eleven thousand, three hundred and eighteen (11,318) students. Through the application of simple random sampling techniques, a sample size of three hundred and eighty-six (386) participants was derived and utilized for the study. A questionnaire entitled "Perceived Influence of School Climate on Students' Learning Outcome" was implemented for data collection purposes. The instrument underwent expert evaluation to establish both face and content validity. The reliability of the instrument was assessed via a test-retest method, yielding a coefficient of 0.85, indicating an 85% reliability level. The responses to the three research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation statistics, whereas the T-test statistic was employed to evaluate the formulated hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. The study identified various factors that constituted to the school climate and subsequently influence the academic outcomes of students in public senior secondary schools within the Ikwerre Local Government Area, Rivers State, thereby reflecting the experiences of Niger Delta students. These factors include, but are not limited to, a well-structured and organized classroom environment, comfortable seating arrangements, adequate lighting, competent and skilled educators, effective classroom management, the geographical location of the school, and class size, among others.

INTRODUCTION

The school climate significantly influences students' learning, shaping not only academic performance but also social and emotional development. School climate refers to the overall environment of a school, including the relationships, attitudes, and physical conditions that influence and poor performance.

The educational environment plays a crucial role in influencing students' learning experiences, affecting not only their scholastic achievements but also their social and emotional growth. The term "school climate" encompasses the comprehensive atmosphere within a school, which includes the interpersonal relationships, attitudes, and physical conditions that can either facilitate or hinder academic performance.

According to Otoabasi (2011), the Niger Delta region of Nigeria is situated along the Gulf of Guinea and is renowned for its abundant natural resources, particularly petroleum. Nonetheless, this region is also characterized by socio-political difficulties, such as pervasive poverty, substandard infrastructure, and environmental deterioration. These adversities are mirrored in the educational sector, where institutions frequently grapple with insufficient financial resources, inadequate facilities, and restricted access to educational opportunities that influence student engagement and learning. A conducive school climate can enhance motivation, foster collaboration, and promote high levels of learning achievement, whereas a detrimental climate may result in student disengagement. The educational framework in Nigeria adheres to a 9-3-4 model, wherein senior secondary schools play a pivotal role in equipping students for higher education and future employment (Ajibade, 2019).

The educational environment is critical for attaining educational objectives (Salako, 2017 in Nwisagbo & Ihua-Jonathan, 2024). Furthermore, the Skinnerian environmental theory, which is grounded in B.F. Skinner's research on operant conditioning, underscores the significance of environmental variables in shaping human behavior (Nwisagbo, 2019). According to Skinner, behavior is acquired through interactions with the environment, where consequences affect the probability of a behavior being repeated. Skinner posited that behavior is not a product of internal cognitive processes but is influenced primarily by external environmental conditions. He advocated for the application of this theory in various domains, including education, therapeutic practices, and organizational behavior, to effectively modify and manage behavioral outcomes (Structural Learning Team, 2023).

Akabogu (2011) as referenced in Thomas and Amaechi (2019) examined the impact of school location on the reading comprehension performance of secondary school students. This study aimed to ascertain whether the geographical location, either urban or rural, influences the academic performance of students in these secondary schools. The research involved two hundred and sixty (260) senior secondary class 2 (SS2) students from the Ikwerre local government area within the Rivers education zone of Rivers State. The data collected were analyzed utilizing means and standard deviations, while analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was employed to test the null hypothesis at a 0.05

alpha level of significance. Akabogu concluded that the geographic location of a school significantly affects students' performance in reading comprehension.

Orlu (2013) conducted a study involving six hundred educators and students with the objective of exploring the environmental factors impacting the academic performance of secondary school students in the Port Harcourt local government area of Rivers State. The findings from this investigation revealed that the school environment exerts a significant influence on students' academic performance. The geographical setting of the school plays a crucial role in determining students' performance; for instance, a school located in a noisy vicinity such as an airport or a bustling city center, where external activities disrupt the educational process, is unlikely to yield academically successful students. Noise pollution, in any form, adversely affects the teaching-learning process. Additionally, the physical structure of the school facilities and the nature of interactions between educators and learners also significantly impact students' academic performance.

The climate of a school can serve as either a beneficial determinant for the efficacy of the educational environment or a considerable impediment to the learning process. The educational milieu can exert influence across various dimensions and individuals within academic institutions. For instance, an affirmative school climate has been correlated with a reduction in behavioral and emotional challenges faced by students. Consequently, it is posited that fostering positive interpersonal relationships and providing optimal educational opportunities for students across diverse demographic contexts may augment achievement behaviours (Nwisagbo, 2019). A constructive relationship between students and teachers fosters a positive and nurturing school climate that facilitates the seamless execution of academic activities, ultimately culminating in enhanced learning performance.

Statement of the Problem

Notwithstanding numerous governmental and non-governmental endeavors aimed at ameliorating the educational landscape in Nigeria, students enrolled in public senior secondary schools within the Niger Delta region persist in exhibiting subpar performance in national assessments. A principal factor contributing to this academic underachievement is the prevailing school climate, which encompasses the social, physical, and academic contexts encountered by students in their educational institutions. Empirical investigations have indicated that a favorable school climate has the potential to bolster student engagement, motivation, and academic success (Tibi, Chenube, & Omumu, 2023); however, numerous schools within this region grapple with adverse climate conditions, including overcrowding, inadequate facilities, and a deficiency in support systems. This study endeavors to examine the extent to which these environmental factors inherent in the school climate impact the academic outcomes of students attending public senior secondary schools in the Niger Delta, Nigeria.

This article seeks to elucidate the perceived influence of school climate on the learning outcomes of students in public senior secondary schools within the

Niger Delta. By scrutinizing the influence of the school's social and emotional environment on student achievement, the research will delineate the degree to which conducive classroom settings, interpersonal relations among school personnel, and the geographical location of the school affect the academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools. Comprehending this relationship is imperative for educators and policymakers aiming to cultivate educational environments that genuinely promote student success.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does a conducive classroom environment influence the learning outcomes of students in public senior secondary schools within the Niger Delta Region?
2. To what extent do interpersonal relations among school personnel affect the learning outcomes of students in public senior secondary schools within the Niger Delta Region?
3. To what degree does the geographical location of a school impact the learning outcomes of students in public senior secondary schools within the Niger Delta Region?

Research Hypotheses

HO1: There exists no significant disparity between conducive classroom environments and the academic outcomes of students in public senior secondary schools within the Niger Delta Region.

HO2: There exists no significant disparity between the relationships among school personnel and the academic outcomes of students in public senior secondary schools within the Niger Delta Region.

HO3: There exists no significant disparity between the geographical location of schools and the academic outcomes of students in public senior secondary schools within the Niger Delta Region.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey research design was employed for the investigation, which was executed within the Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State, encompassing a population of fifteen (15) operational public senior secondary schools, aggregating a total of eleven thousand three hundred and eighteen (11,318) students from all public senior secondary institutions. Through the application of simple random sampling methodologies, a sample size of three hundred and eighty-six (386) participants was derived and utilized for the research. A questionnaire entitled "Perceived Influence of School Climate on Students' Learning Outcome" (PISCSLO) served as the primary instrument for data collection. The instrument underwent scrutiny by experts to ascertain face and content validity. The reliability of the instrument was established through test-retest methods, yielding a coefficient of 0.85, indicative of 85% reliability. The data collected in response to the research inquiries were examined utilizing mean

and standard deviation statistics, while a T-test statistic was employed to assess the hypotheses formulated at a significance level of 0.05.

RESEARCH RESULT

Research Question One

To what degree does a conducive classroom environment impact the learning outcomes of students in public senior secondary schools within the Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation illustrating the influence of a conducive classroom on learning outcomes.

| S/N | ITEMS | SA | A | D | SD | TOTAL | MEAN | SD | REMARK |
|-----|---|-----|-----|---|----|-------|------|------|----------|
| 1. | A well-designed and organized classroom can enhance student engagement and focus | 211 | 172 | 2 | 1 | 386 | 4.52 | 0.75 | Accepted |
| 2. | Comfortable seating arrangements, appropriate lighting, and minimal distractions can create a conducive learning environment that promotes student attentiveness and concentration. | 220 | 161 | 3 | 2 | 386 | 3.51 | 0.58 | Accepted |
| 3. | When students feel safe, valued, and supported, they are more likely to participate actively in class, ask questions, and take academic risks. | 219 | 164 | 1 | 2 | 386 | 3.52 | 0.59 | Accepted |
| 4. | A positive classroom climate encourages collaboration, open communication, and the sharing of ideas, leading to | 210 | 147 | 1 | 2 | 386 | 3.50 | 0.58 | Accepted |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----|--|-----|-----|---|---|-----|-------------|-------------|----------|
| | improved learning outcome. | | | | | | | | |
| 5. | The availability of relevant instructional material can enhance students' understanding, critical thinking skills, and overall learning performance. | 170 | 186 | 3 | 1 | 386 | 3.40 | 0.56 | Accepted |
| 6. | A conducive classroom environment should have access to appropriate technological that support interactive and collaborative aids. | 200 | 171 | 8 | 7 | 386 | 3.41 | 0.56 | Accepted |
| | GRAND MEAN | | | | | | 3.67 | 3.62 | |

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

From the aforementioned Table 1, it is evident that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 consistently affirm that a conducive classroom environment significantly influences the academic outcomes of students enrolled in public senior secondary schools within the Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State. Specifically, the mean results indicate that an optimally designed and systematically organized classroom can substantially enhance student engagement and concentration (4.52). Furthermore, comfortable seating arrangements, adequate lighting, and minimal distractions contribute to the establishment of a conducive learning environment that fosters student attentiveness and focus (3.51). When students perceive their environment as safe, valued, and supportive, they are more inclined to engage actively in classroom discussions, pose inquiries, and undertake academic risks (3.52). An affirmative classroom climate promotes collaboration, facilitates open communication, and encourages the exchange of ideas, thereby leading to enhanced academic performance (3.50). The provision of relevant instructional materials can significantly bolster students' comprehension, critical thinking abilities, and overall academic achievement (3.40). Additionally, a conducive classroom environment must include access to appropriate technological resources that support interactive and collaborative learning experiences (3.41). Nonetheless, the grand mean presented in Table 1 (3.67) further substantiates the assertion that a conducive classroom environment impacts the academic outcomes of students attending public senior secondary schools in the Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Question Two:

To what extent does the relationship among school personnel influence the academic outcomes of students in public senior secondary schools in the Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation showing school personnel influence on learning outcome.

| S/N | ITEMS | SA | A | D | SD | TOTAL | MEAN | SD | DECISION |
|-----|---|-----|-----|----|----|-------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| 7. | The competence and effectiveness of teachers greatly influence students' learning outcomes. | 199 | 165 | 15 | 7 | 386 | 4.38 | 1.09 | Accepted |
| 8. | Effective classroom management by teachers creates an environment conducive for learning. | 214 | 156 | 10 | 6 | 386 | 3.45 | 0.86 | Accepted |
| 9. | School personnel, such as guidance counselors and mentors, can provide valuable support to students. | 213 | 165 | 5 | 3 | 386 | 3.50 | 0.87 | Accepted |
| 10. | School administrators and staff play a crucial role in allocating resources within the school in a manner that aids learning outcome. | 206 | 170 | 4 | 6 | 386 | 3.46 | 0.86 | Accepted |
| | GRAND MEAN | | | | | | 3.70 | 3.68 | |

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 2 illustrates that items 7, 8, 9, and 10 collectively affirm that the relationship among school personnel affects the academic outcomes of students in public senior secondary schools situated in the Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State. Specifically, the mean results indicate that the competence and effectiveness of educators significantly affect students' academic performance (4.38). Moreover, effective classroom management by educators establishes an environment conducive to learning (3.45). Additionally, school personnel, including guidance counselors and mentors, can offer invaluable support to students (3.50), while school administrators and staff play a pivotal role in

resource allocation within the institution, which is conducive to improved academic outcomes (3.46). Conversely, the grand mean presented in Table 2 (3.70) further indicates that the relationships among school personnel significantly influence the academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools within the Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State.

Research Question Three:

To what extent does the geographical location of schools affect the academic outcomes of students in public senior secondary schools within the Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation showing the influence of school location

| S/N | ITEMS | SA | A | D | SD | TOTAL | MEAN | SD | DECISION |
|-----|--|-----|-----|---|----|-------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| 16. | Nearness to your home | 235 | 143 | 5 | 3 | 386 | 4.62 | 0.92 | Accepted |
| 17. | School location can affect or influence the concentration of student during class period. | 169 | 204 | 5 | 8 | 386 | 3.34 | 0.67 | Accepted |
| 18. | School location can also impact school size and class sizes. | 205 | 176 | 1 | 4 | 386 | 3.49 | 0.69 | Accepted |
| 19. | School location can affect the availability and performance of teachers. | 210 | 170 | 1 | 5 | 386 | 3.50 | 0.70 | Accepted |
| 20. | Schools located in urban areas often have better access to resources such as libraries, technology, educational materials, and extracurricular activities. | 200 | 174 | 5 | 7 | 386 | 3.43 | 0.68 | Accepted |
| | GRAND MEAN | | | | | | 3.68 | 3.66 | |

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 3 above demonstrates that items 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 uniformly affirm that the geographical location of schools impacts the academic outcomes of students enrolled in public senior secondary schools in the Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State. Specifically, the mean results indicate that proximity to one’s residence is a significant factor (4.62), while the location of the school can influence student concentration during instructional periods (3.34).

Additionally, school location may also affect the size of the school and the composition of classrooms (3.49). Furthermore, the geographical location can impact the availability and effectiveness of teaching staff (3.50), with schools situated in urban areas frequently enjoying enhanced access to resources such as libraries, technological tools, educational materials, and extracurricular activities (3.43). Nonetheless, the grand mean presented in Table 3 (3.68) further corroborates the assertion that the geographical location of schools significantly influences the academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools within the Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between conducive classroom and students' learning outcome of public senior secondary schools in Ikwerre local government, Rivers State.

Table 4. t-Test on difference between conducive classroom and students' learning outcome in public senior secondary schools.

Total number of respondents N=386

| S/N | Group | N | \bar{X} | SD | Degree of freedom | Level of Significant | Calculated t value | Table of t value | Decision |
|-----|----------------------------|-----|-----------|-------|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------|------------------|----------|
| 1 | Conducive Classroom | 130 | 3.67 | 0.176 | 385 | 0.05 | 0.74 | 1.85 | Accepted |
| 2 | Students' Learning Outcome | 256 | 3.50 | 0.182 | | | | | |

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 4 above, indicated that the calculated t-value is 0.76 at 385 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significant since the calculated t-value of 0.74 is less than the table t- value of 1.96, the first null hypothesis (H_{01}) of the study is accepted. The researcher draws conclusion that there is no significant difference between conducive classroom and students' learning outcome of public senior secondary schools in Ikwerre local government, Rivers State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between the school personnel relations and students' academic performance of public senior secondary schools in Ikwerre local government, Rivers State.

Table 5. t-Test on difference between school personnel relations and students learning outcome of public senior secondary schools.

Table 5: t-test analysis on difference between school personnel relations and students learning outcome

Total number of respondents
386

N=

| S/ N | Group | N | \bar{X} | SD | Degree of freedo m | Level of Significa nt | Calculated T value | Table of t value | Decision |
|---------|----------------------------------|-----|-----------|-------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|----------|
| 1 | School Personnel Relations | 130 | 3.70 | 0.168 | 385 | 0.05 | 0.441 | 1.92 | Accepted |
| 2 | Students learning outcome | 256 | 3.65 | 0.195 | | | | | |

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The table 5 showed the t-test analysis of the difference between the mean ratings of school personnel relations and students' learning outcome. The table, also indicated that the calculated t-value is 0.441 at 385 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significant, while the table t- value is 1.92. Since the calculated t-value of 0.446 is less than the table t-value of 1.92, the second null hypothesis of the study is accepted. The conclusion drawn was that, school personnel relations and students' learning outcome do not differ significantly in their mean ratings with regard to the extent school personnel relations affects student's learning outcome of public senior secondary schools.

Hypothesis Three: There exists no statistically significant disparity between the geographical location of schools and the educational outcomes of students enrolled in public senior secondary institutions within the Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State.

Table 6. t-Test on difference between the school location and students' learning outcome of public senior secondary schools.

Total number of respondents

N=386

| S/N | Group | N | \bar{X} | SD | Degree of freedo m | Level of significant | Calculated t value | Tabl eof t value | Decisio n |
|-----|--------------------|-----|-----------|-------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | School location | 130 | 3.68 | 0.186 | 385 | 0.05 | 0.81 | 1.90 | Accept ed |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|-----|------|-------|--|--|--|--|--|
| 2 | Students' Learning Outcome | 256 | 3.19 | 0.192 | | | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|-----|------|-------|--|--|--|--|--|

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 6 presents the t-test analysis pertaining to the variance in mean ratings between school location and the academic performance of students. The analysis further elucidates that the computed t-value is 0.89, with 385 degrees of freedom at a significance level of 0.05. Since the calculated t-value of 0.81 is inferior to the tabulated t-value of 1.90, it is concluded that the hypothesis is accepted. The researcher deduces that no significant difference exists between school location and students' learning outcomes in public senior secondary schools situated in Ikwerre local government area, Rivers State.

DISCUSSION

The investigation elucidated that a conducive classroom environment significantly impacts the educational outcomes of students in public senior secondary schools within the Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State. Consistent with the findings of Nwisagbo (2019) and Wey-Amaewhule and Nwisagbo (2022), it has been observed that a meticulously designed and organized classroom enhances student engagement and focus. Comfortable seating arrangements, adequate lighting, and minimized distractions contribute to the establishment of an optimal learning atmosphere that fosters student attentiveness and concentration. When students perceive themselves as safe, valued, and supported, they are more inclined to engage actively in class discussions, pose inquiries, and embrace academic challenges. An affirmative classroom climate promotes collaboration, open dialogue, and the exchange of ideas, culminating in improved academic outcomes. Furthermore, the provision of pertinent instructional materials can augment students' comprehension, critical thinking abilities, and overall academic performance, while a conducive classroom environment must also incorporate access to appropriate technological resources that facilitate interactive and collaborative learning experiences.

The research additionally discovered that the relational dynamics among school personnel significantly influenced the academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools within the Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State. The proficiency and effectiveness of educators play a pivotal role in shaping students' educational outcomes. The implementation of effective classroom management techniques by teachers fosters an environment conducive to learning. Furthermore, school personnel, including guidance counselors and mentors, can offer invaluable support to students, while school administrators and staff are instrumental in the judicious allocation of resources within the educational institution.

Finally, the study established that the geographical location of schools has an appreciable influence on the educational outcomes of students in public senior

secondary schools in Ikwerre local government area, Rivers State, primarily due to factors such as proximity to students' residences. The location of a school can significantly affect students' concentration during instructional periods, as well as impact school size and class dimensions. Additionally, the geographical positioning of schools can influence the availability and performance of teaching staff, with urban schools typically enjoying enhanced access to resources, including libraries, technological tools, educational materials, and extracurricular opportunities (Akinnubi, Ajape & Adeoye, 2024).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research elucidated a multitude of factors that constituted the School Climate and which subsequently exert significant influence on the academic performance of students in Public Senior Secondary Schools situated within the Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State, thereby reflecting the educational experiences of students from the Niger Delta region. The identified factors encompass, but are not limited to, a meticulously designed and systematically organized classroom, ergonomically comfortable seating arrangements, adequate illumination, the proficiency and efficacy of educators, the implementation of effective classroom management strategies by instructors, the geographical location of the school, and the size of the class, among other considerations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings derived from this study, a series of recommendations have been proposed;

Governmental and community entities should facilitate the provision of facilities that are not only adequate but also modern and comfortable, including, but not limited to, classrooms, seating arrangements, laboratories, and lighting systems. Governments are urged to recruit qualified educators, while School Administrators ought to ensure that these instructional personnel fulfill their responsibilities through diligent monitoring and ongoing supervision. Furthermore, governmental bodies must guarantee that educational institutions are situated in tranquil environments that are not excessively distant from local communities.

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