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PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT ON THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NJIKOKA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the perceived influence of school environment on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area. The study adopted a survey research design. Three research questions guided this study. The population of this study consists of 5,750 secondary school students in the 15 secondary schools in Njikoka L.G.A. The simple random sampling technique was used to select 200 respondents from the 15 secondary schools in Njikoka L.G.A. The instrument used for collection of data was a 15-item structured questionnaire. Data collected in the study were the mean statistics. The findings revealed unequivocally that the physical and social school environments significantly influence the Academic Achievement of secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area. While the result of the hypothesis revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of physical school environment on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area. To this end, the researcher recommends amongst many others Schools can also organize extracurricular activities, sports, and clubs to promote socialization and teamwork as by fostering a positive social environment, schools can help students develop essential life skills, build confidence, and achieve academic success.

Keywords: Perceive Influence, School Environment, Academic Achievement, Secondary Schools

Introduction

The school environment seems a critical factor that influences the academic achievement of secondary school students. A conducive school environment fosters a positive and supportive atmosphere that promotes students' learning outcomes, socialization, and overall development (Woolner et al., 2018; Kingston et al., 2018). Conversely, a poorly designed or unsupportive school environment can hinder students' Academic Achievement, leading to decreased motivation, engagement, and overall well-being (Tucker (2018) Epstein, 2011). Secondary school students, in particular, are at a critical stage of their educational journey, and the school environment can significantly impact their academic achievement and future prospects (Higgins et al., 2015; Hallinger, 2018

The school environment encompasses various physical and psychological factors, including the building design, classroom layout, lighting, temperature, noise levels, and aesthetic appeal (Woolner, 2018). These factors can either support or hinder students' learning, depending on how they are designed and maintained (Tucker (2018). For instance, a well-designed classroom with adequate lighting, comfortable seating, and minimal distractions can promote students' engagement and motivation, leading to improved Academic Achievement (Higgins, 2015).

On the other hand, a poorly designed classroom with inadequate lighting, uncomfortable seating, and excessive noise levels can hinder students' ability to learn, leading to decreased academic achievement and increased stress levels (Epstein, 2011). Moreover, the school environment can also impact students' socialization and emotional well-being, as it provides opportunities for social interaction, peer relationships, and emotional support (Hallinger, 2018

The relationship between school environment and academic achievement is complex and multifaceted, involving various psychological, social, and physical factors (Woolner, 2018). Research has shown that the school environment can influence students' academic achievement through various mechanisms, including motivation, engagement, and cognitive processes (Higgins, 2015). For instance, a supportive school environment can promote students' motivation and engagement, leading to improved academic achievement and increased academic aspirations (Tucker (2018).

Conversely, an unsupportive school environment can hinder students' motivation and engagement, leading to decreased academic achievement and increased dropout rates (Epstein, 2011). Moreover, the school environment can also impact students' cognitive processes, including attention, memory, and problem-solving, which are critical for academic success (Hallinger, 2018

In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the importance of the school environment in promoting academic achievement and student well-being (Woolner, 2018). This has led to increased investment in school infrastructure and

facilities, as well as efforts to promote positive school cultures and climates (Kingston et al., 2018). However, despite these efforts, many schools still struggle to provide a supportive and inclusive learning environment, particularly in disadvantaged and marginalized communities (Tucker (2018).

This study investigated the perceived influence of school environment on academic achievement of secondary school students, exploring the empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks that underpin this complex and multifaceted issue. The study will examine the physical and psychological factors that comprise the school environment, as well as the mechanisms by which these factors influence students' Academic Achievement. The findings of this study will contribute to our understanding of the critical role that the school environment plays in promoting academic achievement and student well-being, and will inform strategies for improving school environments and promoting positive educational outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

The academic achievement of secondary school students is a pressing concern for educators, policymakers, and parents. Despite efforts to improve educational outcomes, many students continue to struggle academically, with significant numbers failing to meet minimum standards in core subjects. This issue is particularly pronounced in disadvantaged and marginalized communities, where students often face numerous barriers to academic success. One critical factor that seems to contributes to this problem is the school environment. The physical and psychological conditions of a school can either support or hinder students' learning, depending on how they are designed and maintained. A poorly designed or unsupportive school environment can lead to decreased motivation, engagement, and academic achievement, as well as increased stress levels and behavioral problems.

The school environment can have a disproportionate impact on certain student populations, including those from low-income backgrounds & students with disabilities learners. These students often face additional barriers to academic success, including limited access to resources and support services. Despite the critical importance of the school environment, many schools struggle to provide a supportive and inclusive learning environment. This can be due to a range of factors, including limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient training and support for teachers and staff.

The consequences of a poorly designed or unsupportive school environment can be severe and long-lasting. Students who struggle academically due to environmental factors may experience decreased self-esteem, increased stress levels, and reduced opportunities for future success. In light of these issues, it is essential to explore the Perceived Influence of School Environment on the Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Njikoka Local Government Area.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine the Perceived Influence of School Environment on the Academic achievement of Secondary School students in Njikoka local government Area of Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to identify:

1. the influence of physical school environment (i.e., class design, school facilities) on the academic achievement of secondary School students in Njikoka local government Area
2. the influence of social school environment (i.e., teacher-student relationship, peer relationship and so on) on the academic achievement of secondary School students in Njikoka local government Area.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated by the researcher to guide the study:

1. What is the influence of physical school environment on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area?
2. What is the influence of social school environment on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area?

Research Hypothesis

Ho_1: There was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of physical school environment on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area.

Review of Related Literature

School Environment

The school environment is a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses various physical, social, and psychological factors that influence students' learning experiences and outcomes. various definitions of the school environment are given below:

According to Gottfredson and Gottfredson (2015) the school environment refers to the physical, social, and psychological context in which students learn and interact with teachers, peers, and other school staff. This environment encompasses various factors, including the school's layout, classroom design, teaching methods, and relationships among students and teachers. Similarly, Schreck (2017) define the school environment as the totality of physical, social, and cultural factors that influence students' learning experiences, behaviors, and outcomes. This environment includes not only the physical infrastructure but also the social interactions, norms, and expectations that shape students' experiences.

In addition, the National Center for Education Statistics (2019) describes the school environment as the combination of physical, social, and organizational factors that affect students' Academic Achievement, attendance, and overall well-being. This environment includes factors such as school safety, teacher quality, and parental involvement.

Furthermore, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2019) defines the school environment as the physical, social, and cultural context in which students learn, including the school's facilities, teaching practices, and relationships among students, teachers, and parents. This environment plays a critical role in shaping students' learning outcomes, social skills, and emotional well-being.

Lastly, according to Kumar and Kumar (2020), the school environment encompasses various dimensions, including physical, psychological, social, and cultural factors. These dimensions interact and influence one another, ultimately affecting students' academic achievement, motivation, and overall educational experience. Schreck (2017) reiterated that the school environment includes the "physical, social, and cultural contexts in which students learn". This definition highlights the importance of considering the various dimensions of the school environment in order to understand its impact on students. Recent research has emphasized the critical role of the school environment in shaping students' academic achievement, motivation, and well-being. For instance, Gottfredson and Gottfredson (2015) found that schools with positive learning environments, characterized by supportive teacher-student relationships and engaging instructional practices, tend to have higher student achievement and motivation. Similarly, the National Center for Education Statistics (2019) reported that schools with safe, supportive, and inclusive environments tend to have better student outcomes, including higher graduation rates and lower dropout rates.

The school environment is not just a physical space, but also a social and psychological context that influences students' experiences and outcomes. As Kumar and Kumar (2020) noted, the school environment is a "dynamic and interactive system" that involves the interactions among students, teachers, and the physical environment (p. 12). This perspective highlights the importance of considering the complex interplay between various factors in the school environment in order to create supportive and inclusive learning environments that promote student success.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey research design as one in which a group of items or people are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. Njikoka Local Government Area is one of the 21 local government areas in Anambra State, Nigeria. Located in the central part of the state, Njikoka LGA is headquartered in Abagana. With a population of approximately 182,000 people, according to the 2006 census, the area is composed of several communities, including Abagana, Enugwu-Ukwu, Abba, and Nawfia. The economy of Njikoka LGA is primarily driven by agriculture, with crops such as yams, cassava, and maize being major staples. The area also boasts several schools, including primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions, as well as infrastructure projects like roads,

bridges, and healthcare facilities. Njikoka LGA is also known for its rich cultural heritage, with several festivals and traditions being celebrated throughout the year. The population of the study comprised 5,750 secondary school students in the 15 secondary schools in Njikoka L.G.A. (Anambra State Science Teachers Association, 2023). The sample for the study comprised 200 secondary school students from 10 out of the 15 secondary schools in Njikoka L.G.A. Simple random sampling was used to select the 10 secondary schools for the study from A Njikoka L.G.A. Furthermore, Simple random sampling was then used to obtain 10 male and 10 female students across all classes from the selected schools which gave rise to the sample of 200 students with a breakdown of 100 male and 100 female students. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. The instrument was titled "Questionnaire on Perceived Influence of School Environment on the Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Njikoka Local Government Area (QPISEAPSSSNLGA). QPISEAPSSSNLGA was divided into two sections A and B. Section A addressed the demographic characteristics of the respondents while Section B was broken into two clusters (one and two) geared towards answering the research questions. The clusters were constructed in a way that the respondents will respond in the mode of four-point rating scale of: Strongly Agree (SA=4), Agree (A=3), Disagree (D=2), and Strongly Disagree (SD=1). The face and content validity of the instrument was ascertained by giving the questionnaire to three experts who are lecturers in the Faculty of Education in Nnamdi Azikiwe University. While two were from the department of educational management and policy, one was from measurement and evaluation. All the experts were given copies of the research topic, purpose of the study and research questions to guide them. The reliability coefficient of 0.74 was gotten which was high enough to consider the instrument as reliable for data collection. Mean was used to analyze data. The cut-off point for accepting mean score was put at 2.50, with the decision rule that any weighted mean score from 2.50 and above was taken as agree while weighted mean scores below 2.50 was taken as disagree.

Results

Research Question One: What is the influence of physical school environment on the Academic Achievement of secondary School students in Njikoka local government Area of Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Respondents on influence of physical school environment on the Academic Achievement of secondary School students in Njikoka local government Area of Anambra State

S/N	In my School;	Mean	Remark
1.	A comfortable classroom temperature, lighting, and seating arrangement can improve students' focus and concentration, leading to better Academic Achievement.	3.30	Agree
2.	Excessive noise levels in the school environment can negatively impact students' ability to focus and learn, resulting in lower academic achievement	3.33	Agree
3.	Availability of modern technology, such as computers and internet, can enhance students' learning experience and improve their Academic Achievement.	3.23	Agree
4.	Well-maintained school facilities, including clean and safe classrooms, can promote a positive learning environment and improve student outcomes.	2.89	Agree
5.	Adequate natural light in classrooms can boost students' mood, energy, and motivation, leading to improved Academic Achievement.	2.67	Agree
	Grand Mean	**3.01**	**Agree**

Table 1, influence of physical school environment on the Academic Achievement of secondary School students in Njikoka local government Area of Anambra State. Respondents agreed with items 1-5 having mean values of 3.30, 3.33, 3.23, 2.89, and 2.67 all above 2.50 respectively. The grand mean of 3.01 therefore indicates that the respondents agreed with the items stated as some of the influences of physical school environment on the Academic Achievement of secondary School students in Njikoka local government Area of Anambra State

Research Question Two: What is the influence of social school environment on the Academic Achievement of secondary School students in Njikoka local government Area of Anambra State?

Table 2: Mean Ratings of Respondents on the influence of social school environment on the Academic Achievement of secondary School students in Njikoka local government Area of Anambra State

S/N	In my School;	Mean	Remark
1.	Positive teacher-student relationships can improve students' motivation, engagement, and Academic Achievement.	3.65	Agree
2.	Supportive peer relationships can enhance students' sense of belonging, reduce stress, and improve academic outcomes.	3.11	Agree
3.	A positive school climate, characterized by respect, empathy, and inclusivity, can promote students' social and emotional well-being, leading to better Academic Achievement.	2.78	Agree
4.	Exposure to bullying and harassment can negatively impact students' mental health, self-esteem, and academic achievement.	3.01	Agree
5.	Parental involvement in school activities, such as volunteering and attending parent-teacher conferences, can positively impact students' Academic Achievement.	3.43	Agree
	Grand Mean	**3.20**	**Agree**

Data in Table 2 reveal that all items have mean score above 2.50. This indicates that the respondents agreed with the items the researcher indicated above. The grand mean 3.20 which is above the cut off mark of 2.50 indicates that there is a positive influence of a proper and conducive social school environment on the Academic Achievement of secondary School students in Njikoka local government Area of Anambra State.

Research Hypothesis

Ho1: There was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of physical school environment on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area.

Table 3: t-test on the difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of physical school environment on the academic achievement of secondary school students

Items	Status	N	Mean	SD	t.	df	P-value	Decision
1	Male	100	3.58	0.53	0.12			
				0.52		198	0.80	NS
	Female	100	3.57					
2	Male	100	3.51	0.55				
				0.56	0.11	198	0.91	NS
	Female	100	3.50					
3	Male	100	3.71	0.48				
					0.33	198	0.52	NS
	Female	100	3.68	0.50				
4	Male	100	3.44	0.52				
				0.53	0.31	198	0.74	NS
	Female	100	3.43					
5	Male	100	3.44	0.58				
					0.21	198	0.88	NS
	Female	100	3.43	0.59				

Key: NS: Not significant

Result on Table 3 revealed that the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of physical school environment on the academic achievement of secondary school students was not significant as the P value of 0.05 ($P < 0.05$) was less than the calculated values. This means that the sampled male and female students were of same opinion on the influence of physical school environment on the academic achievement of secondary school students.

Discussion

Influence of Physical School Environment on the Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Njikoka Local Government Area

The findings of the study revealed Influence of physical school environment on the

Academic Achievement of secondary School students in Njikoka local government Area of Anambra State. This is based on the respondents' agreement that they meet the items listed which include A comfortable classroom temperature, lighting, and seating arrangement, Availability of modern technology, such as computers and internet, Well-maintained school facilities, including clean and safe classrooms and Adequate natural light in classrooms can boost students' mood, energy. While the result of hypothesis revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of physical school environment on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area. The findings from this study concur with the study of Al-Khateeb, & Al-Shammari, (2017) whose study revealed a significant positive relationship between school environment and student Academic Achievement. The findings corroborated also claimed that some students struggle with their Academic Achievement due to lack of proper school management skills which could have been developed with a lot of principal experience.

Influence of Social School Environment on the Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Njikoka Local Government Area

The findings of the study revealed that items listed as the impact of proper classroom management on the Academic Achievement of secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area as all agreed by the respondents. They agreed that Positive teacher-student relationships, Supportive peer relationships, A positive school climate and Parental involvement in school activities, such as volunteering and attending parent-teacher conferences are all factors that Influence of social school environment. This therefore entails that the better the classroom management, the better the Academic Achievement. These findings align with Al-Turki, (2017) whose study on challenges of school environment on student Academic Achievement in Saudi Arabia revealed that a poor social school environment which include poor teacher-student relationships could affect student Academic Achievement.

Conclusion

The study's findings unequivocally indicate that the physical, social, and psychological school environments significantly influence the Academic Achievement of secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area. The respondent's consensus on the positive impact of a conducive physical environment, the role of social factors, and the effects of psychological conditions underscores the importance of a holistic approach to optimizing learning outcomes.

Recommendations

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

1. Teachers should be trained to create inclusive classrooms, engage with students, and address diverse needs. Schools can also organize extracurricular activities, sports, and clubs to promote socialization and teamwork as by fostering a positive social environment, schools can help students develop

essential life skills, build confidence, and achieve academic success.

2. To support students' psychological needs, schools should provide counseling services, promote stress management techniques, and establish mental health support systems.

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