



Influence of School Climate on Senior Secondary School Students Academic Performance in The English Language

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of school climate on senior secondary school students' academic performance in the English language in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, Katsina State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive research design of survey type. The target population was made up of two thousand, seven hundred and fifty-one public senior secondary school two students. We used a simple random sampling technique to select five public senior secondary schools in the Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State while a purposive sampling technique was used to select one hundred and twenty senior secondary school two students for the study. Two instruments were used to collect data in the study namely; the School Climate Questionnaire (SCQ) and the English Language Performance Test (ELPT). The research questions were answered using frequency and percentage while the hypothesis was tested using linear regression analysis. The findings showed the significant relative influence of school climate on the academic performance of senior secondary school students in English Language. It was recommended that the school administration should provide a conducive school climate to facilitate teaching and learning processes in the English language.

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1. INTRODUCTION

English language is a generally accepted language in Nigeria because it serves as a language of communication between and among people from different linguistic and ethnic backgrounds (Danladi, 2013; Osoba & Alebiosu, 2016). It is the official language that is used in all sectors or disciplines such as by the government, judiciary, mass media, business, and the language used to interact with people outside Nigeria. The English language is one of the compulsory subjects in senior secondary schools in Nigeria (Udofia *et al.*, 2021; Chukwuyenum *et al.*, 2014). The importance of this subject led the Nigerian government to make it a compulsory subject in primary and secondary schools as well as a prerequisite for admission into tertiary institutions. Students read, write, and express themselves in any given task using the English language.

English language involves four skills; speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Ali, 2022; Al-Jiboury, 2024)). Thus, student assessment in a favorable school climate in the English language is important to discover the level of acquisition and proficiency of students in this subject. The school climate construct is complex and multi-dimensional. It has been described as the unwritten personality and atmosphere of a school, including its norms, values, and expectations. School climate is one of the critical elements which contribute to the holistic success of any school.

The climate of a school involves collaboration between human, physical, and material resources. It has been perceived that school, as a social institution for learning and the exchange of ideas, should be conducive to learning and the realization of academic excellence among the students. In Nigeria, common observation shows that some parents have lost confidence in the ability of most of the public secondary schools to guarantee the successful academic performance of their children. It has equally been observed that while some students passed their Senior Secondary Certificate Examination in some schools, others failed the examinations in some other schools. It is assumed that the type of school climate of an institution is responsible for this because a school has unique characteristics and these characteristics of the school tend to distinguish one school from the other.

Moreover, school climate has been defined in various ways by many researchers for instance, some researchers define school climate as an aggregate measure of school characteristics, such as relationships between parents, teachers, administrators as well as physical facilities on the ground. Characteristics of a school such as the physical structure of a school building and the interaction between students and teachers are two diverse factors that both affect and help to define the broad concept of school climate. Some researchers (Rudasill, 2018) define school climate as the affective and cognitive perceptions regarding social interactions, relationships, values, and beliefs held by students, teachers, administrators, and staff within a school. There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that school climate is one of the factors that differentiates schools that succeed from those that do not.

Scholars have also asserted that school climate factors such as socioeconomic status, parent involvement, attendance, school size teaching-learning resources, and interpersonal relationships affect teachers' job satisfaction and this can affect student academic performance. The school as an organization has certain objectives that it has to achieve. According to the National School Climate Council in 2007, a sustainable, positive school climate promotes students' academic and social development. In a negative school climate, schools are deterred from their mission and goals by parental and public demands.

To achieve the objectives, the organizational climate of the school is important. Some researchers have extended this definition and included it in the attributes describing the environment inside the organization, distinguishing one organization from another and affecting the behaviors of each member.

Previous studies have investigated the relationship between poor school environments including problems with student-teacher ratio, school location, school population, classroom ventilation, poor lighting in classrooms, and inconsistent temperatures in classrooms with students' health problems, student behavior, and student achievement (Johnson, 2001).

Among other factors, empirical evidence has confirmed that school climate is powerful in affecting students' academic achievement (Chen & Weikart, 2008; Collins & Parson, 2010). Subsequent research supports these findings (Goddard *et al.*, 2000; Heck, 2000). For example, some researchers (Tschannen-Moran *et al.*, 2006) found that a positive school climate was associated with students' academic achievement, after controlling for SES. Contrastingly, a negative school climate has been found to reduce student participation in school activities and student learning (Chen & Weikart, 2008). This climate-achievement relationship appears to be robust for students across different grades, backgrounds, and cultures (Gregory *et al.*, 2007). Scholarly evidence has shown that there is a significant relationship between school climate and academic performance.

According to some researchers (Adewale, 2003), academic performance can be defined as a means of academic progress, not only to indicate readiness for the next step but to evaluate students' progress toward educational goals. Some researchers (Anene, 2005) defined students' academic performance as an assessment of students' learning task progress that is required of them. They are expected to engage in activities that may include, manipulation of materials, problem-solving, demonstration of practical skills, and participating in theoretical work.

In Nigeria, there is abundant evidence attesting to senior secondary school students' difficulty in attaining high academic performance in the English language despite the government's efforts to find a solution to the student's failure in the subject. Many schools seem to exhibit different types of climates. In some schools, the atmosphere might be healthy and friendly while in others, it may be tense hence, students' academic performance seems to be a function of the school climate. In this regard, the dwindling performance of secondary students in their common entrance may be attributed to school climates which may constitute the problem. Some buildings are old and some have leaky roofs, walls have cracks, unlockable doors, and broken or no window panes.

Moreover, there is evidence that the performance of students in the English language has not been encouraging despite the use of different methods by teachers in Nigerian schools and government efforts to find a lasting solution to this problem. Some researchers traced students' poor performances in the English language in national examinations to an inadequate number of qualified teachers of the subject, a lack of instructional materials, and an unsupportive learning context. The public's unhappiness becomes more prominent, following the annual release of the West African Senior School Certificate Examination results. All stakeholders are concerned about why the system is turning out graduates with poor results.

Thus, it is important to examine the concept of climate and its relation with the lives of schools and individuals, with establishing a positive atmosphere and with academic achievement. Therefore, this study investigated the influence of school climate on senior secondary school students' academic performance in the English language in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State, Nigeria.

The main objective of this study is to examine the influence of school climate on senior secondary school student's academic performance in the English language in the Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to find out the:

- (i) Pattern of school climate of senior secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State, Nigeria?
- (ii) Pattern of academic performance of senior secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State, Nigeria?
- (iii) Find out the influence of school climate on senior secondary school students' academic performance in the English Language in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State, Nigeria.

The following research questions were asked in the study.

- (i) What is the pattern of school climate of senior secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State, Nigeria?
- (ii) What is the normal distribution of academic performance of senior secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State, Nigeria?

One null hypothesis was formulated for the study and tested at a 0.05 alpha level of significance: There is no significant relative influence of school climate on the academic performance of senior secondary school students in the English Language in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State, Nigeria.

2. METHODS

This study adopted a descriptive research design of survey type. This research design was considered suitable for this study because no variable was manipulated. We collected data through questionnaires and tests from the respondents. The target population was made up of two thousand, seven hundred and fifty-one public senior secondary school two students in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, Katsina State. The target population used for the study was made up of the following; male and female students from eight mixed schools and two girls' schools. We used a simple random sampling technique to select five (5) public senior secondary schools in the Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State while a purposively sampling technique was used to select 120 senior secondary schools two (SSS 2) students from the 5 selected public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma, Local Government Area of Katsina State, Nigeria.

Two instruments were used to collect data in the study namely; School Climate Questionnaire (SCQ) and English Language Performance Test (ELPT). School Climate Questionnaire (SCQ) consisted of 10 items with a four-point Likert-type scale of strongly agree, Disagree, strongly disagree and English Language Performance Test (ELPT) with four options A to D. Respondents were asked to circle the correct answer from A to D.

Both the face and content validities of the instruments were ensured. The reliability of the instruments was determined using a split-half method of estimating reliability with reliability coefficients of 0.88 and 0.89 for SCQ and ELPT respectively. Research questions one and two were answered using frequency and percentage while hypothesis one was tested using linear regression analysis. The hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 shows that the distribution of senior secondary school students' school climate is approximately normal. This implies that there are fewer students whose school climate is below or above average while the majority of the students' school climate is average.

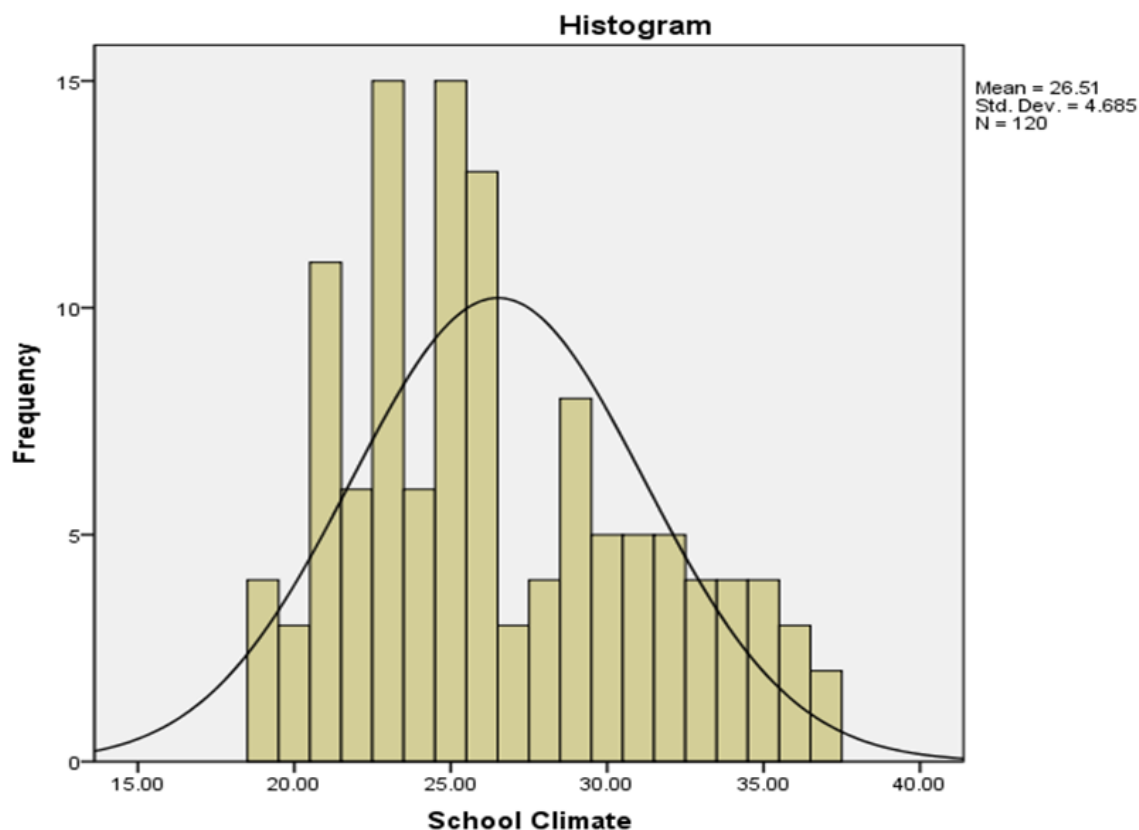


Figure 1. Pattern of students school climate.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of senior secondary school students' academic performance in the English Language in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State, Nigeria which is approximately normal. It means that there are fewer students whose performance is below or above average while the majority of the student's performance in the English language is at an average level.

In **Table 1**, school climate significantly contributed only 3.7% to the total variance in academic performance ($R^2 = 0.037$, $F_{1, 118} = 4.565$; $p < 0.05$). This implies that 3.7% of the variation in academic performance of the students can be explained by their school climate. Other variables not included in this study may be responsible for the remaining variance in the academic performance of the students. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant relative influence of school climate on the academic performance of senior secondary school students in English Language in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State, Nigeria. Therefore, school climate is a good predictor of the academic performance of senior secondary school students in the English Language in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State, Nigeria.

The findings in hypothesis one showed that there is a significant relative influence of school climate on the academic performance of senior secondary school students in the English Language in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State, Nigeria ($R^2 = 0.035$, $F_{1, 118} = 4.565$; $p < 0.05$). In support of this finding, some researchers (Brookever, 2008) conducted a study establishing the relationship between climate performance and students' achievement and the result showed that there was a relationship between school climate and the performance of the students. The finding in hypothesis one was also supported by the finding from some researchers (Tschne-Moram, 2006) who found that a positive school climate was associated with students' academic performance.

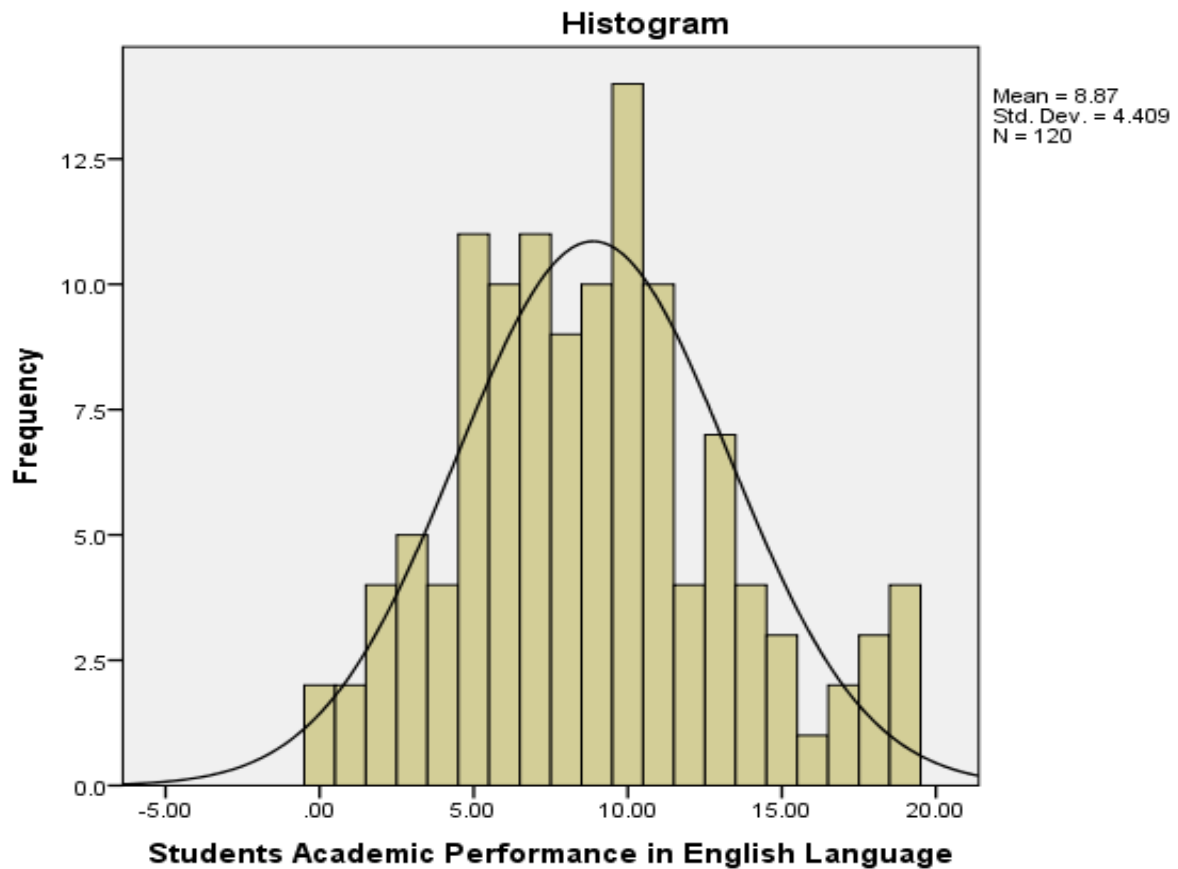


Figure 2. Pattern of students academic performance in English language.

Table 1. Regression analysis showing the influence of School Climate on academic performance of senior secondary school students in English Language in Dutsin-Ma.

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	86.153	1	86.153			
Residual	2226.972	118	18.873	4.565	0.035	S
Total	2313.125	119				

S: Significant at the 0.05 alpha level of significance

4. CONCLUSION

School climate relates linearly with the academic performance of students in the English Language. Also, school climate is a good predictor of students' performance in the English Language but it contributed little percentage to the variation in the student's academic performance which is tested to be significant.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- (i) School administration should provide a conducive school climate to facilitate teaching and learning processes in the English language;
- (ii) The government should provide facilities that can improve school climate which in turn improves students' performance in the English Language in senior secondary schools.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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