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INFLUENCE OF CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN DELTA NORTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of classroom environment on academic performance of secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. One research question and one null hypothesis guided the study. The study utilized the correlational research design. The population of the study consist of 9,385 SS 2 students in public secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District in the 2024/2025 academic session. The sample size comprised of 357 students. The multistage sampling procedure was used to select the sample. The data for the study were collected using questionnaire. The instrument was validated through experts' judgement and factor analysis. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was used to check for the reliability of the items. The data obtained were analysed using Pearson's correlation and coefficient of determination for the research question and linear regression for the hypothesis. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between classroom environment and academic performance among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. In view of these findings, the study recommended amongst others, that government and principals should prioritise the improvement of physical and psychosocial classroom conditions.

KEYWORDS: Classroom Environment; Academic Performance; Secondary School Students; Delta North Senatorial District.

INTRODUCTION

Secondary education in Nigeria is a crucial stage in the nation's educational system. It serves as the bridge between primary education and higher or vocational training. It generally caters for students aged between 11 and 17 and is structured into junior secondary (three years) and senior secondary (three years), in line with the 6-3-3-4 system of education. This level of education is guided by the National Policy on Education, which emphasises providing all children with a broad-based curriculum that fosters intellectual, social, moral, and vocational competencies necessary for adulthood and societal contribution (Federal Ministry of Education, 2021). In essence, secondary education is intended not only to prepare students for further academic pursuits but also to equip them with relevant skills for self-reliance and community development, making it a pivotal determinant of individual and national growth.

The goals of secondary education in Nigeria are multidimensional, aiming to develop students' cognitive abilities, moral values, social responsibility, and vocational skills. According to recent educational reforms, these goals include preparing students for useful living within society, equipping them with the capacity to pursue higher education, and instilling values that promote national unity and sustainable development (Okeke & Okoye, 2022). These objectives are closely linked to academic performance because the degree to which students acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes during secondary school largely reflects how effectively these goals are met. Academic performance refers to the measurable extent to which a student has achieved specific learning objectives. This is usually determined through continuous assessment, tests, examinations, and other evaluative methods. It is not limited to mastery of subject content but also includes the ability to apply knowledge, demonstrate problem-solving skills, and exhibit creativity and critical thinking (Adewale & Afolabi, 2023). In the Nigerian secondary school context, academic performance serves as a key indicator of educational effectiveness.

In recent years, the academic results of secondary school students in Delta State have raised serious concern. Reports from national examination bodies show that many students are not meeting the basic pass levels required for further studies or jobs. For example, WAEC's 2022 report showed that about three-quarters of candidates achieved credit passes in core subjects, but in the following years there was a noticeable drop in the number of students who got five credits including English and Mathematics (WAEC, 2022). NECO's 2023 national report also revealed that about 38% of candidates failed to reach the same five-credit benchmark, which is often used to measure readiness for higher education (NECO, 2023). Since Delta State

students write the same national exams, these figures are a clear signal that the state's performance may be following a similar worrying trend.

A closer examination of Delta State reveals that data from NECO and state education reports for 2023 and 2024 indicate a moderate-to-high overall performance compared to other states, with average pass rates ranging from 71% to 76% for students obtaining five credits. However, these averages conceal significant variations in performance across different areas within the state (NECO, 2023; Delta State Ministry of Basic & Secondary Education, 2024). In reality, some schools, especially in rural parts of the northern part of the state, have much lower pass rates in English and Mathematics. The problem becomes even clearer when looking at JAMB's UTME results for 2023–2024, which show that many students nationwide scored below the usual admission cut-off of 200 points. Since Delta State generally follows the national trend, it is likely that a large number of students in the state, including those in Delta North, are struggling to meet the requirements for university admission (JAMB, 2024).

For Delta North Senatorial District, there is very little public data that shows exact performance for each LGA because WAEC, NECO, and JAMB do not usually publish district-level results in their public reports (WAEC, 2022; NECO, 2023; JAMB, 2024). However, the combination of national failure rates, state averages that hide poor performance in some areas, and low UTME scores strongly suggest that there are serious academic challenges in parts of Delta North.

Poor academic performance has negative effects on both the school and the students. For students, it limits their chances of progressing to higher levels of education, gaining admission into competitive programmes, and securing good job opportunities in the future. Students who consistently perform poorly may also experience low self-esteem, reduced motivation, and feelings of frustration, which can lead to a lack of interest in schooling altogether. This can increase the risk of school dropout, particularly in areas where socio-economic challenges already make education difficult. For the school, poor results harm its reputation and reduce public confidence in its ability to provide quality education. This can lead to a drop in student enrolment, less community support, and in some cases, reduced funding from government or private stakeholders. When schools are known for low performance, they also struggle to attract and retain qualified teachers, which can further worsen the situation.

Several studies have identified a range of factors responsible for poor academic performance among students. These include inadequate teaching methods, lack of qualified teachers, overcrowded classrooms, poor school infrastructure, and shortage of learning materials

(Okoye & Nwankwo, 2021). Environmental factors such as noisy classrooms, unsafe school locations, and poor lighting or ventilation have also been found to negatively affect concentration and learning (Eze, 2022). Socio-economic issues play a significant role, as students from low-income families may lack access to textbooks, private tutoring, and other learning resources (Okeke & Okoye, 2022).

Other researchers have highlighted factors such as low student motivation, poor study habits, lack of parental involvement, and high rates of absenteeism as strong predictors of weak academic outcomes (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2023). These findings show that poor performance is usually the result of a combination of school-related, environmental, and personal factors, making it necessary to investigate each one carefully. Since poor academic performance affects both the image of the school and the future of the students, it becomes important to focus on variables within the school's control that could help improve learning outcomes. This variable is classroom environment.

The classroom environment refers to the total setting in which teaching and learning take place, including the physical, social, and psychological conditions that influence how students and teachers interact. It is more than just the arrangement of desks and chairs; it includes the quality of lighting, ventilation, noise control, classroom size, availability of instructional materials, and overall cleanliness and safety of the space (Eze, 2022). A positive classroom environment is one that is well-organised, welcoming, and supportive, where students feel comfortable, respected, and motivated to participate actively in learning activities. In contrast, a poor classroom environment can create barriers to concentration, reduce student engagement, and make it difficult for effective teaching to occur. The classroom environment also encompasses the relationships and communication patterns between teachers and students, as well as among students themselves (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2023).

A teacher who fosters mutual respect, provides encouragement, and maintains clear behavioural expectations contributes to a supportive atmosphere that promotes learning. On the other hand, classrooms where students feel intimidated, excluded, or misunderstood often discourage participation and reduce motivation. The psychological aspect of the classroom environment such as the presence of trust, fairness, and emotional safety is just as important as the physical aspect because it shapes students' attitudes toward learning and their willingness to engage with challenging tasks.

The classroom environment may likely influence the academic performance of secondary school students because it directly affects how well they can focus, understand lessons, and

stay engaged in learning activities. A well-structured, clean, and safe classroom with adequate lighting, ventilation, and instructional resources may create a setting where students can concentrate and participate actively without unnecessary distractions (Eze, 2022). Such an environment may support better comprehension, encourage regular attendance, and make it easier for teachers to deliver lessons effectively. On the other hand, overcrowded, noisy, or poorly maintained classrooms may make it difficult for students to follow instructions, limit individual attention from teachers, and lead to fatigue or loss of interest, which may ultimately lower academic performance.

Beyond the physical setting, the social and psychological aspects of the classroom may also have a strong impact on students' results. When teachers maintain positive relationships with their students, show respect, and provide encouragement, learners may be more motivated to put in effort and persist in their studies (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2023). A supportive classroom climate may foster confidence and a willingness to engage in problem-solving and critical thinking tasks, which are important for success in examinations. On the other hand, a tense or hostile classroom atmosphere may create anxiety, discourage participation, and reduce students' self-belief, which can negatively affect performance. In view of the above, this study aims to examine the influence of classroom environment on , students' motivation, parental involvement and academic performance among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the relationship between classroom environment and academic performance among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypothesis were tested in the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between classroom environment and academic performance among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State.

METHODS

The study utilized the correlational research design. The population of the study consist of 9,385 Senior Secondary two (SS 2) students in public secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District in the 2024/2025 academic session. The sample size comprised 357

students. This sample size is based on the recommendation of Gill, et al. (2010) that for a population between 5,000 and 9,999, that a sample size of 357 is appropriate (see appendix II). The multistage sampling procedure was used to select the sample for the study. In the first stage, the simple random sampling technique was used to select 4 Local Government Areas from Delta North Senatorial District. In the second stage, five (5) schools were selected randomly from the four (4) Local Government Areas, making a total of 20 schools. In the third stage, from the 20 schools, students were stratified based on sex and selected to make the sample for the study. Once the strata were established, students were randomly selected to form a representative sample for the study.

The data for the study were collected using questionnaire. The questionnaire comprises two sections; section A comprises the demographic data of the respondents while section B comprises Classroom Environment Rating Scale, a self-report instrument designed by the researcher to assess secondary school students' perceptions of their classroom environment. The scale comprehensively captures key components of the classroom setting, including physical, social, and psychological dimensions, which collectively influence teaching and learning experiences. The scale consists of 30 statements reflecting various aspects such as the quality of lighting, ventilation, noise control, classroom size, availability of instructional materials, cleanliness, and safety, representing the physical conditions of the classroom. It also addresses social factors like student-teacher interactions, peer relationships, classroom management, fairness, and mutual respect among students. The items were however reduced to 24 after validation. The scale was structured on a 4-point rating scale, ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 4 for strongly agree. The overall score of the students in the second term of the 2024/2025 academic session were collected from the school and used to assess their academic performance.

The instrument was validated through experts' judgement and factor analysis. The questionnaire was presented to the experts in Guidance and Counselling Department, for face validity. These experts assessed the instruments for appropriateness and suitability to the objective of the study. Some of the items were corrected in terms of language choice, to suite the purpose of the study. After face validity of the instrument through experts' judgement, the researcher administered 50 copies of the questionnaire to secondary school students at Abraka in Delta Central Senatorial District, which is different from the location of the study. The data obtained were subjected to a factor analysis for content and construct validity of the instrument. The principal component analysis of the extraction method was used to estimate the content validity of the instrument. It yielded a total cumulative variance of 71.02%. The

rotated factor loading of the varimax method was used to estimate the construct validity of the instrument. It yielded 0.56-0.85 range of scores. In order to ascertain the reliability of the research instrument, the data from the pilot testing were subjected to Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient. It yielded a coefficient of 0.95.

The questionnaire was administered to the respondents directly by the researcher with the help of three research assistants. The researcher approached the principal of the schools, explained purpose of visit and obtained permission for the administration. The researcher was ground to explain the content of the questionnaire, where appropriate. The completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately to avoid loss of data. The data obtained were analysed using Pearson's correlation and coefficient of determination for the research question and linear regression for the hypothesis. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. In order to determine the strength of the relationship as raised in the research questions, the benchmark suggested by Cohen was adopted. Cohen (1988) suggested the following guidelines for the interpretation of the strength of relationship:

r = .10 to .29 - Small Positive Relationship

r = –.10 to – .29 - Small Negative Relationship

r = .30 to .49 - Moderate Positive Relationship

r = –.30 to – .49 - Moderate Negative Relationship

r = .50 to 1.0 - Large Positive Relationship

r = – .50 to – 1.0 - Large Negative Relationship

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between classroom environment and academic performance among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State?

Table 1: Pearson's correlation coefficient and coefficient of determination on classroom environment and academic performance among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State.

Variable	N	*R*	r^2	r^2%	Decision
Classroom Environment					
Academic Performance	357	0.16	0.03	3	Positive Relationship

Table 1 shows the Pearson's correlation coefficient and coefficient of determination on classroom environment and academic performance among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. The result shows an r-value of 0.16 and an r^2-value

of 0.03. The amount of contribution of classroom environment to academic performance was 3%. This shows a low positive relationship between the two variables. Classroom environment accounted for approximately 3% of the variance in academic performance.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between classroom environment and academic performance among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State.

Table 2: Regression analysis of classroom environment and academic performance among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State.

Model	**SS**	***df***	**MS**	***F***	***p***
Regression	1625.388	1	1625.388	9.102	.003[b]
Residual	63393.805	355	178.574		
Total	65019.193	356			
Variables in Equation					
Model	**Unstandardized Coefficient**		**Standardised Coefficient**	***T***	***p***
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
(Constant)	28.490	3.111		9.157	.000
Classroom Environment	.153	.051	.158	3.017	.003
$\alpha = 0.05$, $R = 0.158$, R-Square = 0.03 **a. Dependent Variable:** Academic Performance **b. Predictors (Constant):** Classroom Environment					

The result in Table 2 shows the regression output of a relationship between classroom environment and academic performance among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State, with an F-value of 9.102 and a p-value of 0.003. Testing the hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value of 0.003 was less than the alpha level of 0.05, hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. This revealed that there is a significant relationship between classroom environment and academic performance among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. The unstandardized regression coefficient (B) for predicting academic performance from classroom environment is 0.153. The standardized coefficient (β) is 0.158, t = 3.017. Classroom environment was significant at an alpha level of 0.05.

DISCUSSIONS

The first finding revealed that there is a significant relationship between classroom environment and academic performance among secondary school students in Delta North

Senatorial District of Delta State. This finding suggests that the physical, social, emotional, and instructional characteristics of the classroom are important conditions associated with students' academic outcomes. A classroom environment that is orderly, adequately ventilated, well-lit, spacious, relatively free from excessive noise, and furnished with appropriate instructional facilities can create conditions that support sustained attention and effective participation in learning activities. Similarly, a classroom characterised by respectful teacher–student relationships, positive peer interactions, fairness, and psychological safety may encourage students to participate actively, ask questions, seek clarification, and persist when they encounter difficult academic tasks. Thus, the significant relationship observed in the present study may be explained by the fact that students do not learn independently of their immediate classroom context; rather, the classroom provides the physical and psychosocial conditions within which teaching and learning take place.

One possible explanation for this finding is that a conducive physical classroom environment facilitates students' concentration and reduces environmental distractions that may interfere with information processing. Factors such as excessive classroom temperature, poor ventilation, inadequate lighting, overcrowding, noise, uncomfortable seating arrangements, and insufficient learning resources can compete for students' attention and reduce the amount of cognitive capacity available for academic tasks. On the other hand, classrooms that provide reasonable physical comfort allow students to devote greater attention to lessons and instructional activities. This explanation is consistent with the broader educational-environment literature, which indicates that the physical characteristics of learning spaces can influence students' engagement, concentration, behaviour, and learning outcomes. In this regard, Barrett et al. (2015) found that classroom design characteristics were associated with measurable differences in pupils' learning progress, particularly through factors such as naturalness, individualisation, and stimulation. Although their study focused on primary school pupils, the underlying implication is relevant to secondary education because the physical classroom constitutes the immediate environment in which students receive and process instruction.

Beyond physical conditions, the finding may also be explained by the psychosocial climate created by teachers and students. A classroom in which students perceive their teachers as supportive, respectful, fair, and responsive is more likely to encourage active engagement with academic tasks. Teacher support can communicate to students that their efforts are valued and that mistakes are acceptable as part of the learning process. Such perceptions can strengthen students' willingness to participate and persist in challenging activities. The

finding agrees with Klem and Connell (2004), who reported that students' perceptions of teacher support were associated with engagement and academic outcomes. It also agrees with Quin (2017), who found consistent evidence that positive teacher–student relationships are associated with students' engagement and academic achievement. The implication for the present finding is that the classroom environment should not be understood merely in terms of furniture, ventilation, lighting, or classroom size; the quality of human interaction within the classroom is equally important.

Another explanation concerns student engagement. A supportive classroom environment can promote behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement, which provides a pathway through which classroom conditions may translate into improved academic performance. When students feel comfortable and accepted in the classroom, they may be more willing to attend to lessons, participate in discussions, complete assignments, collaborate with classmates, and invest mental effort in understanding difficult concepts. On the other hand, an environment characterised by hostility, fear, excessive teacher control, peer intimidation, or persistent disruption may discourage participation and reduce students' involvement in learning activities. This position is supported by Zhou et al. (2022), who reported that perceived classroom climate was positively associated with student engagement and academic performance. Their finding provides support for the possibility that the relationship identified in the present study operates partly through students' willingness and capacity to engage meaningfully with classroom learning.

The finding can further be explained from the perspective of motivation. Students are more likely to invest sustained effort in academic activities when the classroom satisfies important psychological needs, particularly the need to feel competent, supported, and socially connected. A teacher who provides constructive feedback, recognises students' efforts, allows appropriate participation, and creates opportunities for students to experience success may strengthen students' motivation to learn. Deci and Ryan's self-determination perspective provides a useful theoretical explanation because learning environments that support autonomy, competence, and relatedness are expected to facilitate more self-determined forms of motivation. Empirical research has similarly shown that students' perceptions of autonomy support and teacher involvement are associated with engagement and positive educational outcomes (Jang et al., 2010; Reeve, 2012). Therefore, the significant relationship obtained in the present study may indicate that classroom conditions influence not only students' immediate learning behaviour but also their motivation to invest effort in academic work.

The role of classroom management also deserves consideration. Effective classroom management creates predictable routines, minimises unnecessary disruptions, establishes clear expectations, and maximises the amount of instructional time available to students. Where classroom management is weak, considerable teaching and learning time may be lost to noise, movement, conflict, lateness, disciplinary problems, or other forms of disruption. Students may consequently have fewer opportunities to receive explanations, practise newly learned skills, obtain feedback, and consolidate knowledge. Korpershoek et al. (2016), in a meta-analysis of classroom management strategies and programmes, found evidence that effective classroom management is associated with improvements in students' academic, behavioural, and social-emotional outcomes. This provides an additional explanation for why differences in classroom environment may be reflected in differences in students' academic performance.

The finding is also consistent with the broader evidence on school and classroom climate. Wang and Degol (2016) explained that school climate is a multidimensional construct involving academic, community, safety, and institutional dimensions, all of which can influence students' educational experiences. Their review indicated that positive climate is associated with academic outcomes and other indicators of student adjustment. Although school climate is broader than classroom environment, the classroom represents one of the most immediate contexts through which students experience the school environment. Consequently, positive conditions at the classroom level may contribute to a broader sense of belonging, safety, engagement, and academic orientation among students.

The present finding also agrees with Nwokedi (2024), who reported that conducive physical environments, positive interpersonal relationships, and sound instructional practices significantly influenced students' academic performance in secondary schools. This agreement is particularly important because it demonstrates that the relationship between learning environment and academic performance is not restricted to a single dimension of classroom conditions. Rather, physical facilities, interpersonal relationships, and instructional practices can operate together to create an environment either conducive or unfavourable to learning. The convergence between the present finding and Nwokedi's result therefore strengthens the argument that improving classroom conditions should involve more than providing physical facilities; attention should also be directed towards teacher–student relationships, instructional practices, classroom management, and students' psychological experiences.

The finding further agrees with Zhou et al. (2022), who established a positive association between perceived classroom climate, student engagement, and academic performance. The relevance of their study to the present finding lies particularly in the proposed mechanism of engagement. Students who perceive their classrooms as supportive and conducive may participate more actively in learning, demonstrate greater persistence, and devote more cognitive effort to academic tasks. Increased engagement can subsequently provide greater opportunities for learning and achievement. Thus, the significant relationship observed among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District may reflect a similar process whereby the quality of the classroom environment influences students' engagement, which in turn contributes to their academic performance.

The finding is also broadly supported by the work of Allen et al. (2018), who emphasised the importance of school belonging and supportive educational environments for students' academic and psychological outcomes. When students experience their educational environment as supportive and inclusive, they are more likely to develop a sense of connection with the school and participate meaningfully in academic activities. This is particularly relevant to secondary school students, who spend substantial portions of their daily lives within classroom settings and whose academic behaviour can be influenced by their perceptions of acceptance, fairness, safety, and support. Consequently, the classroom environment should be viewed as an educational resource that can either facilitate or constrain students' opportunities to learn.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the finding, it is concluded that classroom environment is significantly related to academic performance among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. This implies that the quality and conduciveness of the classroom in which students learn constitute important contextual factors associated with their academic outcomes. A classroom that provides adequate physical comfort, minimal distractions, positive teacher–student relationships, effective classroom management, and supportive instructional conditions is likely to create opportunities for better concentration, engagement, motivation, and learning. On the other hand, unfavourable classroom conditions may constrain students' participation and academic productivity. The following recommendations are therefore made:

1. School administrators should improve the physical conditions of classrooms by ensuring adequate ventilation, lighting, seating arrangements, cleanliness, appropriate classroom

space, and reduction of excessive noise and other distractions that may interfere with students' concentration.

2. The Delta State Government and relevant educational authorities should provide adequate instructional facilities and learning resources to secondary schools, particularly schools experiencing shortages of desks, instructional materials, teaching aids, and other facilities necessary for effective classroom instruction.

3. Teachers should adopt supportive and learner-centred classroom practices that encourage students to ask questions, participate in discussions, collaborate with peers, and express their difficulties without fear of ridicule or intimidation.

4. School administrators should strengthen teachers' capacity in classroom management through regular professional development programmes focusing on effective classroom organisation, management of disruptive behaviour, positive discipline, and strategies for maximising students' engagement and instructional time.

5. Teachers should promote positive teacher–student relationships by treating students fairly, providing constructive feedback, recognising students' efforts, and creating a classroom atmosphere characterised by respect, encouragement, and psychological safety.

6. School authorities should periodically assess the quality of classroom environments through student feedback, classroom observation, and facility inspection. Such assessments can help identify environmental conditions that may be hindering effective teaching and learning and facilitate timely interventions.

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