

# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL CLIMATES AND ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT OF STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU STATE

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## Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between school climate and students' academic adjustment in secondary schools in Enugu State. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The study employed correlational research design. The sample of this study comprised of 733 SSII students drawn from the population of the study using multi stage sampling techniques. The study was carried out using SSII students in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Two instruments were used for data collection of the study namely questionnaire titled Secondary School Students School Climate Questionnaire (SSSSCQ) and Secondary School Students Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (SSSAAQ). Cronbach Alpha formula was used to test the reliability of the instruments and they yielded reliability indexes of 0.98 and 0.78 respectively. The data for this study were collected through personal administration of the instruments by the researcher and with the help of six research assistants. In order to answer the research questions, this study employed means and standard deviation while Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficients was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the study showed that there was significant relationship between school climate and academic adjustment. There is no significant relationship between gender and academic adjustment. There is significant relationship between school location and academic adjustment of students in Enugu state. In line with the findings of the study, the educational implications of the findings were highlighted and the recommendations were equally proffered.

Background School climate is the quality and characteristics of school life, both social and physical aspects of the school, which can positively promote behaviour, school achievement, and the social and emotional development of students. School Climate is based on patterns of students', parents', and school personnel's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal interactions, teaching and learning practices and organizational structures. The climate of the school refers to the psychological disposition among other various components of the school. School climate is what constitutes the schools atmosphere based on the interactions and perceptions of the stakeholders in the school environment (Norton, 2008). Some of these perceptions according to Lunenburg and LaRusso, Romer and Selman (2007) can be conveyed as open, lively, friendly, casual, formal, unwelcoming, rigid, or closed. School climate is the atmosphere, tone or a feeling that prevails in a particular school. It is brought about by the interaction between the principal and teachers, among teachers and students.

Also school as a social system compels the principal, teachers and students to interrelate at administrative level in the area of planning, decision making problem solving and control. They also interact through personnel matters which are part of normal school routine. This means that school climate results from interaction of the school members- principal, teachers, students, staff and other stake holders (Oyetunji, 2006). According to Anita (2008) school climate is perceived attributes of an organization and its sub system as reflected in the way an organization deals with its members, groups and issues. This means that climate is the internal quality that is unique and peculiar to a school. It also implies that schools and colleges can be identified with specific climate and interaction pattern that influence the behaviour and relationship of both staff and students of the school. School climate can either impact positively or negatively on the student's academic adjustment. The term adjustment in this study refers to the degree of capacity by which an individual student tries to cope with inner tensions, needs, conflicts, frustration and is simultaneously able to bring coordination between his inner demands and those imposed by the school environment. It is often used as a synonym for accommodation and adaptation. Adjustment, in psychology, refers to the behavioural process by which humans and other animals maintain equilibrium among their various needs or between their needs and the obstacles of their environments adjustment (Searle and Ward, 2012). It is used to emphasize the individual struggle to get along or survive in his or her social and physical environment. In this process, the individual also makes efforts to maintain harmonious relationship with the learning environment. The issue of adjustment is of great importance to all individual especially to the students who should be helped in developing good adjustment besides the intellectual progress. A successful academic adjustment of students will enable them complete their studies. Present society is a dynamic; hence the needs of human beings are increasing tremendously which needs to be fulfilled. Everybody in the society is in the race of competition. This poses the serious threat to the adjustment of the individuals particularly to the adolescents/ secondary school students. The problem of adjustment is a crucial problem of the modern world. This problem is a matter of such pervasive concerns that books, articles, magazines, scientific journals etc. dealing with adjustment problems are appearing more repeatedly (Winga, Agak and Ayere, 2011). Adjustment, in psychology, is the behavioural process by which one maintains equilibrium among various needs or between needs and the obstacles of environments. A sequence of adjustment begins when a need is felt and ends when it is satisfied. In general, the adjustment process involves four parts: (1) a need or motive in the form of a strong persistent stimulus, (2) the thwarting or nonfulfilment of this need, (3) varied activity, or exploratory behaviour accompanied by problem solving, and (4) some response that removes or at least reduces the initiating stimulus and completes the adjustment (Kumaraswamy, 2013). A well-adjusted student is one who does not get affected adversely by the interactions such as conflicts, emotions etc., and whose personality development goes through a healthy course of socialization (Sangeeta and Chirag, 2012). Academic involves a variety of demands differing in kind and degree and requiring lot of coping responses or adaptations. It is not only academics with which the students are concerned; they are equally affected by the social and emotional changes. According to Sharma (2012), the definition of academic adjustment reflects on how much an individual achieves through it and its effect on his/her personal growth. In terms of how adjusted the individual is in academics, depends on the individual student's capability of getting grades and eventually achieving the goals and objectives of his/her academic pursuits. Despite the importance of a school education for increased earnings, meaningful employment, and subsequent quality of life, nearly one in four secondary students leave school before completing their secondary school education (Ganai and Muhammad, 2013). Based on this, it can be

seen that the totality of school environment (school climate) could serve as a source of adjustment for the individual students. The adjustment of students in school could differ due to gender differences. Gender refers to the socially culturally constructed characteristics and roles, which are ascribed to males and females in any society. Gender is a major factor that influences the adaptation of students to academics (Okeke, 2008). Gender is determined by attributes such as tasks, functions and roles of women and men in the society rather than the biological characteristic of women and men. However, gender gap is one of the variables in the educational system that tends to influence the academic adjustment of students owing to some societal stereotypes (Yau and Cheng, 2014). As gender roles in the society are being rapidly redefined, female students today are showing outstanding academic prowess and pursuing higher education. Research on gender differences in school adjustment has portrayed that girls are better adjusted as compared to boys. One such study was by Wang, Chen, Sorrentino and Szeto (2008) found that girls had higher scores on academic adjustment, than boys. Another study by Prakash and Coplan (2007) found out that boys adjust better than girls in academics. Kiuru, Nurmi, Aunola, Salmela – Aro (2009) found out that girls' cliques resembled each other more in satisfaction with their educational choice and school engagement when compared with boys. These findings showed that there are gender differences in school adjustment. Hence this study sorts to find out the gender if differences are based on the academic adjustment of secondary school students in Enugu State. Also the locations of school could also be a factor in students' academic adjustment owing to shortfalls or adequate supplies of school facilities. Location is the place or point that something is situated. Location comprises of rural and urban areas. School location refers to the community in which the school is located, such as village hamlet or rural area with fewer than 3000 people), a small town (3000 to about 15,000 people), a town (15,000 to about 100,000 people). BektaG (2008) explained school location as specific geographical site of the school and it contains building where the school equipment is kept for educational use. A school cannot usually change its location, yet location conceivably may have consequences for how well students learn at the school. The investigations of a rural gap in academic adjustment have been explored in studies conducted by researcher and showed that locations of schools have great impact on academic adjustment of students. From the foregoing, research has shown that a lot of maladaptive behaviours abound in schools. Students violate school rules; absconding from school, perpetual struggle with authority, substance abuse, incessant cheating, habitual smoking and drinking, fighting, destruction of school properties, drug addiction and in extreme cases drop out of school. The general review shows that many authors concentrated on academic achievement and performance while only a handful dealt on academic adjustment therefore this study tries to fill this gap.

**Statement of Problem** The retention of students in secondary school has been the concern of school administrators and parents at large. Many students drop out of school before completing their secondary school education to learn trade and others go into so many kinds of apprenticeship, which was not their initial plan at enrolment. This scenario has raised the attention of stake holders in education and many researchers has sort for solutions to these problems, some attribute it to social, emotional and academic adjustment while others have shown that this could be as a result of the students inability to cope with the academic situations in school owing to some school factors. Based on these therefore, this study sorts to find out the relationship between school climate and student's academic adjustment of students in Enugu State?

**Research Questions** The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the relationship between school climate and academic adjustment of students in Enugu state?
2. What is the relationship between gender and academic adjustment of secondary schools in Enugu state?
3. What is the relationship between school location and academic adjustment of secondary schools in Enugu state?

**Hypotheses** The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance HO1: There is no significant relationship between school climate and academic adjustment of students in secondary schools in Enugu State. HO2: there is no significant relationship between gender and academic adjustment of secondary schools in Enugu state. HO3: there is no significant relationship between school location and academic adjustment of secondary schools in Enugu state.

**Research Method:** This study adopted a correlational survey design. This study was carried out in secondary schools in Enugu State. The sample for the study comprised 733 SS 11 students drawn from the population of the study using multistage sampling technique. Two instruments were used for data collection in this study, namely questionnaire titled Secondary School Students School Climate Questionnaire (SSSSCQ) and Secondary School Students Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (SSSAAQ). The instruments consisted of part A and B. Part A is on the demographic information of the respondents while part B comprised the item statements. The section B has response option of Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Disagree (D) Strongly Disagree (SD) with assigned weights of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively for positive questions and the reverse (1, 2, 3 and 4) for negative questions. The SSSSCQ is a 20 item questionnaire which was developed by the researchers to elicit information from the respondents on their take about the nature of school climate that exist in their school. And AAQSSS is a 30 items questionnaire used to get information on students' academic adjustment in school. In order to ensure the reliability of the instrument, a trial test was carried out in Ebonyi state using 20 students from three different schools located at Abakaliki the state capital, which is close to Enugu State and share similar characteristics. In order to determine the internal consistency of the instruments Cronbach Alpha formula was used. The instruments SSSSCQ and SSSAAQ yielded internal consistency reliability indexes of 0.98 and 0.78 respectively. The data for this study were collected through personal administration of the instruments by the researchers and with the help of six research assistants. The research assistants were made up of teachers that are teaching in different schools in Enugu state. The instructions that were given to them centered on how to locate the respondents and on how to administer and retrieve the questionnaire from the respondents. In other to answer the research questions, this study employed mean and standard deviation while Pearson Moment Correlation coefficients was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

Research question 1: What is the relationship between school climate and academic adjustment of students in Enugu state? HO1: There is no significant relationship between school climate and academic adjustment of students in secondary schools in Enugu State.

Table 1: Pearson correlation (r) rating of relationship between school climate and academic adjustment of secondary school students in Enugu State (N=733).

Items SD

School Climate

Academic Adjustment

School Climate

Academic Adjustment

2.70 Sig. N

2.68 Sig. N

.48 (2tailed)

.49 (2tailed)

Pearson Correlation

Pearson Correlation

1 .000 733

.962\*\* .000 733

.962\*\*

733

1

733

Data in table 1 on the relationship between school climate and academic adjustment of students showed that school climate had mean rating of 2.70 while academic adjustment had mean rating of 2.68. This showed that both school climate and academic adjustment had high mean rating above the mean cut off point of 2.50. Relationship between school climate and academic adjustment indicated high correlation for school climate and academic adjustment with Pearson correlation index of .962. This showed that there is high relationship between school climate and academic adjustment. Also, data on table 1 showed that Pearson correlation for school climate and academic adjustment indicated significant relationship between school climate and academic adjustment,  $r(1, n=733) = .962, p < .000$ . The null hypothesis was rejected. Indicating that there was significant relationship between school climate and academic adjustment.

Research Question 2:

What is the relationship between gender and academic adjustment of secondary schools in Enugu state?  
HO2: there is no significant relationship between gender and academic adjustment of secondary schools

in Enugu state. Table 2: Pearson correlation (r) rating of relationship between gender and academic adjustment

Gender Academic Adjustment

Male Female

Mean

2.68 2.68

SD

.46 .52

N

Academic Adjustment

N

Pearson Correlation Sig. (2tailed)

Pearson Correlation Sig. (2tailed)

733

.000 .998 733

1

733

1

733

.000 .998

Data in table 2 on the relationship between gender and academic adjustment of students showed that male students had mean rating of 2.68 while their female counterparts had mean rating of 2.68. This showed that male and female students do not differ in their mean rating on academic adjustment. Also, the result indicated low correlation for gender and academic adjustment with Pearson correlation index of .000. This showed that there is no relationship between gender and academic adjustment. The Pearson correlation for gender and academic adjustment indicated no relationship between gender and academic adjustment,  $r(1, n=733) = .000, p < .998$ . The null hypothesis was rejected. Indicating that there is no significant relationship between gender and academic adjustment.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between location and academic adjustment of students in secondary schools in Enugu state? HO3: there is no significant relationship between school location and academic adjustment of students in secondary schools in Enugu state.

Table 3: Pearson correlation (r) rating of relationship between location and academic adjustment of secondary school students in Enugu state

Location

Academic Adjustment

Location

Urban Rural

Academic adjustment

2.68 2.68

.46 .52

Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed)

N

Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N

1

733

-.030 .420 733

-.030 .420

733

1

733

Data in table 3 on the relationship between location and academic adjustment of students showed that students in urban areas had mean rating of 2.68 while their rural counterparts had mean rating of 1.38. There is also a negative correlation for location and academic adjustment with Pearson correlation index of -.030. Also, table 3 showed that Pearson correlation for location and academic adjustment indicated a significant relationship between location and academic adjustment,  $r(1, n=733) = -.030, p < .420$ . The null hypothesis was rejected. Indicating that there is significant relationship between peer relations and academic adjustment.

### Summary of Findings

1. There was significant relationship between school climate and academic adjustment.
2. There is statistically significant relationship between school climate and academic adjustment of students in Enugu State.
3. There is no significant relationship between gender and academic adjustment

### Relationship between school climate and academic adjustment of students in Enugu State

Result of the study showed that there is high relationship between school climate and academic adjustment and the test of hypothesis also showed that there was significant relationship between school climate and academic adjustment. This shows that when there is positive school climate, it can

culminate to high academic adjustment because school climate is a multi-dimensional environment that influence many individuals including students, parents, school personnel and community. It is also the relatively enduring quality of the internal environment of the school that is experienced by the members who include students, teachers, administrators, secretaries, consultants and custodians that leads to proper academic adjustment. These influence their students' behaviour, and can be described in terms of the values, norms especially concerned with those institutional patterns and behavioural practices that enhance or impede students' academics. Other factors in school climate that could enhance students' academic adjustment includes the environmental factors such as the physical building, classroom, materials used for instruction, academic performance, feeling of safety, school size, feeling of trust and respect for teachers and students. The result of this study could be as a result of some social aspect of the school climate that deals with the appearance, comfort and orderliness of the school facilities, the opportunities students have for their participation in the school programme. It could also be as a result of the peer norms that are prevalent in the school and the nature of the administrative staff-student cohesion and support systems. The finding of this study is in line with Jia, Way, Ling, and Hughes (2009), Gareau, Monrad, DiStefano, May, Price, Ishikawa and Mindrila (2009), Ojelabi (2009), Kyalo and Chumba (2011), Adeogun and Olisaemeka (2011), Osa-Edo and Iyamu (2012), Androutsou and Anastasiou (2014) and Babatunde, and Olanrewaju (2014) who in their respective studies found out that there was high relationship between school climate and students' academic achievement and adjustment. Therefore it showed that school climate has positive influence on students' academics.

**Relationship between gender and academic adjustment of secondary schools in Enugu State** Result of the study showed that there is no relationship between gender and academic adjustment. Also the test of hypothesis showed that there is no significant relationship between gender and academic adjustment. The finding of the study could be traced to the fact that adjustment is an individual's general adaptation to his environment and the demands of life such as the way he/she relates to other people. Academic adjustment deals specifically with modification or service that gives students equal opportunity to benefit from the educational process, which is how things are normally done to ensure that students benefit and adapt to school academic pursuits. This may have given both male and female students equal chances of benefiting from the academic activities of the schools. The finding of this study is in line with Farmer, Irvin, Thompson, Hutchins and Leung (2006) and Enochs and Roland (2006), who found out that there exist no significant difference in the academic adjustment in their respective studies. The study contradicts the findings of Yau and Cheng (2012), Basu (2012) & Velmurugan, K. and Balakrishnan (2011) who found out that gender has significant influence on learners' school adjustment.

**Relationship between school location and academic adjustment of secondary schools in Enugu state** Result of the study showed that there was negative relationship between location and academic adjustment. The test of hypothesis also showed that there was significant relationship between school climate and academic adjustment. This result could be due to the fact that the school location which is classified into urban and rural schools may have affected the academic adjustment of the student due to the presence or absence of school learning facilities and the provision of qualified and devoted teachers and school administrators. This may have affected the level of adjustment of both rural and urban students, with one group performing better than the other. This finding is in line with the findings of Singh (2006) and Velmurugan and Balakrishnan (2011). Also, the finding of this study contradicts the finding of Ishak, Jdaitawi, Ibrahim and Mustafa (2011) who found out that there is no significant relationship in academic adjustment of urban and rural students.



## **Conclusion**

There is high relationship between school climate and academic adjustment/there was significant relationship between school climate and academic adjustment. There is no significant relationship between gender and academic adjustment. There is significant relationship between peer relations and academic adjustment.

## **Educational Implications of the Findings of the Study**

The findings of this study have implication for secondary school administrators and students. The study shows that there were significant relationship among school climate and academic adjustment. Also the result of the study showed that Gender was not a significant factor in the academic adjustment of students and lastly school location was found to have a significant influence in students' academic adjustment. The implication of this finding for secondary school administrators is that when the school climate is conducive enough for students' academic endeavour, they tend to adjust very well to school system thereby minimizing the high rate of school dropout and other delinquencies among students at the secondary school level. Therefore the school administrator should endeavour to ensure that proper school climates are prevalent in school. Also school administrators should endeavour to create enabling environment for students to relate with their colleagues through such activities like sport, dance competition, debate and other extra-curricular activities. Also they should ensure that both schools in rural and urban areas are provided with enabling environment for proper academic adjustment. The class teachers in secondary schools should be conducting comprehensive education programs for students to meet their needs and solving the problems they may face. Moreover, providing them with information and skills that increase their adjustment with the academic life could give them an increased and positive participation in class activities. The study also showed that both male and female students adjust positively and equally to academics in secondary schools in Enugu state, therefore schools should sustain the nature of their school climate that enhances the students' academic adjustment.

## **Recommendations**

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

1. Government and stake holders of secondary school education should organize regular in-service training for teachers and school administrators on how to create convenient school climate and to also create enabling environment for positive academic adjustment among students in secondary schools.
2. Government should ensure that basic materials needed for teaching are provided for schools to ensure proper academic adjustment among student.
3. Institutions, colleges of education and universities should ensure that they equip student-teachers adequately with knowledge needed for effective classroom management.
4. Government and other stakeholders in secondary school education should ensure adequate provision of school facilities for schools both in rural and urban areas since the study has found out that location was a factor in student's academic adjustment.

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