

## **School Environmental Factors as Correlate of Students' Learning Outcomes and Security in Private Secondary Schools in Abia State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

This study examined school environmental factors as correlate of students learning outcomes in private secondary schools and security in Abia State, Nigeria. It adopted a correlational research design, three research questions and three null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance. Population of 14,525 SS2 students were used for the study while sample size comprised 960 Senior Secondary School Two (SS2) students drawn from 12 private secondary schools within the 17 Local Government Areas of Abia State. Multi-stage sampling techniques were used to draw the sample. The researchers' self-developed questionnaire titled: School Environmental Factors Questionnaire (SEFQ) and Students Learning Outcome Questionnaire (SLOQ) were used for data collection and was validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the test re-test reliability method and it yielded an overall reliability index of 0.77 and 0.71. The data collected were statistically analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Pearson's R<sup>2</sup> (coefficient of determination) was used to analyze the research questions while multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The study concluded that there exists a high positive correlation between school buildings and students learning outcome and a direct but moderate positive correlation between school location and students learning outcome. It was recommended among others that schools should be properly supervised by the relevant agencies before they can be allowed to start functioning. Schools operating in environmentally unfriendly areas should be made to relocate to an environmentally friendly area among others.

**Keywords:** Environmental factors, learning outcomes, private schools, security

## Introduction

One of the greatest challenges before educationists, psychologists and policy makers in Nigeria has been how one can reach the optimal goals of establishing secondary school education and how teachers can optimize their teaching ability considering the high state of insecurity of school environments. Also, of great concern to them are out-dated teaching methods, and poorly made instructional materials which an average student seems to interact with on daily basis. Osaat (2012) in his reaction posits that education transforms the human mind from a raw material state into a finished product whereby an individual can function effectively and efficiently- physically, socially, mentally, emotionally, culturally and technologically. Hence, Ogwen (2015) noted that the success of any educational endeavour, whether science or arts must rest solely on the conduciveness of the school environment.

Different people at several times have perceived the concept of school environment depending on their school of thoughts. School environment according to Nsa, Offiong, Udoh and Ikot (2014) can be defined as all variables that can affect the teaching and learning which include: science and computer laboratories, library facilities, classroom facilities, workshop facilities, farm buildings and structures. Others include play grounds, teaching methods, instructional materials and the inter-personal relationship which exist between the student and staff including security. Edem (2014) argues that school environment is a relatively enduring character of a school that is experienced by its participants, of which may affect their actions, and is based on the collective perceptions of behaviour in the school. To Bua (2013), it is an orderly environment in which the school family feels valued and able to pursue the mission of the school from a free point of safety and disruptions. According to a report cited by Bua (2013),

positive school environment exists when all students feel comfortable, wanted, valued, accepted, secured and can interact with caring people that they trust. It is however obvious that the positive interaction of these variables have the capability of influencing teaching and learning. Borode, (2010) opined that the school itself being a social and learning agent is expected to provide the enabling environment upon which a learner may be formally converted from a raw material state to a finished product of attaining its educational goals. Environment to Borode (2010) connotes physical objects, social interactions, and social rules of conduct and academic master plan of a school.

The issue of school environment is multi-dimensional. According to Miller and Cunningham, (2011), the environment here refers to facilities that are available in and around the school of which through adequate interaction can promote effective learning outcomes. The facets of the school environment involve the physical, social and academic dimensions. The physical dimension includes: the appearance of school buildings and classrooms, libraries, laboratories, hostels, sporting/games facilities. Others are instructional materials, school size and ratio of student- teacher in the classroom. Also included are the order and organization of classrooms in the school, the position of chalk or whiteboard and the availability of resources to afford safety and comfort (Lawani, 2014). The social dimension includes: the quality of inter-personal relationship between and amongst students, teachers and administrators, equitable and fair treatment of students by teachers and other staff and the extent to which students and staff alike contribute to the decision making process of the school (Miller et al, 2011). The academic dimension include: the quality of instruction given to students and the teacher expectations for good achievement from students (Miller et al, 2011). In summary, school environment connotes all interacting human and material resources available in the school which a child can see, hear,

touch, feel and respond to during and after learning experience (Obi, Johnson & Lawani, 2014). The specific interacting school environmental factors which are capable of influencing positively or negatively on students' learning outcomes as examined in this study include: School buildings and school location.

School buildings are civic landmarks that reflect a community or school values. People usually attach importance to school buildings which their interpretation and meaning of such building could give them either negative or positive impression about the school system. Just as every person is unique, every school building is also unique as well. Asiyai, (2010) opined that each school building has a character with its unique physical features, which comprise a variety of formal characteristics and physical expression reflecting users' values. School building for the benefit of this study, means any structure for use as a classroom including a school facility such as laboratory, library, school eating facility or facility used for the preparation of food in the school. Asiyai (2010) reported that some of the challenges of school building in Nigeria that can affect students learning include; deposits on school building roofs as a result of gas flaring and excessive global heat warming and is responsible for the rusting and dilapidation of school infrastructural facilities in oil producing areas. Erosion menace in the Eastern part of the country and other parts including Abia State has affected facilities in schools such that many of the school buildings have caved in; schools in flood prone areas have also resulted in a situation where lots of school facilities are lost to the flood, access road blocked, roof blown off and children made to learn under despicable conditions with regards to school location.

School facilities are permanent and semi-permanent structures, such as machinery, laboratory equipment, the blackboard, teachers' tools and other equipment as well as consumables. School

facilities refer, to all provision, which include physical materials or equipment within the environment of the school, which help to facilitate effective teaching –learning process and educational goals. One can also see school facilities as non-human and non-financial resources, which include all movable and immovable materials, which are used for teaching, learning and other school activities. Hence, McGowen (2007) opined that school facilities are instruments that rate facility conditions on such factors as educational adequacy, environment for education, space flexibility, and cosmetic condition. According to Asiyai (2012), school facilities include the entire school plant which school administrators, teachers and students harness, allocate, and utilize for the smooth and efficient management of any educational institution. When combined with other resources in adequate quality and quantities, school facilities constitute vital inputs for achieving desired educational goals.

Classroom environment encompasses a broad range of educational concepts, including the physical setting, the psychological environment created through social contexts, and numerous instructional components related to teacher characteristics and behaviors. Classroom environment is the environment the teacher creates in the classroom that will maximize instructional time, help students feel secured and supported and motivate them to learn and succeed. It includes the choice of the teacher on rules and expectations, reward and discipline system, class procedure, seating arrangement. It is how consistent students are held accountable for what the teacher is able to achieve. Classroom learning environment according to Malik and Rizvi, (2018) is a dynamical social system which includes not only teachers' behaviour and teacher - student interaction but student - student as well.

Classroom learning environment carries a variety of meanings; it generally refers to the total climate, structures, processes, ethos within class-rooms which are integral elements affecting student's learning (Miller and Cunningham, 2011). A classroom setting has two major components, namely, physical component and human component. Physical component comprises all the physical objects present in the classroom e.g. black board, furniture, lightings, projector, books, computers etc., whereas the human component comprises of individuals i.e., teachers and students in the classroom. It generally involves the nature of interaction of teachers with students and student-student as well. This pattern of interaction generates a particular atmosphere which may be called as learning condition/situation/environment. This aspect is also called the psycho-social environment of the classroom (Malik and Rizvi, 2018). This is worst heat by the ownership of schools.

Ownership of educational institutions in Nigeria is between the public and private sectors. The ownership of schools in Nigeria, which could be viewed as the controlling force in terms of the administration of the school could be divided into two broad ownership structures, which are public ownership and private ownership. Schools that are established and run by governments are called public schools. The public schools here refer to schools controlled by the government at the three tiers-federal, state and local government. Private schools on the other hand are individual, or group of persons, organizations or mission bodies coming together to establish and run an education institution at any level of the educational system namely, nursery, primary, secondary, universities, colleges of education and polytechnics among others.

Schools that are established and run by governments are called public schools while those established by individuals, organizations and mission bodies are referred to as private schools.

Consequently, private schools are those schools that are supported by private organization or individuals rather than by the state. They are independent schools that are supported wholly by the payment of fees and are not administered by local, state or federal governments. These schools have the right to select their students and they do not rely on mandatory taxation through public or government for funding. Private participation in education could be substantiated as a result of breakdown of the public-school ownership structure and void in the educational sector due to falling level of infrastructure and facilities, the neglect of government of the missionaries' schools after independence and the low morale of public schools teachers caused by lack of structural welfare from the government with non-payment of salaries (Adepoju, 2021).

The history of private ownership in educational administration in Nigeria could be traced to the period when western education was introduced to the country in the 19th century (Odeleye & Oyelami, 2012). The reasons for private participation in the establishment of school at whatever levels of the educational system in Nigeria are not farfetched. Initially, private schools were established as part of the missionary society's plan to develop locally educated elites that could help promote the Christian faith. The intention was to use education as a basis for facilitating the proselytization of the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, it is no longer the case in this era. In fact, not even some of the missions' schools have this again as a driving force, talk less of some private individuals and organizations. Most mission schools around us today have become so expensive, financially discriminatory and far from seeing provisions of education as a social service that it ought to be to the people (Odeleye & Oyelami, 2012). Today, to own a private school in Nigeria is a very lucrative business (Toscany Academy, 2012). This is a trend that runs through almost all the private institutions particularly in Abia state (Toscany Academy,

2012). Other private bodies that establish schools in Nigeria may be immortalize the names of their departed loved ones or as service to humanity, or as investment, social security against retirement and as means to provide employment to job seekers among others (Omede, 2015). No matter what the driving force may be, if the federal, states and local governments had not failed in their primary responsibility of providing qualitative education to the citizenry, the private sector wouldn't have taken the advantage which is affecting the quality of education in the country.

Qualitative education is too important to be compromised. Issues that affect the performance of education are issues of concern to families, communities, local, state and federal governments. Governments at all the levels in Nigeria are seen to be helplessly watching public structures and institutions collapsing and some in a dangerous state of coma with little or no hope of being revived. The public are fast losing confidence in government. Nothing seems to be working or moving forward. Security is fast running out of the control of government, poor, epileptic and very low voltage supply of electricity even now that is privatized. Pipe-borne water in most local government headquarters have now become stories of the past. The remains of rusted and broken pipes now only serve as reminders of those good old days. Many roads-intra and inter local governments, states and other countries-have become death traps to users. Nothing, absolutely nothing of public statuses seems to work again in Nigeria. (Omede, 2015).

The educational institutions seem to be the worst hit. The standards and qualities of education seem to have fallen so dangerously that remaining indifference to government's ineptitude to revitalization of this sector would mean waiting endlessly (Omede, 2015). Because of the prominence, education occupies in the development of individual, families and nation as a whole, it became very important to seek for alternative means of educating and training the



children who are the future hope of the society. This is where private education came in. However, the genuine intention of establishing private schools in Nigeria as well as in Abia state has not been met. The original intention of genuine private practitioners in education was to intervene and redeem the collapsing public institutions however, today; the revise seems to be the case (Omede, 2015). In fact, one of the driving forces of most private schools today is for economic benefit and this has continually undermined quality and infrastructural provisions in the educational sectors in Nigeria generally and Abia state in particular.

The entrance of private practitioners in education in Nigeria is a good one. They rejuvenated confidence of Nigerians about the decadence that is prevalent with the public institutions particularly, the public educational sector that had suffered protracted industrial actions and dearth of infrastructures. The private owners of schools have helped tremendously by running stable academic calendars, monitor and supervise academic proceedings for quality delivery and so on (Omede, 2015).

### **Statement of the Problem**

A positive school environment is a learning environment in which the students feel safe, engaged, connected and supported in their classrooms and schools. It is the environment whereby students are greatly impacted by the learning environment and teachers play an important role in controlling the setting. Positive school environment is important for students and for teachers because everything in the school settings sends impressions to the students and can affect the way students learn and how well students receive instruction. Hence students tend to learn better when they view their environment to be positive and supportive. Positive students learning outcomes is at the center of educational goals and objectives at any levels.

However, as commendable as are the emergence of private education in Nigeria as well as in Abia state and the roles that private education institutions play, they are surrounded with some unhealthy practices such as charging of exorbitant fees, proliferations of schools, illegal and substandard schools and employment of unqualified and inadequate personnel among others. These unhealthy practices and many more practised in the private schools of today especially in Abia state where one can easily rent a two-bedroom apartment and start using it as school has deterred many parents from sending their children to most of these private schools.

From the observation of one of the researchers of this work who has been a teacher in some of the private schools in Abia State and also has colleagues working in most private schools in Abia state, most private schools in Abia state now compromise a lot of things to stay in business. Hence, private school practice, which emerged as a corrective measure to the public schools, has now become a business enterprise and so, they do anything to stay in business. For instance, most private schools will rather employ unqualified personnel as long as the person is willing to accept anything that was giving to him/her as salary. Also, as mentioned earlier, most private schools do not take into consideration the stipulated environmental or structural requirement before starting their private school. In fact, a tour on most private schools in Abia state will leave one with little doubt to the fact that many of these schools need to be closed down.

### **Research questions**

1. What is the relationship between ascertain the relationship between school facilities and students learning outcomes?
  2. What is the relationship between classroom environment and students' learning outcomes?
- the relationship between school location and students' learning outcomes?

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between school facilities and students learning outcomes in private secondary schools in Abia State.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between classroom environment and students' learning outcomes?

### Methodology

The study adopted Correlational Research Design. Nwankwo (2011) defines Correlational design as the measure or determination of the linear relationship or association between two variables. Correlational Coefficient indicates the strength, direction and magnitude of the relationship between two variables with varying values from -1 to +1 (Obi, 2010). The study therefore examined the relationship between school environment factors and students' learning outcomes in terms of relationship, direction and magnitude.

The population of this study comprised all the 14,525 SS2 Students in all the private senior secondary schools in Abia State. The state has a total of 415 private secondary schools. The choice of senior secondary two students is because they are considered to have adapted to the school environment more than the SS1 students have, and the SS3 students are considered as Exam class who are getting set for their external examination.

The sample for this study comprised 960 SS2 students drawn from 12 private secondary schools within the seventeen local government areas that make up Abia State. Multi-stage sampling technique was used for drawing the sample. Stage one, stratified random sampling technique was used to select eight local government Areas in Abia State. Stage two, from the each of the

eight local government areas, six schools were randomly sampled making a total of 48 schools. Stage three, from each of the 48 schools, one stream of SS2 class was randomly sampled. This gives 48 streams of SS2 class. Stage four, simple random sampling technique was used to select 20 students (10 males and 10 females) from each stream of SS2 class. This implies 960 students were sampled from each of the local Government Areas making a total of 960 students. By so doing, students from each of the schools had equal chance of being selected.

A researcher's-made instrument known as School Environmental Factors (SEFQ) and Students Learning outcomes Questionnaire (SLOQ) was used for the study. The instrument was developed based on the literature reviewed; and it contains the demographical characteristics of the respondents. This questionnaire was used to find out the correlates of school environmental factors such as: School building, school location and school facilities. The School Environmental Factors Questionnaire (SEFQ) instrument was in three clusters according to the research questions

Students Learning Outcomes Questionnaire (SLOQ) instrument focused on the Students' Learning outcomes. The instrument was scaled using a 4-point Likert scale type of Strongly Agree (4-points), Agree (3-points), Disagree (2-points) and Strongly Disagree (1-point). The initial draft of the instrument known as School Environmental Factors (SEFQ) and Students Learning outcomes Questionnaire (SLOQ) were subjected to face and content validation in order to ascertain their relevance in the present study. In view of this, the instrument was given to three experts from Departments of Educational Management and Science Education (Measurement and Evaluation). all the experts are from Michael Okpara University, Umudike. Their suggestions and corrections were effected and the final draft of the instrument produced.

The instruments were pre-tested on 50 SS2 students in Okigwe Local Government, which is different from the area of study. Test re-test method of reliability was employed for an interval of three weeks to measure its reliability. The initial and re-test scores were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics. The following stability coefficients were obtained for the (SEFQ) instrument (School 0.89, building school location 0.76, school facilities .58, and the grand coefficient value of SEFQ instrument is 0.77. For SLOQ, 0.71 was obtained as the coefficient value. The instruments have an overall reliability estimate of 0.85, which indicated that the instruments were reliable. The researchers with the help of five trained research assistants administered 960 questionnaires to the respondents which were dully filled and retrieved personally on the spot to ensure 100% return. The research questions were answered using Pearson product moment correlation statistics while linear regression was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Correlation coefficients was used for decision-making. Hence, items with .00 will be regarded as no correlation. Items within the range of -.01 to -.10 will be regarded as weak negative correlation. Items within the range of -.11 to -.29 will be regarded as moderate negative correlation. Items within the range of -.30 to -.59 will be regarded as strong negative correlation. Items within the range of -.60 to -1.00 will be regarded as perfect negative correlation.

Furthermore, Items within the range of +.01 to +.10 will be regarded as weak positive correlation. Items within the range of +.11 to +.29 will be regarded as moderate positive correlation. Items within the range of +.30 to +.59 will be regarded as strong positive correlation. Items within the range of +.60 to +1.00 will be regarded as perfect positive correlation. The results are presented on the tables.

## Result

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between school facilities and students' learning outcomes?

**Table 1:** Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis of school facilities and students' learning outcomes

		School Facilities	Learning outcomes
Pearson Correlation	School Facilities	1.000	.722
	Learning outcomes	.722	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	School Facilities	.	.000
	Learning outcomes	.000	.
N	School Facilities	960	960
	Learning outcomes	960	960

To answer this research question, the scores from the responses of the respondents on school facilities were correlated with their responses on students' learning outcomes. The result shows that the correlation coefficient obtained between school facilities and students' learning outcomes was 0.72. This means that, there exist a perfect positive correlation between school facilities and students' learning outcomes.

A corresponding hypothesis formulated to test whether there exist a significant relationship between school facilities and students' learning outcomes is;

### Hypothesis 1

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between school facilities and students learning outcomes in private secondary schools Abia State.

**Table 2: Regression Analysis of school facilities and students' learning outcomes.**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
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Regression	357.735	1	357.735	2995.397	.000
Residual	329.383	958	.119		
Total	687.118	959			

$$\alpha = 0.05$$

In order to test hypothesis 3 ( $H_{03}$ ), linear regression analysis was used. The result in Table 8 shows that an F-ratio of 2995.397 with associated exact probability value of 0.00 was obtained. This probability value of 0.00 was compared with 0.05 set as level of significant for testing the hypothesis and it was found to be significant because 0.00 is less than 0.05. The null hypothesis, which stated that; there is no significant relationship between school facilities and students learning outcomes in Abia State private secondary schools, is therefore rejected. This implies that, there was a significant relationship between School facilities and students' learning outcomes in private secondary schools Abia State. In other words, School location is a good predictor of students' learning outcomes.

### Research Question two

What is the relationship between classroom environment and students' learning outcomes?

**Table 3:** Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis of classroom environment and students' learning outcomes

		Classroom Environment	Learning outcomes
Pearson Correlation	Classroom Environment	1.000	.769
	Learning outcomes	.769	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Classroom Environment	.	.000
	Learning outcomes	.000	.
N	Classroom Environment	960	960
	Learning outcomes	960	960

To answer this research question, the scores from the responses of the respondents on classroom environment were correlated with their responses on students' learning outcomes. The result shows that the correlation coefficient obtained between classroom environment and students' learning outcomes was 0.77. This means that, there exist a perfect positive correlation between classroom environment and students' learning outcomes.

A corresponding hypothesis formulated to test whether there exist a significant relationship between school facilities and students' learning outcomes, see hypothesis four.

## Hypothesis 2

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between classroom environment and students' learning outcomes in private secondary schools in Abia State.

**Table 4: Regression Analysis of classroom environment and students' learning outcomes.**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1080.952	1	1080.952	3986.276	.000
Residual	747.883	958	.271		
Total	1828.835	959			

$$\alpha = 0.05$$

In order to test hypothesis 4 (H<sub>04</sub>), linear regression analysis was used. The result in Table 9 shows that an F-ratio of 3986.276 with associated exact probability value of 0.00 was obtained. This probability value of 0.00 was compared with 0.05 set as level of significant for testing the hypothesis and it was found to be significant because 0.00 is less than 0.05. The null hypothesis, which stated that; there is no significant relationship between classroom environment and students learning outcomes in private secondary schools in Abia State, is therefore rejected. This implies that, there was a significant relationship between classroom environment and



students' learning outcomes in private secondary schools in Abia State. In other words, classroom environment is a good predictor of students' learning outcomes.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of the study were discussed in line with the research questions and hypotheses raised in the study.

The finding of the study vis-à-vis research question two revealed that there exist a perfect positive correlation between school facilities and students' learning outcomes. The corresponding hypothesis revealed that there is a significant relationship between school facilities and students' learning outcomes in Abia State private secondary schools. In other word, school facilities are good predictor of students' learning outcomes. This finding gives credence to the earlier study of Limon, (2016) who examined the effect of the adequacy of school facilities on students' performance and achievement in technology and livelihood education. Limon reported that in terms of student performance and achievement, the largest increase was observed during school year 2010-2011 (22.0%) when there was adequate school facilities while the smallest increase was noted during school year 2009-2010 (2.8%) when school facilities were not adequate.

Analysis of the second research question shows that there exist a perfect positive correlation between classroom environment and students' learning outcomes. The corresponding hypothesis revealed that there is a significant relationship between classroom environment and students' learning outcomes in Abia State private secondary schools. The possible explanation

for the finding could be the fact that the classroom is the major place in which formal learning takes place. Hence a conducive classroom environment is appropriate for both the teacher and the learner in order to better learning outcomes. In other words, classroom environment is a good predictor of students' learning outcomes. This finding is in concomitance with the findings of Malik and Rizvi (2018) on the effect of classroom learning environment on students' academic achievement in mathematics at secondary school level. The results of this study revealed that the classroom environment has a significant correlation on student achievement in mathematics.

### **Conclusion**

There exist a high positive correlation between school facilities and students' learning outcomes. The corresponding hypothesis revealed that there is significant relationship between school facilities and students' learning outcomes in private secondary schools Abia State. In other words, classroom environment is a good predictor of students' learning outcomes. Similarly, there exist a direct but moderate positive correlation between school environment and students' learning outcomes. The corresponding hypothesis revealed that there is a significant relationship between school environment and students' learning outcomes in Abia State private secondary schools. In addition, school location is a good predictor of students' learning outcomes.

### **Recommendations**

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

- 1 The government, school administrators, religious groups, and non-governmental organizations should organize seminars, retreats, workshops and conferences regularly

- in order to create awareness on the relationship between facilities as environmental factor and students' learning outcomes.
- 2 The government and relevant agencies should set minimum standard for approval of private secondary schools and ensure that these standards are met before approving any private schools to function. Even when these schools are opened, there should be regular supervision by the ministry of education and Secondary Education Management Board (SEMB) to check the condition of classroom environment.

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