Effect of School Safety on Students' Academic Performance Case Study: Public Secondary School Students in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract - This study analyzed the effect of school safety on students' academic performance in Amuwo-Odofin Local Government Area of Lagos State. A total of one hundred (100) teachers including school administrators were randomly selected from public schools. A structured self-developed questionnaire was designed in line with a 5-point likert scale and the instrument was administered to the respondents in order to ascertain the effect of school safety on student academic performance. The data was analyzed with simple percentage and non-parametric statistics of chia-square using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). Finding shows that public schools in do not have effective safety facilities and equipment to take prompt remedial action and also, the result shows that security and discipline rules perceived by teachers and students were not strictly enforced in most public schools in Lagos State. Therefore, it was recommended that government should establish and maintain professional relationships with a variety of education stakeholders (including key policymakers and labor leaders) is important in advancing safety schools.

I. INTRODUCTION

Safety is a particularly pressing issue in urban public schools, in part because community factors such as crime and poverty play a strong role in shaping the climate of schools. A number of studies have shown that neighborhood characteristics, including crime and poverty, influence the social and educational development of children and the climate of schools (Bowen and Bowen cited in Matthew, Elaine and David, 2011).

Tsavga (2011) maintains that the learning environment plays a vital role in determining how students perform or respond to circumstances and situations around them. This implies that no society is void of environmental influences. The learning environment determines to a large extent how a student behaves and interacts, that is to say that the environment in which we find ourselves tend to mound our behaviour so as to meet the demands of life whether negatively or positively. The United Nations Study on Violence against Children reveals that children worldwide are at risk of violence in and around the school. The threats range from rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and physical beatings to verbal abuse, bullying, taunting, stereotyping and other forms of humiliation. At times, teachers, school authorities and peers are the perpetrators of such abuse (United Nations cited in UNICEF, 2009).

School safety is a pressing concern in Nigeria and the nation, and there is a need for more information about the nature of the problem and the factors that mitigate or exacerbate problems. To date, little is known about the nature of the problem across schools, the reasons safety varies in different sites, or the features of schools that lead them to have better climates. This report provides new evidence on these issues (Bowen and Bowen cited in Matthew, Elaine and David, 2011).

Children are exposed to many physical and physiological threats that jeopardize their health and safety in school besides poor nutrition. Malaria, waterborne diseases, parasitic infestations (worms are a major cause of under nutrition in school-age children), diarrhea, cholera, dehydration and HIV and AIDS are just some of the physiological risks to children. There are also physical risks that threaten health and safety, such as traffic injuries incurred en route to and from school, lacerations, fractures and

other injuries during play, drowning, physical violence (corporal punishment, assaults, etc.) and sexual violence (UNICEF, 2009).

The safety of America's students and schools periodically comes to the public's attention when shootings or homicides of school-aged children occur. The September 2009 beating death of CPS student Derrion Albert, in which four teenagers were subsequently charged with first-degree murder, made national head- lines. Yet, physical attacks against public school students often occur without substantial attention in the media. Furthermore, not all of the threats that students face occur outside of the school building. In fact, the violent crime rate among public school students while at school is higher than the violent crime rate nationally among the general population.

The concept of safety is as old as human beings. Everyone is legally responsible for the safety of others. Our fore-fathers protected themselves from dangerous animals. Onuzulike (2003) stated that primitive man lived in caves or tree-tops to protect himself from dangerous wild beasts and enemy tribes.

Çelik (2000) described them as organizations where learning and efficiency is important for everyone, and where students are expected to be successful and given space to display their social skills.

Millions of children attend schools that are reasonably safe most of the time. But schools in most developing countries fail to protect children from the consequences of natural disasters and accidents. At a time of increasingly unsafe environments, and as scientists predict with relative certainty that climate change will increase both the severity and prevalence of natural disasters, schools that cannot withstand catastrophes are unacceptable (UNICEF, 2009).

According to Indiana Education Policy Centre (2000), schools that are safe and responsive have plans and procedures in place to deal with violent and disruptive behaviour that may occur. School violence prevention demands that we be prepared for the eventuality of violence.

Safety awareness and preparedness in schools are becoming major concern in the wave of insecurity in Nigeria. In the recent past, there have been perpetual reports on violence and fire outbreaks across the schools in the country. These reports are evidence that schools are not immune to destructive violence. Apparently, there exists constant fear among the leaders and a growing need to address the issue of safety in depth. In a similar vein, both Schneider (2000) and Çelik (2000) defined the safe school as a relaxed environment for managers, teachers and students.

II. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In Nigeria, there is an increase in the number of students' enrolment in schools with little or no regards to improving the learning environment so as to better their performance. The influence of school environment on academic achievement of students has been an issue of concern to all stakeholders in education. The school administration has a responsibility to ensure that the school environment is conducive for learning (Day and Golench, 1995). This study intends to evaluate the effect of school safety on student academic achievement in Lagos State public schools.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to critically to evaluate the effect of school safety on student academic achievement in Lagos State public schools. Other specific objectives include:

i. To examine how safe are schools for learning.
ii. To find out the various challenges facing school safety in Lagos State Public Schools.
iii. Examine the influence of discipline of teachers on academic achievement of secondary school students.
iv. Assess the influence of school physical facilities on academic achievement of secondary school students.
v. To make recommendations on how to improve safety conditions in schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

i. Will there be any relationship between influence of school environment on the academic achievement of Public-school students in Lagos State?
ii. How doe Will there be any relationship between discipline of teachers and academic achievement of public-school students?
iii. Will there be any relationship between influence of school physical facilities and academic achievement of public-school students?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated:

i. There is no significance relationship between the influence of school environment on the academic achievement of Public-school students in Lagos State.
ii. There is no significance relationship between teachers' discipline and academic achievement of public-school students.
iii. There is no significance relationship school physical facilities and academic achievement of public-school students.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term safe school has been defined by Donmez and Guven (2002) as places where students, teachers and staff feel physically, psychologically and emotionally free, and where enriched school programs hone students' skills. Ogel, Tan and Eke (2005) have defined the term as places where positive relations exist between managers and teachers; teachers and students; students themselves; and school staff with each other and students.

The physical environment of a school or learning space, including its surrounding neighborhood, is crucial to children's safety and security. To increase school safety, fences should be built to protect children from harmful outside influences, such as drug peddling, sexual harassment or physical violence. Constant supervision of the school and schoolyard is usually necessary. Expansive schoolyards with many

large buildings or unprotected areas may need additional staff or other security measures, such as emergency notification or alarm systems that can alert students and teachers to an ongoing emergency. (UNICEF, 2009).

According to Orpinas, Horne and Staniszewski (2003), safe schools implement effective instructional approaches, are aware of genuine student problems, and have a culture of respect and adequate physical equipment.

A good study of climate, safety and enjoyment are assumed to be necessary conditions for a good learning environment. In several studies, it has also been found that the climate in a school co- varies with achievement (Hattie, 2009; Johnson & Stevens, 2006; Papanastasiou, 2008; Uline & Tschannen- Moran, 2008). However, factors that have been found to correlate with student achievement are 'a calm classroom climate', teachers' management of disruptive behavior, and students' feelings of safety in school (Ma &Willms, 2004).

Some conceptualizations of school safety or safe learning environments are very broad, but from the standpoint of this literature review, Prinsloo's (2006) definition is more suitable because of its sharp focus on the problems of school violence. In that publication, Prinsloo stated, "A safe school may be defined as one that is free of danger and where there is an absence of possible harm; a place in which non-educators, educators, and all learners may work, teach, and learn without fear of ridicule, intimidation, humiliation, or violence."This definition was developed in the context of South Africa, which has very high rates of violence in many of its schools.

Pinheiro, an independent expert appointed by the United Nations' Secretary-General Kofi Annan, defined the term "school violence" in a report for the United Nations' study on violence against children (Pinheiro, 2006). In this publication, Pinheiro's definition of "school violence" encompasses corporal punishment, cruel and humiliating forms of psychological punishment, sexual and gender-based violence, bullying, fighting, and gang-related violence (Pinheiro, 2006). One aspect of school violence that is not explicitly mentioned in this definition is students'

fear of violence. School safety tends to be defined by students' and teachers' perceptions; therefore, this is an important omission.

Milam et al. (2010) conducted a study of the linkages between perceived school and neighborhood safety and academic achievement in Baltimore, MD (United States). In that 2010 publication, the researchers suggested that it was students' fear of and anxiety about violence that affected their academic performance, rather than their actual experiences of violence, although, of course, they are related.

Leach and Humphreys (2007) discussed how girls' fear of violence on their way to and from school was likely to affect their performance at school. Chen and Weikart (2008) studied school violence in New York City (United States) and commented on the importance of students' perceptions where school safety was concerned. Chen and Weikart stated that if students believe their school is unsafe, then this will affect attendance. School safety has been included as a dimension of educational quality in several school climate models, including the Child-Friendly/Girl-Friendly Schools initiative by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2012). Another example is the quality education model developed by EdQual, an academic research program funded by the UK's Department for International Development for developing country contexts. In EdQual's model, school safety is viewed as part of an enabling school environment.

In Pinheiro's report (2006), the Secretary-General of the United Nations sets forth policy recommendations for the creation of safe schools, providing governments with a platform for action. In the United States, the U.S. Department of Education's Safe and Supportive Schools model contextualizes school violence in pervasive school incivility and emphasizes the problem of bullying. This model is particularly concerned with the linkages between school violence and the underachievement of black and Hispanic students.

School safety involves arrangements regarding the internal and external environment of the school. However, it is not only limited to environmental adjustments but includes activities geared towards increasing school loyalty of staff, students and families. According to Kermit and Flanary (1996), acts of violence and unwanted student behaviors are more common in schools where students feel less loyal.

School safety not only focuses on factors within the school but also involves social factors which are in constant interaction with one another, school safety can be viewed as having four main dimensions student safety, family safety, school building safety and social safety (Schneider, 2000).

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School Safety and Academic Performance

A school culture that is characterized by a strong emphasis on the school's learning goals and high expectations of pupils' work are highlighted in the school and classroom climate research (Griffith, 2000 and Hattie, 2009). Further, an extensive research during the last fore decades argues that a school atmosphere of high expectations of pupils' work and a strong emphasis on the school's learning goals correlates with high student achievement (Hattie, 2009).

National study of high school students in the National School Climate Survey from the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Results from that study show that harassment at school was linked to lower academic achievement among lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) students. Students who were more frequently harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender expression reported an average grade point average (GPA) almost half a grade lower than students who were less often harassed. Network (Kosciw, Diaz and Greytak, 2008).

Education is closely linked to his life chances, income and wellbeing (Battle and Lewis 2002). Therefore, it is important to have a clear understanding of what benefits or hinders one's educational attainment. Education generally is seen as an agent of socialization and integration of a child or an adult into the norms of the society. Equally it is the process of transmitting the culture of a society to the learners in a formalized setting. Unequivocally, it is seen as the bedrock of any nation. In order to ensure the growth and development of a nation, it becomes imperative for right policy to be in place to allow for effective planning and execution of educational programmes (Adejobi, Osonwa, Iyam, Udonwa and Osonwa, 2013).

Donmez and Guven (2002) found in a study conducted in Malatya, Turkey with high school teachers and students that the most serious safety problems in school stemmed from a lack of control in school corridors and the playground. Isik (2004) conducted a study in Istanbul, Turkey and concluded that the most commonly valued subdimension of school safety was physical place.

In a similar study, Kisioglu, Dermirel, Ozturk (2005) evaluated school safety in the interior places of 37 primary schools located in the center of Isparta, Turkey and reported that 94% of these schools were not adequately designed, which had an adverse effect on both students and teachers. In the U.S., Klooster (2002) conducted a study to establish school safety perceptions of students in a Los Angeles, California high school, and found that 18.5% did not feel safe at school, and that 13.9% were even scared to go to certain places within the school. A total of 28.7% of these students reported that people other than students and staff could easily enter the school.

In a study conducted with primary school teachers from Washington, U.S., Miller (2003) stated that 30% of teachers agreed that violence prevention programs and school safety policies were insufficient in preventing threats to school safety.

These studies suggest that school safety is an important factor in academic success. A study conducted by Clarke & Russell (2009) on school safety and student achievement. They we examined

GPAs and specifically and concluded that school safety was linked to higher GPAs.

The issue of poor academic performance of students in Nigeria has been of much concern to the government, parents, teachers and even student themselves. The quality of education not only depends on the teachers as reflected in the performance of their duties, but also in the effective coordination of the school environment (Ajao, 2001). Education is an essential factor for effective development of any country like Nigeria.

According to Ajewole and Okebukola (2000), a number of factors are said to have contributed to the students' poor academic achievement in school. The authors stress that a host of these factors may surround students' poor achievement in school which may include: poor study habits and lack of available resource materials, poor school climate, indiscipline, inadequate facilities, teachers' ineffectiveness, the teaching method and the type of learning environment available for both the students and the teachers. From the authors view, the poor performance of students in primary school may be a reflection of the type of learning environment.

Risk factors which pose a threat to school safety generally stem from underestimating student safety, school safety, family safety and environmental safety. Schools may come under the effect of negative forces not just from the inside but also from the social environment.

Safeguarding Schools Environment

Moore (2008) cited in Lumpkin (2013), explains that students' achievement is lower in schools with deficient building and in improved ones, the results were better. Moore (2008) as cited in cited Lumpkin (2013), further explains that the need for good environment is not in isolation from other factors. Good learning environment must be blended with good standard, qualified teachers, good management to achieve good academic performances of students in examinations.

Roberts, Edgerton and Peter cited in Duruji, Azuh and Oviasogie (2014) arguing from a psychological is of the view that there is a psychological relationship

between the nature of the school facility and those that are within the environment that is both teachers and students. However, they further explain that for effective learning to occur there should be a synergic relationship between high moral, commitment and enthusiasm and high learning there will be effective learning (cited in Lumpkin, 20133).

Concern for the educational climate is widespread and for good reason. If children are afraid of violence, they can't learn, and if teachers are afraid of violence, they can't teach, says Curwin (2002), coauthor of the ASCD book 'As Tough As Necessary'. He emphasizes that school should be a stable environment in which all students feel welcome.

According to him, create a school violence action plan. An action plan is paramount to establishing a sense of security for students and staff alike. The knowledge that in the case of a violent incident there will be adults in charge who know what to do is reassuring for everybody. Action plans should include a signal to everyone that a crisis is occurring, the selection of a central command post, and instructions on where to seek shelter.

Address all rule violations. When teachers ignore "minor" rule violations such as cursing or talking back, some students are tempted to keep pushing the limits of what they can get away with. Punishing every violation stops gradual acceptance of unacceptable behavior. And when children know what teachers will and will not tolerate, predictability is established, resulting in a secure classroom environment.

School Safety and Students Learning

If we expect students to succeed, schools must help them surmount the problems that interfere with learning--such as a lack of school safety; distractions caused by family problems; and chronic, untreated health problems. (Oshevire, 2000). When schools do not deal with children's health by design, they deal with it by default.

Olweus & Limber (2000) is a comprehensive bullying prevention program. Olweus trains school personnel to create a supportive school environment and establishes clear limits on unacceptable behavior, and consistently applies consequences for violations of rules. Adults in the school community act as authority figures and role models. The Olweus program has been associated with reductions in the frequency with which students reported being bullied and bullying others.

Vreeman and Carroll (2007) reviewed outcome studies from several types of bullying prevention programs. They found that programs using the "whole-school" approach and mentoring programs had the greatest impact of bullying.

According to leading researcher Dryfoos (2010), education reform has fallen far short of our expectations and the needs of children. It is likely to continue to do so unless educators directly address the causes of underachievement; poor health is clearly one. Continued inattention to this most basic of basics will render high-publicity reforms largely ineffective.

Then offer your time. Keep guns out of the home. If this is not possible, keep them secure from children. The easiest place for children to get hold of weapons is in their own homes or those of family members. This was the case in all of the reported schoolyard killings.

According to Katy (2004) parent should support and become involved in violence prevention programs. There are many effective programs available, but they don't work if they're not used. Find out what your school district offers or whether a local youth group is interested. Or your religious community.

The students whose schoolyards exploded with gunfire are not the only ones who were affected. When children return to school we need to help them come to terms with their fears and do our best to prevent future violence.

V.   METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A descriptive research design: it attempts to describe and explain condition of the present by using many subjects and questionnaires to fully describe a phenomenon. This study intends to fully describe and examine the condition of school safety and academic

achievement in Public Schools in Lagos State. Therefore, a descriptive research design will be adopted in this study.

Population of the study

The population of the study will comprise all the Public School Teachers in Lagos State.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size for this study will comprise of 100 Public School Teachers including School Administrators where a ten teachers will be randomly selectedfrom ten Public schools in Amuw-Odofin Local Government Area of Lagos State.

Instrument and Instrumentation for data collection

The researcher will employ a self-developed and well-structured questionnaire as the major instrument for this study. Research instrument will be used in obtaining, gathering, measuring and assessing data. A suitable questionnaire will be structured along with a five-point likert-type scale (summated) of strongly agree (5), agree (4), undecided (3), disagree (2) and

χ^2	D.F.	χ_{tab}	p	Decision
168.35	12	21.03	0.05	Reject H_o

strongly disagree (1) to gather data for the study. It is a set of attitude items, all of which are considered of approximately equal "attitude value" and to each of which subjects respond with degree of agreement or disagreement (intensity). Section "A" of the research questionnaire will describe respondents' background information. While section "B" will comprise of possible methodological competencies. The questionnaire will be made simple for a straightforward understanding because different categories of people will be chosen as respondents.

The researcher will administer the questionnaire designed to gather information for the purpose of this study to analyze the result which will be used to answer the research questions and test for the relevant hypotheses as outlined in chapter one of this study.

Validity of Instruments

The instrument will be validated by the researcher's supervisor, lecturers in the department and colleagues who are vested on the field for necessary suggestions, modifications and corrections.

Method of Data Analysis

The entire data will be analyzed with the help of the computer software called statistic packages for social sciences (SPSS) version 20. The following statistical tools will be employed in data analysis and presentation.

   (i)   Frequency distribution table

   (ii)   Simple percentage

   (iii)   Chi - Square

Frequency distribution table and simple percentage will be used to analyze the bio-data and section B of research questionnaire, Chi-Square statistical method will be employed to test the hypotheses.

VI.   RESULTS

i. Test of Hypothesis Two

Chi-square computation between the influences of school environment on the academic

Table above is the summary of the computation of Chi-square statistic result between school environment and students' academic achievement. From the analysis of data, χ^2-calculated of 168.35is*greater* than χ^2- table value of 21.03. This implies that, the result is significant at 0.05 alpha level with the degree of freedom 12. As a result of this, Null Hypothesis (H_o) that, there is no significance relationship between the influences of school environment on the academic is hereby, rejected and therefore, concluded that, the achievement of the students in school depends on the school environment.

ii. Test of Hypothesis Two

Chi-square computation between teachers' discipline and academic achievement in public school students

χ^2	D.F.	χ^2_{tab}	p	Decision
40.29	12	21.03	0.05	Reject H_o

Calculated χ^2-cal = 40.29, χ^2- table value = 21.03 and Degree of Freedom of 12 at 5% significance level.

From the table above, result shows that the χ^2 calculated value of *40.29* is greater than the table value of 21.03 with Degree of Freedom of *12* at *p>0.05*. Therefore, the Null Hypothesis that there is no significance relationship between teachers' discipline and academic achievement in public school students is hereby rejected while the Alternative Hypothesis is accepted and concluded that teachers' discipline has direct bearing on academic achievement of public-school students.

iii. Test of Hypothesis Three

Chi-square computation between school physical facilities and academic achievement of public-school students

χ^2	D.F.	χ_{tab}	Sig.	Decision
119.11	12	21.03	0.05	Reject H_o

The responses from the questions administered to the respondents as analyzed in the tables above shows that, at 5% significant level with degree of freedom 12, the χ^2-cal of 119.11 is greater than χ^2-tab of 21.03 in order to examine the relationship between school physical facilities and academic achievement in public school students. Therefore, the Null hypothesis (H_o) which stated that, there is no significance relationship between school physical facilities and academic achievement among public school students in Lagos State is, hereby, rejected. Indicating that students' academic achievement will greatly and positively be improved by well layout physical facilities around the school premises.

VII. CONCLUSION

In addition to being safe, the students get used to beautiful environment with safety tips. The findings so far shows that public secondary schools environment are not safe and conducive for student to learn, although, the respondents claimed that students feel safe with and listened to by their teachers and students are exposed to safety precaution within the school premises and also, students are willing to seek teachers' help for bullying and violence in school.It was then concluded that, school safety involves arrangements regarding the internal and external environment of the school. However, it is not only limited to environmental adjustments but includes activities geared towards increasing school loyalty of staff, students and families. Concept of safety, safeguarding our schools as well as school safety and students learning were discussed in the previous chapter of this study. Based on the findings of this study, possible recommendations were made.

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