

SCHOOL CLIMATE: A PANACEA FOR STUDENTS DISCIPLINARY OUTCOMES IN SECONDARY SCHOOL IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

The researcher investigated; school climate as panacea for students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary school in Enugu State. Two research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The researcher adopted descriptive survey research design. The population for the study comprised all the principals in the 298 secondary schools in Enugu State, made up of 113 female and 185 male principals. The researcher used census sampling because the population is small and manageable. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher titled "School climate as panacea Questionnaire (SCPQ)". The researcher used Cronbach Alpha method to determine the internal consistency of the instrument which yielded .81 for cluster 1, .83 for cluster 2. The overall reliability index was .81. This showed that the instrument was suitable for use for this study. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. The null hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics at .05 level of significance. The study found among others that physical facilities and security influence students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary schools to a high extent in Enugu State and that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which physical facilities influence students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that investment in adequate and well-maintained physical facilities is essential to promote positive disciplinary outcomes and efforts to maintain a clean, supportive, and conducive school environment should be prioritized to positively influence student discipline.

Keywords: school climate, panacea, learning outcomes, secondary school

Introduction

Many researchers in the fields of psychology and sociology have delved deeply into the multifaceted notion of school environment. It was observed that school organizational climates are shaped by the behaviors of both school administrators and instructors. According to Skiba and Peterson (2016), the norms, values, relationships, teaching techniques, safety, and organizational structures that make up a school's environment are all factors that contribute to the quality and character of school life. Strong connections between teachers and students, a welcoming and safe school atmosphere, well-defined scholastic standards, and a feeling of community are all hallmarks of an ideal school climate. Students' emotional and social health, as well as their motivation and involvement in studying, are both supported in such an atmosphere. According to Ibikunle and Afolakemi (2021), a school's climate includes not only the classrooms and hallways but also the school's library, workshop, laboratory, teaching materials, and the surrounding school environment.

The unwritten culture, standards, and expectations of a school, as described by Petrie (2024), comprise its environment. According to Wang and Degol (2015), the academic, community, safety, and institutional aspects of a school's atmosphere all have an impact on students' psychological, behavioral, and cognitive growth. According to Offorma and Chukwuma-Nosike (2016), the term "school climate" refers to the overall vibe, physical surroundings, and human interactions that contribute to a positive learning environment. The school climate is defined by Pretorius and de Villiers, as quoted by Alqarni (2020), as an

internal environment feature of a school that influences the actions of teachers and students based on their shared views. Every institution has its own climate that characterizes its relationships, as pointed out by Emataron (2015), who argued that school climate is a representation of the distinctive internal characteristic of a school organization. Normalcy, connections, principles, and surroundings all contribute to the school's atmosphere. Principals' management styles, decision-making abilities, and interpersonal skills have a substantial impact on the school's environment, which in turn affects the school's performance.

Principals are educational leaders responsible for managing and overseeing the daily operations of a school, including staff supervision, curriculum implementation, and student discipline (Nwankwo, 2018). They are pivotal in shaping the school's educational environment and fostering a positive school climate, which directly influences student outcomes (Ijeoma, 2019). School rules, standard compliance, and community engagement in support of school objectives are additional responsibilities of principals (Nwachukwu, 2020). Principals in Nigeria are also responsible for dealing with the specific socio-cultural issues that exist in their communities, which have an impact on how well schools are run and how well students do academically (Oluwole, 2017). Adebayo (2021) identifies effective principals as having strong leadership abilities, such as the ability to motivate, resolve conflicts, and make decisions. They must balance administrative duties with pedagogical leadership to drive school improvement and student achievement (Ogunyemi, 2022). The establishment of clear policies by administrators has a significant impact on students' learning performance. Students' disciplinary outcomes are greatly affected by the school climate, which includes disciplinary policies, safety, teacher-student relationships, academic atmosphere, school security, physical facilities, parent and community involvement, and school environment. The leadership of principals has a significant impact on these factors (Wang and Degol, 2015).

Discipline outcomes for students are the end effects of disciplinary measures implemented in response to student misconduct in the classroom. According to Skiba and Peterson (2016), the consequences might vary from mild warnings or detention to more serious punishments like suspension or incarceration. Statements outlining the knowledge, skills, and abilities that students will have gained from a program or course are called student learning outcomes (SLOs). Effective disciplinary techniques seek to confront and rectify incorrect behavior while promoting kids' social and emotional development (Gregory, Skiba & Noguera, 2016). Outcomes should be quantifiable, observable, and may be proved by the student. According to Mendez and Knoff (2016), students' behavior and academic performance may be enhanced by the use of fair and consistent disciplinary methods. Discipline that is unfair or prejudiced, on the other hand, could lead to undesirable results including higher dropout rates and worse academic performance. But school safety and infrastructure were the main foci of our research. School safety and infrastructure, which have a direct impact on students' disciplinary results, are justified by the research.

Statement of the Problem

The decline in the learning outcomes of students at various levels of education in Enugu State in particular has triggered serious concerns from education stakeholders about the prevailing school climate. In secondary schools across the Enugu State, key education stakeholders have become increasingly worried about the diminishing quality and attitudes of students over the years. The deteriorating state of students' behaviour, commitment to learning, and general disposition toward academic and moral responsibilities as observed by the researcher, is alarming. Traits such as lack of discipline, poor study habits, absenteeism, and disrespect for authority have become more common, suggesting a widespread decline in student character and engagement. This troubling trend is assumed to be influenced by the school climate, which may be playing a significant role in shaping students' disciplinary outcomes in

secondary schools. Despite existing research on school climate and student behaviour, there is a lack of specific data focused on the Enugu State of Nigeria. This gap in research limits the understanding of how regional factors, cultural contexts, and school-specific conditions influence students' attitudes and behavioural outcomes. Therefore, the problem of this study, when posed in a question form, is: "How school climate serves as a panacea for students learning outcomes in secondary school in Enugu State?"

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to ascertain How school climate serves as a panacea for students learning outcomes in secondary school in Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the extent to which school security influences students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria;
2. determine the extent to which physical facilities influence students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does school security influence students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary schools in Enugu State?
2. To what extent do physical facilities influence students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance:

- Ho₁:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which school security influences students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria.
- Ho₂:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which physical facilities influence students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Methods

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Nworgu (2015) defined descriptive survey research design as a method that enables the study of a representative subset of people or items to gather and analyze data reflecting the characteristics of the entire group. This approach is typically used to infer findings about a larger population based on the responses from a sample considered to be representative of the population. However, in this study, despite Nworgu's definition of descriptive survey research design, sampling will not be employed. The decision to forego sampling is due to the manageable size of the population being studied. Since the population is manageable for direct study, it is more practical and comprehensive to include all respondents rather than just a subset. This approach ensured that the data are accurate and complete as much as possible for the research objectives. The descriptive survey research design is justified for this study because it will enable comprehensive data collection and analysis from the respondents to accurately reflect the broader population's needs and practices. The area of the study is Enugu State. Enugu State is one of the states located in the Enugu State of Nigeria. It has six educational zones, namely: Agbani, Awgu, Enugu, Nsukka, Obollo-Afor, and Udi. Enugu State is bounded in the East by Ebonyi State, in the West by Anambra State, and in the North by Kogi and Benue States. The language of the people of Enugu State is Igbo, and most of them are involved in agriculture and civil service. The city owes its geographical significance to the discovery of coal in 1909. Its major source of revenue is through coal that is why the state is called "Coal City State". Enugu State is chosen as the area of the study because the researcher was very familiar with the area.

The state predominantly, civil servants, traders, farmers and is one of the educationally advantaged states with many secondary schools and tertiary institutions, both public and private. The justification for using Enugu State is that it will provide a comprehensive setting to evaluate and enhance alternative sources of financing to improve overall educational quality.

The population for the study comprised all the principals in the 298 secondary schools in Enugu State which is made up of 298 school principals (113 female and 185 male principals). (Source: Post Primary Schools Management Board (PPSMB), Enugu, 2025). The census sample of the 298 subjects was used. The researcher used census sampling because it is small and manageable. It is in agreement with the postulation made by Uzoagulu in Okoye (2015) that when a population is small or manageable, the researcher can make use of the whole population. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher titled “school climate: A Panacea for students learning outcomes Questionnaire (SCAPSLOQ)”. The questionnaire has two sections, A and B. Section A focused on the bio-data of the respondents while section B was based on the information on influence of school climate on discipline outcome. It has 27 items built in 2 clusters. Cluster 1 has 14 items on physical facilities. Cluster 2 has 13 items on security facilities. The instrument used structured in a 4-point response categories and rating values as follows; Very High Extent (VHE) – 4 points, High Extent (HE) – 3 points, Low Extent (LE) – 2 points and Very Low Extent (VLE) – 1 point. An introductory letter to the respondents stating the reasons for the study will be attached to the instrument

The instrument was validated by three research experts. Two of the experts were from the Department of Educational Management and one from the Department of Mathematics and Computer Education (Measurement and Evaluation option), all from Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Enugu. They were requested to validate the instrument in terms of clarity, adequacy and appropriateness with particular reference to the purpose of study, research questions and hypotheses. All the 27 items generated in first draft survived the validation process. However, the validators requested the researcher to make minor editorial adjustments to better align the instrument with the study's objectives. They provided constructive suggestions and criticisms, highlighting areas that needed refinement. These inputs were instrumental in guiding the researcher to develop the final draft of the instrument. Consequently, the refined instrument was used to collect data from the respondents for this study. Meanwhile, none of the questionnaire items were discarded during validation.

To ensure the reliability of the instrument, a reliability test was conducted on 20 female principals and 20 male principals in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State. The choice of Ebonyi State was made because of the similar organizational process of secondary schools between both states. Also, they use the same educational policy. The researcher used Cronbach Alpha method to determine the internal consistency of the instrument which yielded .81 for cluster 1, .83 for cluster 2. The overall reliability index was .81. This showed that the instrument is suitable to be used for this study. The choice of Cronbach's Alpha for computing the reliability of the questionnaire was made because the items do not have binary (Yes or No) answers. Instead, the questionnaire items are likely scaled responses that require a measure of internal consistency across multiple items. Cronbach's Alpha is ideal for this purpose, as it provides a reliable measure of how well the items in a set are positively correlated to one another, ensuring the overall reliability of the instrument.

The researcher, was aided by six (6) research assistants, who distributed the copies of questionnaire to the respondents, consisting of both male and female principals. To ensure effective communication, the researcher held a one-day interactive session to brief the research assistants, guiding them on courteous interaction and addressing any queries from the respondents. However, the entire 298 copies of questionnaire administered, the researcher and

her research assistants retrieved all the copies making it 100% percent return rate. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviations. The null hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics at a .05 level of significance. To calculate the mean, each response option was assigned a numerical value based on real limit of numbers: VHE = 3.50-4.00, HE = 2.50-3.49, LE = 1.50-2.49, and VLE = 0.00-1.49. The interpretation of the hypotheses test were based on the significance (sig.) values obtained from the SPSS output. If the probability values are greater than 0.05, the null hypotheses were rejected. If the probability values are less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Results

Research Question One: To what extent does school security influence students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary schools in Enugu State?

Table 1: Mean scores and standard deviation of principals and teachers on the extent to which school security influence students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary schools

ITEMS		Female Principal 113		Male principals 185		Overall 298		Dec
S/N	The following factors of school security could influence students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary schools:	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	
1	encouraging students to report incidents, reducing bullying.	3.07	.82	2.97	.80	3.00	.81	HE
2	discouraging students from bringing illicit substances to school.	3.01	.82	3.01	.83	3.01	.82	HE
3	detering students from damaging school property.	2.96	.84	2.99	.81	2.98	.82	HE
4	restricting unauthorized access during instructional time.	2.99	.86	3.01	.81	3.00	.83	HE
5	reporting of emergency situations immediately.	2.95	.80	2.96	.83	2.96	.82	HE
6	clearly marking areas off-limits to students.	2.98	.83	2.98	.81	2.98	.82	HE
7	supervising student movement in and out of school.	3.04	.79	2.96	.80	2.98	.80	HE
8	facilitating supervision from the outside, deterring misconduct.	2.95	.82	3.02	.82	3.00	.82	HE
9	providing security for students facing bullying.	3.00	.81	3.02	.82	3.02	.81	HE
10	regulating phone usage to prevent distractions.	3.03	.81	3.05	.80	3.05	.80	HE
11	maintaining a visible security presence.	2.99	.83	3.02	.82	3.01	.82	HE
12	limiting entry points to manage access into the school premises.	2.93	.81	3.02	.84	2.99	.83	HE
13	preventing students from bringing weapons.	3.07	.82	2.97	.80	3.00	.81	HE

14	facilitating safe evacuation during emergencies.	3.01	.82	3.01	.83	3.01	.82	HE
Cluster Mean/SD		3.00	.82	3.00	.82	3.00	.82	HE

The result in Table 1 shows that both principals and teachers rated the influence of school security on students' disciplinary outcomes to a high extent, with identical cluster means of 3.00 and standard deviations of 0.82. All 14 items were rated "High Extent" (HE), indicating strong agreement that school security significantly impacts student behaviour in secondary schools in Enugu State. Key items included preventing weapon possession (mean = 3.00), regulating phone usage (mean = 3.05), and providing security support for bullied students (mean = 3.02). Other notable items were encouraging incident reporting (overall mean = 3.00) and limiting unauthorized access (overall mean = 3.00). The consistent high ratings across items reflect the importance of a secure school environment in reducing indiscipline and promoting student safety in secondary schools in Enugu State. The standard deviations suggest that the respondents' answers were closely aligned or showed little variation.

Research Question 2: To what extent do physical facilities influence students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary schools in South East, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean scores and standard deviation of principals and teachers on the extent to which physical facilities influence students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary schools

ITEMS		Female Principal113		Male principals 185		Overall298		Dec
S/ N	The following factors of physical facilities could influence students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary schools:	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	
15	classroom furniture reduces distractions among the students.	2.58	1.15	2.44	1.09	2.51	1.12	HE
16	multipurpose hall used for various structured activities, reduces instances of disorderly behaviour.	2.66	1.13	2.58	1.08	2.62	1.10	HE
17	adequate restrooms prevent loitering.	2.49	1.12	2.50	1.11	2.50	1.11	HE
18	properly organized dining hall helps reduce instances of food-related conflict.	2.51	1.12	2.37	1.08	2.44	1.10	LE
19	school fencing helps to restrict unauthorized entry and exit into the school premises.	2.67	.85	2.63	.83	2.65	.84	HE
20	easily accessible teachers' staffroom help teachers to monitor students' behaviour.	2.52	.84	2.50	.80	2.51	.82	HE
21	safe play areas help in encouraging students' teamwork.	2.52	.82	2.48	.84	2.50	.83	HE
22	assembly ground is common meeting point for disciplinary measures.	2.52	.80	2.51	.83	2.52	.82	HE
23	CCTV cameras deter misbehaviour through constant monitoring.	2.58	.81	2.59	.80	2.59	.80	HE
24	well-monitored spaces reduce	2.55	.82	2.53	.82	2.54	.82	HE

	loitering.							
25	adequate restrooms prevent truancy.	3.01	.79	2.99	.82	2.99	.81	HE
26	availability of school library encourages positive academic engagement.	3.02	.81	3.02	.80	3.02	.80	HE
27	well-maintained classrooms reduce disruptive behaviour.	2.95	.80	3.02	.83	3.00	.82	HE
Cluster Mean/SD		2.66	.91	2.63	.90	2.65	.91	HE

Table 2 reveals that both principals (mean = 2.66, SD = 0.91) and teachers (mean = 2.63, SD = 0.90) agreed to a high extent that physical facilities influence students' disciplinary outcomes, with an overall cluster mean of 2.65 and SD of 0.91. Out of 13 items, 12 were rated as "High Extent" (HE), while only one item relating to the dining hall (mean = 2.44, SD = 1.10) was rated "Low Extent" (LE). Highly rated items include the school library (mean = 3.02), adequate restrooms preventing truancy (mean = 2.99), and well-maintained classrooms (mean = 3.00), all of which are linked to improved student behaviour. Other important facilities with positive influence included CCTV cameras (mean = 2.59), school fencing (mean = 2.65), and safe play areas (mean = 2.50). These findings suggest that functional and well-maintained school facilities contribute significantly to promoting discipline among secondary school students in Enugu State. The standard deviations indicate that the respondents provided similar responses with minimal differences.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which security influence students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary schools in South East, Nigeria

Table 3: Summary of t-test analysis of the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent to which school security influence teachers' job performance in secondary schools

Group	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	p-value	Decision	
Male Principals	185	3.00	.82	296	.003	H ₀₃	not rejected
Female Principals	113	3.00	.82				

The t-test analysis compared the views of 50 female principals (mean = 3.00, SD = 0.82) and 119 male principals (mean = 3.00, SD = 0.82) on how school security influences students' disciplinary outcomes. The degrees of freedom (df) is 296, and the p-value is 0.003, which is below the 0.05 significance level. This indicates a statistically significant difference, even though the mean scores are identical. Yet, the decision states "H₀₃ not rejected," which contradicts the p-value and suggests a likely error in conclusion or reporting.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which physical facilities influence students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary schools in South East, Nigeria.

Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis of the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent to which physical facilities influence teachers' job performance in secondary schools

Group	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	p-value	Decision	
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Male Principals	185	2.66	.91	296	.001	H ₀₄	not
Female Principals	113	2.63	.90			rejected	

The t-test analysis compared the responses of 50 female principals (mean = 2.66, SD = 0.91) and 119 male principals (mean = 2.63, SD = 0.90) on how physical facilities influence students' disciplinary outcomes. The degrees of freedom (df) is 296, and the p-value is 0.001, which is less than the 0.05 threshold for statistical significance. This result suggests a significant difference between the two groups' perceptions. However, the decision recorded as "H₀₄ not rejected" contradicts the statistical evidence and may reflect an interpretation or reporting error.

Discussion

The study showed that school security has a significant impact on students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary schools. Effective security measures create a safe environment that discourages misbehaviour and promotes order. In Enugu State, the presence of strong school security systems greatly influences how students adhere to discipline. The finding is in line with Smith and Brown (2018) argued that effective school security reduces incidents of violence and misbehaviour, leading to better student discipline. Similarly, Eze and Okafor (2020) found that in Nigerian secondary schools, strong security measures help maintain order and positively influence students' behaviour. Both studies support the idea that school security plays a crucial role in shaping disciplinary outcomes, especially in regions like Enugu State. The hypothesis tested showed that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which school security influences students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary schools in South East, Nigeria.

The finding showed that physical facilities significantly affect students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary schools. Well-maintained facilities create a positive learning environment that encourages good behaviour and reduces disciplinary issues. In Enugu State, the quality and availability of physical facilities strongly influence how students comply with school rules and discipline. The finding is in line with Ololube (2016) who emphasized that adequate and well-maintained physical facilities enhance students' focus and discipline by providing a conducive learning environment. Similarly, Adeyemi (2017) argued that poor physical infrastructure often leads to student unrest and disciplinary problems in Nigerian secondary schools. Both authors support the view that the state of physical facilities significantly impacts students' disciplinary outcomes, especially in regions like Enugu State.

The hypothesis tested showed that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which physical facilities influence students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary schools in South East, Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study concludes that school climate significantly influences students' disciplinary outcomes in secondary schools in Enugu State. Disciplinary policies, teacher-student relationships, school security, physical facilities, and the overall school environment all play a crucial role in shaping student behaviour. Each of these factors was found to influence disciplinary outcomes to a high extent. Therefore, improving these aspects of school climate is essential for better student discipline. Stakeholders must prioritize creating positive and secure school environments to enhance student conduct effectively.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the research findings. Enhanced school security measures must be implemented to create a safe environment that supports good student conduct.

1. Investment in adequate and well-maintained physical facilities is essential to promote positive disciplinary outcomes.
2. Efforts to maintain a clean, supportive, and conducive school environment should be prioritized to positively influence student.

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