# SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT VARIABLES AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN CALABAR METROPOLIS, CROSS RIVER STATE

**By**

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## Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between school environment variables and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, it examined how school location and school facilities influence students' academic outcomes. The study adopted a correlational research design with a population of 3,281 students across 18 public secondary schools in Calabar Municipality. Using a combination of the census method and simple random sampling, a sample of 657 students, representing 20% of the population, was selected through the "Hat and Draw" method. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled *School Environment Variables and Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire (SEVSAPQ)*, consisting of 18 items on a four-point Likert scale. The instrument was validated by three experts in Measurement and Evaluation at the University of Calabar, and its reliability, determined through a trial test with 40 students outside the study sample, yielded Cronbach Alpha coefficients of .79 and .81, indicating strong internal consistency. Data collected were analyzed, and hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at the .05 level of significance. Findings revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between school location, adequacy of school facilities, and students' academic performance. The study concluded that school environment variables are critical to students' academic success, with school location and facilities emerging as significant determinants of learning outcomes. Based on these findings, it was recommended that the Ministry of Education should ensure equitable distribution of schools and provide adequate facilities to create a conducive learning environment that supports improved student performance.

## Introduction

The performance of a nation and its economy is largely shaped by the quality of its education system. In Nigeria, secondary schools serve as formal institutions designed to equip students with a solid foundation

in academic knowledge and skills, foster critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, promote character development, and prepare learners either for higher education or the workforce, while also contributing meaningfully to national development (Nigeria, 2013; Egbo et al., 2025; Obona et al., 2025). Students are an integral part of the school system, and their academic performance is vital to the progress of both society and the nation.

In this context, academic performance refers to the degree to which students achieve the learning objectives, standards, and expectations set by educational institutions. It encompasses their fulfillment of responsibilities as well as the actions and activities undertaken to perform their roles within the school system (Difoni et al., 2025; Egbo et al., 2025). Academic performance is influenced by several factors, including intelligence, effort, motivation, study habits, and the quality of instruction. Teachers play a central role in transmitting educational goals to students (Osim et al., 2012; Arop et al., 2018; Ekpoh & Eze, 2015). Koko and Nabie, as cited in Obona et al. (2024), define performance as the act of accomplishing or executing a task within a specified period. The academic performance of secondary school students can be assessed through various indicators such as grades, test scores, and examinations. Additional measures include attendance records, class participation, behavior evaluation, homework completion, extracurricular involvement, and the quality of written assignments. Collectively, these indicators provide a holistic picture of a student's educational progress, capturing not only academic achievement but also overall engagement, conduct, and participation in the learning environment.

 The academic performance of secondary school students is critical not only to their personal growth and well-being but also to the development of society at large. This explains why governments, educators, parents, and communities consistently show deep concern for students' academic outcomes. Despite this, persistent low performance among secondary school students in Nigeria has continued to attract the attention of researchers and stakeholders (Obona et al., 2024). Poor academic performance is generally described as achievement that falls below expected standards or below a student's actual ability. Several factors contribute to this problem, including ineffective teaching, psychological challenges, lack of preparedness on the part of students, unfavorable school environments, school location, and flaws in the evaluation process (Nwadinigu & Azuka-Obieke, 2012; Essien, 2018).

Scholars have consistently expressed concern over the mismatch between the government's substantial investment in education and the quality of student outcomes. Akiri and Ugborugbo (2009) emphasized that despite heavy funding, the performance of students remains disproportionately low. Adeyemo, as cited in Adedeji (2008), observed that no profession in Nigeria has experienced a greater reversal of fortune than teaching. Reports of poor performance are particularly prevalent in core subjects such as mathematics, chemistry, and English language (Adesemowo, 2005; Anakwue, 2021). Researchers such as Sule (2013) and Fehintola (2015) identified teacher inefficiency and ineffective instructional methods as major causes of students' underachievement. Similarly, Eneasator cited in Chukwuemeka et al. (2021), argued that the indifferent attitude of teachers has significantly contributed to the decline in academic standards.

Observations in many public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis further reveal students' growing nonchalance toward learning. Many arrive late, leave school before closing hours, or absent themselves

without valid reasons. In rural areas, it is common to see students loitering in the community during school hours. This lax attitude has resulted in poor performance in both internal and external examinations, inability to read and write fluently, lack of employable skills, and increased involvement in anti-social behaviors such as cultism. These trends raise serious concerns among parents, educators, and policymakers, while also undermining the credibility of public secondary schools in the region, thereby calling for urgent intervention.

One important factor that influences students' academic performance is the school environment. The school setting directly affects teachers, learners, and the overall learning process. According to Iyiegbuniwe et al. (2025), teachers are more effective when they operate in conducive environments. School environment variables, as used in this study, refer to the conditions and factors within a school that shape the educational experience. These include social elements such as student–teacher relationships, peer interactions, and overall school culture, as well as structural aspects like leadership, organizational setup, resource availability, and staff collaboration (Ayang et al., 2025). Together, these variables play a critical role in shaping students' academic, social, and emotional development, thereby impacting their learning outcomes and well-being. This study focuses on two key dimensions of the school environment—school location and school facilities—to examine their influence on students' academic performance in public secondary schools.

**School Location and Students' Academic Performance**

School location refers to the physical placement of an educational institution within a particular geographical area or community. It remains a critical factor that must be carefully studied and managed to enhance teaching effectiveness and students' learning outcomes (Essien, 2018). For example, when schools are situated close to marketplaces, the noise and commercial activities can distract both teachers and learners, thereby hindering the teaching–learning process (Elujekwute et al., 2021). The location of a school, whether urban or rural, significantly influences students' academic performance. Owoeye (2011) examined the relationship between school location, academic performance, and teachers' job effectiveness in Ekiti State, Nigeria, using West African School Certificate Examination (WASCE) results from 1990–1997 across 50 schools. The findings revealed a significant difference in academic achievement between rural and urban schools (t = 273, p < 0.05). Similarly, Essien (2018) investigated the effect of class size on students' achievement in Social Studies in Cross River State and reported that large class sizes negatively influenced learning outcomes.

In another study, Stephen (2015) explored how school location and job satisfaction affect music teachers and their students' performance in South-South Nigeria. Findings showed that teacher motivation greatly contributed to students' success, with location exerting a significant effect on teacher job satisfaction and student achievement. Kabiru (2017), studying secondary schools in Kano State, also reported a significant disparity in academic performance between rural and urban students, attributing the gap to poor settlement planning of schools. Likewise, Awodun and Oyeniyi (2018) confirmed significant differences in Basic Science achievement scores between rural and urban schools in Ekiti State. However, Ikechuku (2021), examining Physics achievement using the 5E learning cycle, reported no significant difference between rural and urban schools, suggesting that instructional methods may moderate location effects.

**School Facilities and Students' Academic Performance**

School facilities refer to the physical infrastructure, resources, and amenities available within an institution to support teaching, learning, and administrative functions. Akomolafe and Adesua (2016) defined school facilities as the school plant, including classrooms, libraries, laboratories, offices, toilet facilities, and other amenities that stimulate learning. These facilities—such as playgrounds, furniture, water supply, electricity, and teaching aids—play an essential role in achieving educational goals. Conversely, inadequate facilities negatively affect both teachers' effectiveness and students' learning outcomes (Akinkuade & Oredein, 2021; Uduak, 2018).

Research has consistently shown a strong relationship between facilities and academic achievement. Akomolafe and Adesua (2016) reported a significant link between school facilities, students' motivation, and academic performance. Similarly, Obona et al. (2021) found that effective maintenance strategies positively correlate with school sustainability. Uchendu et al. (2016) highlighted the importance of libraries and adequate classroom space in enhancing academic staff productivity in Enugu State universities. Abubakar and Adamu (2019) further demonstrated that proper utilization and maintenance of facilities improve student outcomes in Adamawa State.

Studies across Nigeria and beyond have also reinforced this link. Olugbenga (2019) reported that poor facilities in Kaduna State negatively impacted both teaching and learning. Onyebuenyi et al. (2022) showed that access to library facilities significantly enhanced students' performance in Aba Education Zone. Similarly, Yangambi (2023) observed that school infrastructure strongly influenced learning outcomes in Kinshasa, while Foluke and Ogunode (2022) confirmed a relationship between school plant availability, teachers' job performance, and student achievement in Abuja public schools.

The reviewed literature consistently highlights that both school location and facilities have significant influence on students' academic achievement, though findings vary depending on context and methodology. However, most of the existing studies were conducted in states outside Cross River or in foreign countries, limiting their applicability to the current context. Furthermore, no studies have specifically examined the combined effects of school location and facilities on students' academic performance in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap and contribute to the growing body of knowledge.

**Statement of the problem**

Students' academic performance not only determines their personal growth and future opportunities but also contributes to the development of their families, communities, and the nation at large. Ideally, effective student academic performance is reflected in consistent achievement of learning objectives, excellent grades, high levels of class participation, regular school attendance, discipline, and active engagement in both curricular and extracurricular activities. When students perform well, schools achieve their set goals, parents are satisfied with the outcomes of their investment, and society benefits from a pool of competent and responsible citizens capable of contributing to socio-economic development.

However, the researcher's observation, coupled with complaints from parents and students within Calabar Metropolis, reveals that the reality in many public secondary schools falls short of these ideals. Reports of declining academic performance, poor study habits, irregular attendance, inadequate motivation, and low examination outcomes are common. Parents lament that despite investing their resources, many students fail to meet expected standards, while some students themselves complain of poor learning conditions, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient teaching resources. This situation negatively affects the reputation of schools, reduces students' chances of excelling in higher education or competing in the labor market, and this hinders the socio-economic progress of society.

Although the government has introduced measures such as providing instructional materials, employing qualified teachers, and organizing periodic capacity-building workshops to improve teaching and learning, the problem of poor student performance persists. Similarly, researchers have made several recommendations on teaching methods, curriculum improvement, and student support services, yet the challenge remains unresolved. Based on this, the researcher proposes that the problem may be better addressed by examining school environment variables. Therefore, the problem of this study led to the question: What is the relationship between school environment variables and student academic performance in public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria? The need to answer this question necessitated this study.

## Purpose of the Study

This study investigated school environment variables and student academic performance in public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to find out whether:

1. School location relates to student academic performance in public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State.

2. School facilities relates to student academic performance in public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State.

## Research hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between school location and student academic performance in public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State.
2. There is no significant relationship between school facilities and student academic performance in public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State.

## Research methodology

The study adopted correlational research design. Akuezuilo and Agu (2012) explained a survey research as one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from people or items considered to be representation of the entire group. The design was considered appropriate for this study because researchers investigated the relationship between school environment variables and student academic performance in public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State. The population of this study comprised all 3,281 students of the 18 public secondary school in Calabar Municipality Area, Cross River State. Out of this number, 1,595 were male students while 1,692 were female students. The study adopted Census method and simple random sampling technique. Census method was used to involve all the 18 public secondary schools in the area, while simple random technique was used to select 657 students as sample which is 20% of the total population of student in public secondary schools in the area through the "Hat and Drawn" method.

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled "School Environment Variables and Students Academic Performance Questionnaire (SEVSAPQ)". The instrument has three sections: Section 'A' contained the respondents demographic data such as name of school, gender, educational qualification, age, and working experience. Section 'B' contained 12 items that measured the sub-variables of "School Environment" (school location and school facilities). Section 'C' consisted of 6-items designed to measure Students Academic Performance. The instrument has a total of 18 items on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Three experts from Measurement and Evaluation at the University of Calabar validated the instrument. The instrument's reliability was determined using a trial test with 40 secondary school students not involved in the main study. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients obtained were .79 and .81, indicating a high level of internal consistency. The questionnaire copies were administered to the respondents by the researcher supported by 5 research assistants. After three days, the researcher went back and collected the copies of the questionnaires.

The researcher sorted out the collected questionnaire to ensure that all the items have been well responded to by the respondents. The questionnaire was then organized in the order of the variables they were designed to measure. In scoring section 'A' and 'B' of the instruments, the researcher assigned numbers to the items. Positively worded items were scored as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4point, Agree (A) = 3points, Disagree (D) = 2points and Strongly Disagree (SD) =1point. But for all the negatively worded items, the pattern was reversed. Pearson product moment correlation analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The entire hypotheses were tested at a .05 level of significance and the results presented in tables.

## Results

## Hypothesis one

There is no significant relationship between school location and student academic performance in public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State. The two variables in this

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hypothesis are school location and students academic performance. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis and the result of the analysis is presented in Table 1. Table 1 showed the correlation coefficients between school location and students academic performance. The correlation coefficients was statistically significant for students academic performance ($r = .76$, $p<.05$). Since $p(.000)$ is less than $p(.05)$, hypothesis one is rejected in terms of students academic performance. The result of the analysis implied that there was a statistically significant relationship between school location and student academic performance in public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State.

Table 1: Summary of correlation between school location and student academic performance in public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State.  (N=657)

| Variables | $\overline{X}$ | S.D | r | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| school location | 20.07 | 3.17 | | |
| Students  academic performance | 20.65 | 2.97 | $.76^{*}$ | .000 |

*Significant at $p<.05$ df=655

## Hypothesis two

There is no significant relationship between school facilities and student academic performance in public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State.  The two variables in this hypothesis are school facilities and student academic performance. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis and the result of the analysis is presented in Table 2. Table 2 showed the correlation coefficients between school facilities and student academic performance. The correlation coefficients was statistically significant for academic performance of students ($r = .80$, $p<.05$). Since $p(.000)$ is less than $p(.05)$, hypothesis four is rejected in terms of student academic performance. The result of the analysis implied that there was a statistically significant relationship between school facilities and student academic performance in public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State.

Table 2: Summary of correlation between school facilities and student academic performance in public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State.  (N=657)

| Variables | $\overline{X}$ | S.D | r | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| School   facilities | 20.59 | 3.16 | | |
| Academic performance of students | 20.65 | 2.97 | $.80^{*}$ | .000 |

*Significant at $p<.05$ df=655

## Discussion of findings

The finding from hypothesis one established that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between school location and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State. This may be attributed to students' proximity to school, safe and conducive environments, and access to resources that enhance exposure to diverse learning opportunities. A conducive environment promotes effective learning and retention, which ultimately improves academic performance. The implication of this result is that a favorable school location leads to improved student performance, while an unfavorable location has the opposite effect.

This finding supports Owoeye (2011), who reported a significant difference in the academic achievement of students in rural and urban secondary schools in senior school certificate examinations (t = 273, p < 0.05), showing that students in urban areas performed better than their rural counterparts. Similarly, it aligns with Stephen (2015), who examined the influence of school location and job satisfaction on music teachers and their students' performance in South-South Nigeria. The study concluded that school location significantly affects teachers' job satisfaction and students' academic performance. It also corroborates Awodun and Oyeniyi (2018), who revealed a statistically significant difference in the achievement mean scores of students in urban and rural school locations.

The findings of hypothesis two revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between school facilities and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State. This may be due to the availability of physical environments that support effective teaching and learning, such as well-designed and adequately equipped classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and recreational spaces. Access to up-to-date resources, including technology, books, and research materials, enriches the learning process and deepens students' understanding of subjects. Modern facilities also accommodate diverse learning styles, technological advancements, and interactive methodologies, creating a more dynamic educational experience. Furthermore, comfortable and well-maintained facilities foster motivation, attendance, and overall well-being, thereby promoting academic success. The implication is that improvement in the provision and maintenance of school facilities will lead to corresponding improvements in students' academic performance and vice versa.

This finding supports Uduak (2018), who argued that maximum performance requires a conducive physical environment with adequate facilities. It also corroborates Akomolafe and Adesua (2016), who found a significant relationship between physical facilities, student motivation, and academic performance among senior secondary school students in South-West Nigeria. Similarly, it agrees with Abubakar and Adamu (2019), who revealed that the utilization and maintenance of school facilities significantly contributed to students' academic achievement in Adamawa State.

## Conclusion

The study investigated school environment variables and student academic performance in public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria. The findings revealed a statistically

significant positive relationship between school location, availability of school facilities, and students' academic performance. Based on these findings, the study concluded that school environment variables play a crucial role in shaping students academic outcomes in public secondary schools within the study area. Specifically, school location and the adequacy of school facilities emerged as key determinants that significantly enhance students' effective academic performance.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that:

1. Proper location planning will promote fairness, accessibility, and improved academic outcomes for all. Therefore, the Ministry of Education should ensure that schools are strategically located to reduce overcrowding, long travel distances, and the associated stress that may negatively affect students' learning.

2. Government and educational stakeholders should prioritize the provision and maintenance of adequate school facilities such as libraries, science laboratories, ICT centers, and well-furnished classrooms. Ensuring that these facilities are functional and accessible will create a conducive learning environment that supports effective teaching and enhances students' academic performance.

## Contribution to knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge by empirically establishing that school environment variables such as school location and school facilities play a significant role in shaping students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State. While previous studies have generally emphasized teacher quality and instructional methods as major determinants of learning outcomes, this research provides clear evidence that the physical and geographical context of schooling also has a strong and positive influence on students' achievement. By demonstrating that well-located schools with adequate facilities foster better learning outcomes, the study advances existing literature and provides policymakers, educators, and school managers with fresh insights into the critical role of the school environment in promoting effective academic performance.

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