

## Students' and Teachers' Perception of School Climate: A Correlational Analysis

Agbajeola Racheal Oluwakemi<sup>1</sup>

Olumide Rufus Olubunmi<sup>2</sup>

Garuba Qudus Ajibola<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract

The success of the learning outcome is highly related to the learning environment. This is because the learning environment significantly influences students' academic achievement, attitude, and motivation. The study investigated the relationship between students' and teachers' perception of school climate in public secondary schools in Ijebu Ode, Ogun state Nigeria. The study used a survey research design. The population for the study comprised all teachers and students in Ijebu Ode public senior secondary schools, Ogun State, Nigeria. The sample consists of 186 teachers and 488 student respondents. Simple random sampling techniques were used to select twenty teachers and fifty students from fifteen secondary schools. Data was collected using the Students and Teachers' Perception of School Climate Questionnaire. Data collected was analysed using frequency count, mean, standard deviation and pearson product moment correlation. Result showed that students have a slightly positive perception of school climate (52.9%). It also showed that teachers have a positive perception of school climate (100%). In addition, it was found that there is no significant relationship between students' and teachers' perception ( $r = .118, P > 0.05$ ) of school climate in public secondary schools in Ijebu Ode, Ogun state. It was concluded that there is no relationship between students' and teachers' perception of school climate in Ijebu Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria. It is recommended that teachers should be more tolerant of students to have a positive school climate

**Keywords:** Teachers' perception, Students Perception, school climate, Secondary school

### 1. Introduction

The success of the learning outcome is highly related to the learning environment. This is because the learning environment significantly influences students' academic achievement, attitude, and motivation (Özerem & Akkoyunlu, 2015; Radovan & Makovec, 2015). Significant to the learning environment is the school. School climate represents virtually every aspect of the school experience, including the quality of teaching and learning, school community relationships, school organisation, and the institutional and structural features of the school environment. There is a lack of consensus on the actual definition and parameters within which to measure school climate, resulting in the term school climate often being used to encompass many different aspects of the school environment (Cohen et al. 2009; Johnson and Stevens 2006; Zullig et al.2010; Thapa et al. 2013). As there is no universal definition of school climate, researchers practice a great deal of discretion in how they characterise and describe school climate.

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<sup>1</sup> PhD, Department of Educational Management. Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State, Nigeria. Email: agbajeolaro@tasued.edu.ng

<sup>2</sup> PhD, Department of Management Science. Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji Arakeji, Osun State, Nigeria. Email: Bunmiolumide1967@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup> PhD, Department of Educational Management. Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State, Nigeria. Email:

garubaqa@tasued.edu.ng

Nwagwu (2017) defined school climate as the status of human relationships within the operational environment of the educational institution. While Freinerg (1999) explained it as the heart and soul of the school or that essence of a school that leads a child, a teacher, and an administrator to love the school and to look forward to being there each school day. Classroom climate refers to the type of atmosphere created by the school, teachers, and peers, encompassing elements such as safety, inclusivity, and intellectual stimulation (Cohen et al., 2009). The National School Climate Council (2007) defined school climate as "the quality and character of school life where the patterns of individuals' experience consisting of norms, aims, values and relationships among stakeholders, and structure of the organisation. According to Kurt and Çalık (2010), school climate is an organisational structure that enables the interaction of school elements consisting of teachers, students, parents, and administration among themselves, and these elements are affected by each other. There are six types of school climate, such as: open, autonomous, controlled, familiar, paternal and closed school climate (Nwagwu, 2017; Peretomode, 2014) Another opinion states that the school climate has four aspects, namely safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and environmental-structural (Cohen et al., 2009). Ismail et al. (2020) confirmed that a healthy school climate promotes positive attitudes, openness, and effective teaching and learning while the National School Climate Council (2016) expressed that a sustainable, positive academic climate promotes school students' social development. In a similar direction, Wang and Degol (2016) think that a well-structured classroom climate can inspire learners to reach their fullest potential, while a negative one can hinder growth and disengage students from the learning process. Closely related, previous studies have shown that a positive school climate is associated with increased achievement, decreased problem behaviour (Ellis et al., 2022), and overall student success (Daily et al., 2019; Maxwell et al., 2017). A "positive" classroom climate fosters a nurturing environment where students feel physically secure, emotionally supported, and cognitively engaged. This environment not only satisfies students' basic needs for safety and well-being but also cultivates self-confidence, motivation, and academic success (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). This encourages students to obtain maximum learning achievement, following student expectations (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2014). Besides, a sense of security is also a necessity that needs to be fulfilled by humans to achieve self-actualisation to the fullest at school (Abulof, 2017; Harrigan & Commons, 2015; Healy, 2016).

Conversely, a negative classroom climate can evoke discomfort, whether physical, emotional, or academic, leading to stress, low engagement, and diminished achievement (Thapa et al., 2013). Negative school climate lacks an effective leader, and the teachers are generally unhappy with their jobs and colleagues. School climate can be thought of as the life and character of the school; thus, seeking opportunities to create or sustain a positive school climate is foundational to continuous improvement efforts. Productive school climate needs good teaching and learning strategies, sufficient instructional materials, richer classroom ecology, pleasant school culture, objective administration and good school physical structures. However, there seems to be sparse study on the relationship between students' and teachers' perception of school climate, hence this study.

### **Objectives of the study**

The primary objective of the study was to determine the relationship between students' and teachers' perceptions of school climate in public secondary schools in Ijebu Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria. The following research questions were formulated:

1. What is the student's perception of school climate in public secondary schools in Ijebu Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria?
2. What is the teacher's perception of school climate in public secondary schools in Ijebu Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria?
3. What is the relationship between students' and teachers' perception of school climate in public secondary schools, Ijebu Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria?

## 2. Literature review

Numerous studies have linked positive school climates with improved academic outcomes (Maxwell et al., 2017). The study of Hoy et al. (2007) confirmed that neither teachers nor students are academically motivated in poor schools, and academic achievement is not highly students' perception of the school environment, which influences their involvement in academic activities at school (Bradshaw et al., 2014; Mehta et al., 2013; Wang & Holcombe, 2010). Students who have a good perception of the school climate influence students' sense of school belonging (Cemalcilar, 2010) as well. A student who feels safe and comfortable in learning at school will be optimal in displaying academic performance in school (Kutsyuruba, Klinger, & Hussain, 2015). Collins and Parson (2010) studied establishing this student-climate- performance link; they found that school climate explained a significant amount of the between-school variance in mean school performance. Collins and Parson (2010) found that, among other factors, empirical evidence has confirmed that school climate is powerful in affecting students' academic performance. The school climate study of Espelage et al. (2014) found school climate to be a leading predictor of students' emotional and behavioural outcomes that affect students' adaptive psychosocial adjustment, mental health outcomes and also influences students' behaviour. In their research, school climate was also found to affect students' academic achievement. Research conducted has proven that students' perceptions of school climate have a socioemotional and academic adjustment impact on students living in China and America (Jia et al., 2009). The study of Gage et al. (2016) showed that students' perceptions of school climate can be predictors of student discipline levels in schools, while Agus Supriyanto, Yulia Ayriza and Adiputra (2020) worked on the effect of students' perceptions of the school climate on academic performance. In addition, Jones and Schindler (2016) found in their study of 30 urban schools that students' school climate perceptions highly correlated with their academic achievement. Against popular findings, Bektaş and Nalçacı (2013) found no relationship between students' school climate perceptions and their academic achievement.

The relationships that people (children and adults) have in their school most certainly affect the school climate. These relationships shape a person's perception of the school experience and provide the lens through which each one views all other behaviour at school. Payton et al. (2008) stated that the school climate is related to the students' academic achievement at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Moreover, a positive school climate is related to increased motivation to learn. It has also been observed that students need to have a positive relationship with their teachers, which was also confirmed in the study of Elias and Haynes (2008), who found in their studies that students' teacher support perceptions can predict their academic achievement. Bahçetepe and Giorgetti (2015), in their study with 8th graders in Istanbul, claimed that students' academic achievement increases when their school climate perceptions are more positive. Jia et al. (2016) stated that students with high supportive teacher perceptions have lower dropout rates. Kotok et al. (2016) stated in their study by using data from the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 in the US, that better disciplinary order in schools is related to lower rates of dropout. Also, Daily et al. (2020) claimed that middle and high school students with positive school climate perceptions have lower school absenteeism. Aldridge et al. (2020) stated that school climate perceptions of high school students have a significant effect on students' well-being. In addition, Coelho et al. (2020) claimed in their longitudinal study that students with positive school climate perceptions have a higher self-concept and self-esteem. Students' school climate perceptions are significantly related to life satisfaction and internalising/externalising problems (Suldo et al., 2012). Another study, Zullig et al. (2018) showed a positive school climate perception has a stronger effect on life satisfaction and self-rated health for girls, while school satisfaction is more affected by a positive school climate for boys.

Another important stakeholder in the school is the teacher. School climate, which encompasses the quality and character of school life (National School Climate Centre, 2007), plays a pivotal role in shaping teachers' work experiences. Positive school climates are associated with higher job satisfaction (Malinen & Savolainen, 2016), and improved teacher retention. Teachers are responsible for imparting knowledge, skills, character, and behaviour to students. This vital role teachers play makes their job performance essential. Ofoegbu (2017) stated that teachers' interactions, views, duties and behaviour play a vital role in ensuring achievement in educational institutions. Teachers who feel valued and supported are more likely to engage in effective teaching practices and have a positive impact on their students (Benevene et al., 2020). According to Obikwelu and Nwasor (2017), teachers are those who make strident efforts to improve human capital in the school. This is to say that teachers are those who help in the academic, social, and emotional development of students. Studies of teachers have identified several aspects that comprise their perceptions of school climate, including their perceived access to instructional supplies, connection to and support from parents, colleagues and administration, school expectations for student achievement and behaviour, involvement in decision making, and general school morale (Ouellette et al., 2018). Negative teacher perceptions of school climate are linked to emotional exhaustion and burnout (Fernet et al., 2012; Pas et al., 2012), which correlate with lower academic achievement and lower elementary school student ratings of teacher support (Arens & Morin, 2016). Malinen and Savolainen (2016) reported that teachers who perceive their school climate positively at the beginning of the school year are more likely to report higher job satisfaction at the end of the year. Alonso-Tapia and Ruiz Diaz (2022) found that teachers' perception of the school climate, particularly the quality of leadership and the quality of teachers' mutual support, significantly influences their satisfaction with the school. Fei and Han (2020) claimed that there is a significant positive relationship between school climate and teachers' work performance. In addition, Mailool et al. (2020) stated in their study with vocational high school teachers that school climate perceptions of teachers predict 20.7% of teacher performance.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Method

This study is cross descriptive research design. The design. The population for the study comprised all teachers and students in Ijebu Ode public senior secondary schools, Ogun State, Nigeria.

#### 3.2 Participants and instrument

The sample consists of 186 teachers and 488 student respondents. Simple random sampling techniques were used to select twenty teachers and fifty students from fifteen secondary schools. Two (2) research instruments used for data collection are Students' Perception of Organisational Climate, adapted from Yang et al (2023) and Teachers' Organisational Climate Questionnaire, adapted from Bear (2014). Cronbach's Alpha method was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaires, which showed 0.88 and 0.78 for the students and teachers scale, respectively. Data collected was analysed using frequency count, mean, standard deviation and pearson product moment correlation.

#### 3.3. Results and analysis

1. What is the students perception of school climate in public secondary schools Ijebu Ode, Ogun state Nigeria?

**Table 1. Analysis of students' perception of school climate in public secondary schools**

Statement	Mean	Std	Remarks
<b>Teacher Students Relationship</b>			
Teachers care about their students	3.16	.987	Positive

I like my teachers	1.78	.832	Negative
Adults who work in this school care about the students	1.81	.780	Negative
Teachers listen to you when you have a problem	2.50	1.107	Positive
Teachers let you know when you are doing a good job	2.25	1.078	Negative
Adults in this school treat students fairly"	2.22	1.008	Negative
<b>Student-Student Relationship</b>			
Students get along with one another"	3.13	.871	Positive
Students are friendly toward most other students"	2.56	.948	Positive
Students really care about each other"	2.25	.950	Positive
Students treat each other with respect"	2.66	.902	Positive
<b>Liking of School</b>			
I wish I went to another school	2.38	1.100	Negative
I like this school"	2.44	1.045	Negative
I am proud of my school	2.69	.965	Positive
School feels like a prison	2.81	.998	Positive
<b>Fairness of School Rules</b>			
The school rules are fair	2.84	1.081	Positive
Consequences for breaking school rules are fair	2.63	1.129	Positive
Teachers are fair when correcting misbehavior	2.38	1.040	Negative

The result of question one is presented in Table 1, which shows the students' perceptions of school climate. The mean score of 2.50 was used as a benchmark are: the result showed that nine items were rated above the benchmark mean (2.50). These represent 52.9% of the total number of items. This thus implies that 47.0% of the items were rated below the benchmark mean. With the majority of the items slightly rated above the benchmark mean, it can thus be claimed that students have a slightly positive perception of school climate in a public secondary school in Ijebu Ode, Ogun state.

2. What is the teacher's perception of school climate in public secondary schools in Ijebu Ode, Ogun state Nigeria?

**Table 2. Analysis of teachers' perception of school climate in public secondary schools**

SN	Statement	Mean	Std	Remarks
1	The principal compliments teachers	2.74	.9396	Positive
2	Teachers have parties for each other	3.01	.8205	Positive
3	Routine duties interfere with the job of teaching.	3.02	.8210	Positive
4	Teachers help students on their own time	3.00	.8575	Positive
5	The principal rules with an iron fist.	2.97	.8561	Positive
6	The principal encourages teacher autonomy	3.07	.8043	Positive
7	The principal goes out of his or her way to help teachers	3.07	.8082	Positive
8	The principal is available after school to help teachers when assistance is needed.	3.38	.6664	Positive
9	Teachers socialize with each other on a regular basis	3.23	.6938	Positive

10	Teachers who have personal problems receive support from other staff members	3.07	.7968	Positive
11	Teachers stay after school to tutor students who need help	3.23	.7763	Positive
12	Teachers accepts additional duties if students will benefit.	2.98	.9292	Positive
13	The principal supervises teachers closely.	2.95	.9971	Positive
14	Providing up-to date learning materials for students	2.98	.8917	Positive
15	Most of the teachers here accept the faults of their colleagues	2.82	.9855	Positive
16	Teachers exert group pressure on non-conforming faculty members	2.77	1.036	Positive
17	Teachers are rude to other staff members	2.98	.8931	Positive
18	Teachers don't listen to other teachers	2.91	.9837	Positive
19	The principal corrects teachers' mistakes.	2.93	.9521	Positive
20	Maintaining a manageable student teacher ratio in the classroom	2.98	.9841	Positive

The result of question one is presented in Table 2. The result in Table 2 showed the responses of teachers' perception of school climate. Mean score 2.50 was used as a benchmark. The result showed that all twenty items were rated above the benchmark mean (2.50), thus representing 100% of the total number of items. With all (100%) the items rated above the benchmark mean, it can thus be claimed that teachers have a positive perception of school climate in the public secondary school in Ijebu Ode, Ogun state.

3. What is the relationship between students' and teachers' perception of school climate in public secondary schools, Ijebu Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria?

**Table 3. Relationship of students' and teachers perception of school climate in public secondary schools**

Variables	Mean	Std	N	R	Sig
Students	42.46	7.91	488	.118	.520
Teachers	60.94	11.46	148		

Table 3 shows the result of the relationship between students' and teachers' perceptions of school climate in public secondary schools. The table shows a 42.46 mean score for students with a 7.91 standard deviation and a 60.94 mean score for teachers' perception of school climate with 11.46 standard deviation. The table further shows that the relationship between the two variables is not significant ( $r = .118, P > 0.05$ ). This implies that there is no significant relationship between students' and teachers' perception of school climate in public secondary schools in Ijebu Ode, Ogun state.

### 3.4 Discussion of findings

The importance of school climate is germane to the teacher and students in the overall school activities. The relationship between the teachers and students become a very important area of study. The study finds students' low perception of school climate. There is a need for a positive climate that will ensure students' achievement and willingness to learn. This is because a negative classroom climate can evoke discomfort, whether physical, emotional, or academic, leading to stress, low engagement, and diminished achievement (Thapa et al., 2013). This agrees with Cemalcilar (2010), who confirmed that the students who have a good perception of the school climate have an influence on students' sense of school belonging. A student who feels safe and comfortable in learning at school will perform optimally in displaying academic performance in school (Kutsyuruba, Klingler, &

Hussain, 2015). Collins and Parson's (2010) findings confirmed that school climate explained a significant amount of the between-school variance in mean school performance. The need for positive school climate was further confirmed by Espelage (2014) which found that school climate is a leading predictor of students' emotional and behavioural outcomes that affect students' adaptive psychosocial adjustment, mental health outcomes and influence students' behaviour. In addition, Bahçetepe and Giorgetti (2015) in their study with 8th graders in İstanbul claimed that students' academic achievement increases when their school climate perceptions are more positive.

The result also showed that teachers have a positive perception of school climate in public secondary schools in Ijebu Ode, Ogun State. Negative teacher perceptions of school climate are linked to emotional exhaustion and burnout (Fernet et al., 2012; Pas et al., 2012), which correlate with lower academic achievement and lower elementary school student ratings of teacher support (Arens & Morin, 2016). Malinen and Savolainen (2016) reported that teachers who perceive their school climate positively at the beginning of the school year are more likely to report higher job satisfaction at the end of the year. Alonso-Tapia and Ruiz Diaz (2022) found that teachers' perception of the school climate, particularly, the quality of leadership and the quality of teachers' mutual support, significantly influences their satisfaction with the school.

The result also showed no significant relationship between students' and teachers' perceptions of school climate. This is similar to the finding that there is a difference in school climate perception between students and teachers. It is also similar to the findings of Aleksandra Tłuściak-Deliowska (2015), who also draws attention to the disharmony between student and teacher perceptions of teacher behaviours. The study by Mitchell et al (2010) confirmed that the differences may reflect differences in power because teachers have greater control over daily activities; therefore, they may feel more positively toward the teaching learning environment.

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study investigated the relationship between students' and teachers' perceptions of school climate in public secondary schools in Ijebu Ode, Ogun State. The relationship between teachers and students in the school environment is very important. It is only when teachers and students share a harmonious perception of school climate that schools can achieve productivity. It was concluded that there is no relationship between students' and teachers' perception of school climate in Ijebu ode, Ogun state, Nigeria. It is recommended that teachers be more tolerant of students to have a positive school climate.

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