Effects of School Environment on Students' Commitment towards Learning among Junior Secondary Schools in Udenu Local Government Area, Enugu State

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Abstract

This work investigates the effect of school environment on students' commitment towards learning among junior secondary schools in Udenu Local government Area of Enugu State. The study adopted the descriptive research design. It employed the quantitative approach in collecting and analyzing data from sampled 346 respondents drawn from ten secondary schools in the local government through random sampling. Population consists of all SS 2 students. The data was analyzed using SPSS. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions with one hypothesis. The findings revealed that students' perception were negative on the school environment as they disagreed with the items. The work further indicated that students were committed towards learning. Finally, the study established the existing relationship between school environment and students' commitment towards learning. Therefore, effective school environment predicts the rate of students' commitment towards learning. The study, therefore, recommends that school management should work hard to improve the identified school environmental factors as the factors are essential for effective learning to take place. The identified student's commitment towards learning needs to be rewarded for students to maintain such a high spirit especially at the level of their education, as it is a key factor for effective learning to take place. Furthermore, school administrators should also find ways to create conducive learning environment.

Keywords: **School**, **Environment**, **Commitment, Learning**

Introduction

Knowledge about how students learn has increased considerably over the past decades according to Amesi, (2010). The school is a special social space where education, training and personality development of students who are a community's future assets are founded and run by proper training methods, appropriate physical space and favourable psychological environment. Students in the process of socialization require a healthy environment and models, so as to increase their interest, commitment and performance. Ahmadi, Zarghami & Mahdinejad (2014) were of the view that since schools are the first model affecting students' personality, playing space of a school is an important element for learning and education, even in social perspective, its impact on students' development play a major role. Spana, Sianna,Victoria & Andrew (2014) adduced that, all experts of education and educational psychology of teaching and learning agree that effective education depends on having a goal, the appropriateness of both physical and social environment of class, motivation of teachers and students for teaching and learning, the students' cognitive, emotional and motor preparation, sound class management by teachers, their knowledge and mastery over the subject matter and their passion for their work and the students' progress; that the teacher try to create a perfect environment for learning to prevent the formation of behaviour and nuisance factors.

Education is a means of socializing human beings; a means of bringing up a child in the society and constantly training him to adjust to the changing world around him. It is a lifelong process of developing one's total personality, that is, all round growth, intellectually, socially, economically, culturally…so as to enable him function well in any given environment (Fafunwa, 1991 cited in Ebubechineke, 2018).

Education is a public right that, operations related to this important area are considered as responsibilities of society within public and governmental policies. It can be considered as factors of equality and justice, since no society can claim justice and equality without education (Gilavand & Hosseinpour, 2016); and it can only thrive in a conducive learning environment. Environment influences teaching and learning process of children. Environment is the conditions that affect the

behavior and development of somebody or something, the physical conditions that somebody or something exists in (Maduike & Emeana, 2014).

School environment has been defined by various authors in various ways. Mege (2014) defined it as "factors within the school that influence the teaching and learning process. The school environment includes classroom, library, laboratory, technical workshops, teachers' knowledge (Amesi, 2010) or quality, teaching methods, peers, among others that can affect the teaching and learning process.

This definition implies that there are various school environmental variables and these may differ from one school to another. Korir & Kipkemboi (2014) posit that school environmental factors consist of the school structure, school composition and school climate, safety and order in the school, teacher relationships and collaboration, academic expectations, leadership and teachers professional developmental. In contrast, Mege (2014) brought to view school environment. According to him, the location of the school has an effect on the teaching-learning process. Most schools in the urban areas are well staffed as compared to those in rural areas in case everyone wants to work in the urban centers due to technology which is high in the urban areas as compared to the rural areas. Studies indicated that school environment can determine the students' commitment towards learning.

Commitment is the state of being dedicated to a cause, activity or obligation that restricts freedom of action. Nyoni, Nyoni & Bonga (2017) established that school environment promotes students' commitment towards learning as proper school environment makes the students psychologically comfortable and enhances students' motivation in school related activities, making learning efficient and interesting.

Learning is the process of acquiring new understanding, knowledge, behaviour, skills, values, attitudes and performances. The ability to learn is possessed by human being, non-human animals and some machines. Learning involves interaction of students with the environment which includes the quality of classrooms, laboratories, libraries, playing fields and textbooks among others. Physical resources go long way in creating conducive environment that promotes

students' commitment towards learning. That's why, Nambuya (2013) noted that provision of adequate learning facilities including equipment and human resources enhance the quality and relevance of imparted skills of learners. Lee (2014) on exploring learning environmental factors that affect student cognitive engagement has it that, relationship exists between students' commitment towards learning and school environmental factors. He further added that when the school environmental factors are good and conducive for teaching and learning, teaching and learning become effective and attract students' participation and commitment since students will be comfortable in their learning process. UNESCO (2016) also noted that the availability of electricity and sanitation facilities improve the learning environment and students' health, boosting school attendance and facilitating school activities and through that way improves students commitment towards learning. Based on that, Ngussa and Nzowa (2019) opined that commitment towards learning is an additive function related to academic and school issues. They went on to say that commitment is influenced by school environmental factors and that commitment enhances students' success. Oblinger (2010) on the other hand sees commitment towards learning as beyond the acquisition of knowledge and skills but to include ability to think critically and solve complex problems, communicate effectively, work collaboratively and pursue self directed learning. Therefore, the focal point of commitment towards learning is on the behaviour of the students in the whole process of learning.

School environmental factors have been explained to have noteworthy impact in the whole process of teaching and learning. It plays a significant part in the cognitive, affective and social domains of students because these facts have direct or indirect influence such as creating positive influence on students towards learning. Intensifying students' participation in the process of studying and promoting students' commitment towards learning, which consequentially bring about good academic prowess. That is why, to Mustapha (2014), school environmental factors are greatly essential as they affect the ways students learn. In support of Mustapha (2014), Liftoff (2016) stated that students who attended schools where they and their teachers form positive relationships towards one another, their peers inclusive, have a remarkable advantages over students who attend schools without these relational traits. He further made known that the

issue of physical school environment is not a serious problem in schools where there is no serious problem, in schools where there is economic stability and good educational system. On the same vein, Usaini, Abubakar and Bichi (2015) added that school environment has great influence on the students learning and growth including social, emotional and ethical development. They agreed that when the school environment is conducive and caring, it encourages the students' sense of connectedness and sense of belonging which in turn fosters their academic success. UNESCO (2016) also pointed out that, creating a positive learning environment is essential for success in the school and classroom. This therefore, calls the attention of teachers to create a favourable atmosphere physically, emotionally and psychologically where students feel safe, secure and willing to participate and share ideas with their teachers and fellow students.

Juan &Visser (2017); Oden, (2019) indicated that the extent of which learning could be committed depends on the location of the school compound, the structure of their classrooms, availability of instructional facilities and other related resources. They made known that there exist strong relationship between the school environmental factors and the whole process of teaching and learning. They maintained that school environmental factors contributed immensely to the learners' class active participation and the general academic success.

Statement of the problem

Secondary Schools in Udenu local government area are in poor conditions as observed by the researcher when she went to administer her questionnaire which indicated that most of low performing secondary schools in that area do not have good school environment. No conducive classroom that are well ventilated to allow in air, have dusty classroom, dilapidated classrooms with spoilt chairs and lockers that are death traps, while others make their classroom under the mango or cashew trees. No laboratories, libraries, playground, toilets, desks for students and dormetries. This situation forced students either to learn in overcrowded classrooms or make shifts under the trees. The situation de-motivated some students to learn, leading to truancy, absenteeism and even dropouts.

Investigation into the study revealed that the schools have been registering poor performance, though, it is not clearly known the reasons for their poor

performance in secondary schools in this local government. While poor performance can be associated with poor studying environment. There are many reasons why policymakers, scholars, educators and teachers associate the school environmental factors with student's commitment towards learning. School environmental factors have been demonstrated to have great impact in the whole process of teaching and learning, playing a significant role to the cognitive, affective and social domains of students because these factors have direct and or indirect impact such as creating positive impact on students' commitment towards learning (Ulugumu, 2016). While efforts have been done by the government and educational stakeholders to ensure that secondary schools in this local government have good environment for learning, students' commitment towards learning in Udenu local government is still low. This study therefore, aimed at filling the gap by investigating the effects of school environment on students' commitment towards learning among secondary schools in Udenụ local government area of Enugu State.

Objectives of the study

The study aimed at identifying school environmental factors on student's commitment towards learning among junior secondary schools in Udenu local government area of Enugu state. Specifically, the study sets:

1. To examine the student's perception on the school environmental factors among junior secondary schools in Udenu local government.
2 To find out the rate of students' commitment towards learning in junior secondary schools of Udenu local government.

Research questions

This study was guided by the following two research questions and one hypothesis.

1. What are the student's perceptions on the school environmental factors among junior secondary schools in Udenu local government area?
2. What is the rate of students' commitment towards learning in junior secondary schools of Udenu local government area?

Hypothesis

H01

There is no significant relationship between school environmental factors and students' commitment towards learning.

Theoretical framework

Environmental learning theory

This theory was developed under the primary believes and research of Albert Bandura (1965). Environmental learning theory is heavily dependent on the environment being provided for the learner to take part in. The environmental learning theory is concerned with the modelling that occurs for the learner. Skinner (1957) also contributed greatly to the environmentalist perspective of learning. The environmentalists behave the child's environment shapes learning and behaviour. Human behaviour development and learning are thought of reactions to the environment. Linking the theory to the study, as school environmental factors are internal conditions of the school that influence students' academic performance, it therefore means that school environment must be conducive for learning to effectively take place. Again, understanding environmental factors, schools with good structures, amenities and learning materials will impact positively on learning processes of the child.

Empirical studies

Over the years some scholars carried out some research over school environmental factors and students' commitment toward learning.

Haki (2013) carried out a research in students' academic performance and commitment towards learning, in Tanzania at various levels of education. It was found out that schools' environmental factors such as availability of teaching and learning materials like books, laboratories have been attributed to students' academic performance. The study revealed that safety, relationship of teachers, students and school infrastructures in general were the key tools for students' achievement. The study also revealed that the schools with positive school environment are likely to motivate learners to learn better and enjoy their schooling. The two works are in a way related in content but differ in other ways. So they are not same.

Illugumu (2016) carried out a study at Wangingombe on school environmental factors and its influence on students' academic achievement and commitment towards learning. He referred to some school environmental factors like teacher-student ratio, class size, teaching and learning environments, teaching and learning materials, libraries, and laboratories as determinants of students' commitment towards learning. In the same vein, both works touched school environmental factors and students' commitment towards learning but they differ in the area of study, title, design and scope. Both are not same. Another study carried out by Nyoni Nyoni and Bonga (2017) at Zimbabwe on school environment as a determinant for the students' commitment towards learning. This study established that school environment promotes students' commitment towards learning as proper psychologically comfortable and encourages students' motivation in school related activities making learning efficient and interesting. The findings indicted that teaching and learning become easy when students are committed due to being comfortable with the school environment. It also revealed that availability of resources play important role in determining learning effectiveness. Both works are related in the sense that they are talking about school environment on students' commitment towards learning among secondary schools. Summarily, the reviewed works were somehow related and different at the same time. The previous works were done across the globe while the present work was being done in Udenu local government area of Enugu State.

Methods

The study adopted the descriptive research design as it helps to obtain information that describes the existing phenomena by asking individuals about their perceptions, attitudes and values. The descriptive design was used so as to achieve the main aim of the study which was to examine the effects of school environment on students' commitment towards learning among junior secondary schools in Udenu local government area of Enugu state.

The area of the study was Udenu local government Area of Enugu State. It is made up of 12 communities situated in a rural area. It has 15 government secondary schools. Most of the inhabitants of this area are farmers, traders and civil servants. Students who are both committed and uncommitted attend school together, with seasoned and unseasoned teachers, teachers with different orientation in this local

government area. The researcher's choice of this area of study was anchored on her observation during her field work for data collection for her thesis.

The population of the students from the selected 10 schools was as follows.

Table 1. Population and sampling.

Selected schools	Population size	Sampled size
CSS Obollo Afor	510	50
ADA CSS Obollow Etiti	140	13
St. Pat. MCSS Obollo Eke	371	36
CGSS Imilike Ulo	485	48
CSS Imilike Agu	365	36
CSS Ezimo Uno	308	30
GSS OwereEze Orba	561	55
CSS Umundu	382	37
CSS Orba	557	54
CSS Ikenda	310	30

The total population of students from the 10 selected secondary schools was 3500. This study used the stratified random sampling techniques to obtained 346 respondents from the ten stratums. The researcher selected JSII students for the research. Data were collected, coded and then entered in the software called SPSS whereby frequency and percentage were used to analyze the demographic characteristics of respondents and descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation, were used to analyze data from the two research questions that have 25 items. The instrument used for this study was validated by three experts, two from Arts Education and one from Measurement and Evaluation (Science Education) both from Faculty of Education, UNN. The researcher herself went to the selected schools, with the permission of the head of these schools and with the help of some colleagues, the copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents which were collected on the spot at the end, to ensure all instruments came back. The data collected was analyzed using weighted mean rating nominal values were assigned to the different scaling items as follows : Strongly Agree -3.50 – 400, Agree – 250 -3.49, Disagree – 150-249, Strongly disagree – 1.00-1.49. Therefore, any weighted mean of an item from 2.50 and above was accepted while anything below 2.50 was rejected.

Results

This part describes the perception of students about school environmental factors among as well as their commitment towards learning. The results were presented using tables in line with the research questions. Two research questions and one hypothesis. What is the perception of students on the school environmental factors among secondary schools in Udenu local government area of Enugu state. The research question sought to establish the perception of students towards their school environmental factors. The research question was guided by 15 items from the questionnaire to which students responded as reflected in

Table 2.

Students' perception on school environment

S/N	Questionnaire	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	The school environment is safe for students to learn	2.19	.94121	Disagree
2.	The school environment is supportive	2.16	1.02398	Disagree
3.	The school environment is motivating	2.15	.84818	Disagree
4.	The school environment is enjoyable.	2.12	.90530	Disagree
5.	There is sound relationship between teachers and students	2.19	.95672	Disagree
6	There is good sanitation system in the school	2.20	.85737	Disagree
7	There is clean water for students	2.14	.95187	Disagree
8	The classroom learning atmosphere is conductive	2.15	.86485	Disagree
9	There is good teacher-student ratio	2.12	.95601	Disagree
10	There is good school infrastructures	1.92	.87053	Disagree
11	There are sound teaching methods	2.04	.93257	Disagree
12	There is good students-book ratio	2.04	.93592	Disagree
13.	There is enough and quality laboratories	2.03	.84525	Disagree
14	There is enough quality play field	1.99	.82472	Disagree
15	There are enough teaching and learning materials	1.94	.84297	Disagree

The result in table 2 shows that the mean scores for responses ranged between1.50-2.49. The questionnaire disagree with all the 15 items starting from the school environment being safe for students learning, being supportive for learning, motivating, enjoyable, conducive atmosphere, good sanitation, having clean water in the school, good teacher students ratio, sound teaching methods, good student book ratio, enough and quality laboratories, enough and quality play fields, enough and learning materials and good school infrastructures. Therefore, the responses from the students suggest that students did not consider their learning environment as being conducive for learning. The findings agree within the study carried out by Mwinuka (2016) that revealed similar findings that most of low performing secondary schools in Udenu local government area did not have enough such infrastructures like classroom and laboratories, dining halls, playing fields, toilets, desks, good learning environment for students.

Research question 2: What is the rate of students' commitment towards learning among junior secondary schools in Udenu local government area?

Table 3: Students' commitment towards learning

S/N	Questionnaire	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	School time is well utilized by students	2.61	.88446	Agree
2.	I have time to study privately at school	2.57	.98283	Agree
3.	I attend school regularly	3.17	.83581	Agree
4.	My participation in learning has been improving	2.84	.91774	Agree
5	Learning process is enjoyable	2.57	.9800108	Agree
6.	I make good use of learning resources at school	2.54	1.07899	Agree
7	I am confident in the learning process	2.75	1.00379	Agree
8	I have positive attitude towards my school	2.64	.93050	Agree
9	I am able to solve my own learning challenges	2.51	1.00966	Agree
10	I work hard in school related activities	2.56	1.03991	Agree

The research question sought to establish the level of students' commitment towards learning using 10 items in the questionnaire as seen in table 3.

The mean scores in all statements were between 2.50 -3.49, which means students agreed with all the statements. They agreed to the ten items starting from the school time is well utilized by students to I work hard in school related activities. The identified rate of students' commitment towards learning is commendable by Ngussa and Nzowa (2019) whose study established that commitment towards learning is an additive function related to academic and school issues.

Hypothesis

This section tested a hypothesis that resulted from the second research question.

H_0: there is no significant relationship between school environmental factors and students commitment towards learning.

This research question sought to establish the relationship between school environmental factors and students' commitment towards learning.

This question was prompted by Namugaanyi's (2012) assertion that school environment is a set of internal features that differentiate one school from another and that the factors influenced the behaviour of staff and students. He also argued that the school environment in general plays a vital role in the life of every individual including students and teachers.

Table 4 correlation between the independent and dependent variable

		Environmental	**Commitment**
Environmental	Pearson correlation	1	.480
	sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	323	323
Commitment	Pearson correlation	.480	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	323	323

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The research question called for testing of a null hypothesis which states: there is no significant relationship between school environmental factors and students' commitment towards learning. The hypothesis was tested through Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient as seen in table 4 above which indicates the Pearson correlation or .480 with the sig. of .000 which denotes that there is a significant moderate positive correlation between school environmental factors and students commitment towards learning. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Since this correlation is positive, it means that the better the school environmental factors, the higher the students' commitment towards learning. Therefore, effective school environment contributes towards the high rate of students' commitment towards learning.

Discussion

The findings were in harmony with the research carried out by Ahmed, Taha, Al-Neel and Gaffar (2018) that students with higher academic achievement had more positive perceptions regarding the school environmental factors. Therefore, the school surrounding must be pleasing to learners for them to be motivated and committed towards learning. Likewise, the study of Effendi, Kurniawan and Dwita (2018) indicated the relationship between school environment factors and students' commitment towards learning. The study further shows that to a greater extent school environmental factors have impact on students' commitment towards learning and that students who learn in positive environments are committed than those in poor learning environment.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study came up with the following conclusion that:

1. School environmental factors were perceived by students as unconducive for learning effectiveness as students tended to disagree with all statements in the questionnaire regarding school environmental factors.
2. The rate of students' commitment towards learning was high as students agreed with all the items in the questionnaire regarding the rate of their commitment towards learning
3. Effective school environmental factors positively effects students' commitment towards learning. Therefore, effective school environmental factors need to be

manipulated in order to predict the rate of students' commitment towards learning.

Recommendations

Based on conclusion, the study recommended the following

1. School management should endeavor to improve the identified school environmental factors as the study revealed that proper school environment was essential for learning to take place
2. The identified students' commitment towards learning needs to be rewarded for students to maintain such a spirit as it was a key factor for effective learning to take place.
3. It is important for school administrators to work on the identified challenges to create conducive learning environment which had been found to have a positive effect towards students' commitment towards learning.

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