



School environment as correlate of attitude to study among students in upper basic schools in Edo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between school environment (physical environment, school climate, culture) and attitude to study of students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State, Nigeria. One hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. The study adopted the correlational research design. The population was made up of all the 39,560 Basic 9 students in the 317 Upper Basic Schools in the State. A sample size of 362 students was used for the study. The Taro Yamane's formula for the determination of sample size was adopted in determining the sample size. Two instruments, namely: "School Environment Questionnaire" (SEQ) and "Attitude to Study Questionnaire" (ASQ) were used to collect data for the study. The Cronbach alpha reliability procedure was adopted in establishing the reliability of the instruments, which yielded a coefficient of 0.77 for SEQ and 0.80 for ASQ. The hypothesis was tested using Multiple Linear Regression Analysis. The findings showed that: school physical environment, school climate and school culture jointly correlated with attitude to study of students in Upper Basic schools the State. The study recommended that Government and concerned stakeholders should endeavour to improve on the present conditions of the school physical environment in Upper Basic schools in Edo State; all members of the school community should collaboratively work towards building a positive and favourable school climate and school heads and teachers should endeavour to build a school culture that emphasizes positive beliefs, healthy relationships and sense of belongingness.

Keywords: School physical environment, School climate, School culture, Attitude to study, Upper Basic School

Introduction

Attitude may be described as evaluative statements, favourable or unfavourable, related to a person, object, and event or habitual ways of reacting to situations. Attitude may be negative, positive or neutral. It reflects how an individual feel about something. It is a mindset that affects how a person thinks and acts. It is the way and manner individuals create ideas, display their feelings and manifest behaviours about a psychological object, social issue or reaction to a given situation. Attitude affects and influences a person's feelings, opinions and dispositions, which invariably influences the person's behaviour.

Attitude is a multidimensional construct with three components, affective, behavioural and cognitive components (iEduNote, <https://www.iedunote.com>). The affective component involves a person's feelings, an emotional reaction towards a subject, object or a person. The behavioural component has to do with behavioural intention or how attitude affects or influences one's behaviour. The cognitive component relates to a person's display of knowledge.

Attitude to study is conceived as a student's belief, feelings, disposition and behaviour towards his or her studies. Senay-Sen (2013) defined attitude toward studying or learning as the degree of goal-setting, problem-solving skills, beliefs toward learning, and internal and external motivations for the learning process. Goal-setting implies the ability of a student to create an action plan that will inspire and direct him or her toward achieving study goals. It is a student's deliberate commitment of thought, emotion, and behaviour

towards attaining set goals. Problem-solving ability involves identifying problems, brainstorming and analyzing answers, and implementing the best solutions to the identified problems. Students' belief towards learning refers to their subjective judgments about the relation between learning and their values or attributes. Lastly, internal motivation towards learning means the motivation to accomplish a goal that comes from within a student while external motivation means that motivation to attain a goal that comes from a source outside the self, such as the surrounding environment of the student.

Many factors are known to influence attitude of students to study (Beavers, 2016) [4]. Among these factors are the support students receive from their teachers and school heads, their perception of the school administration's consistency and values, their relationships with their teachers and fellow students, the internal feelings they have about learning and the external forces, such as the school environment, that influence their development (Beavers, 2016) [4]. The school environment constitutes the totality of resources that define the learning environment of a school. It could be described as the physical, social and academic expression of the school programmes and activities. In this study, school environment connotes school physical environment, school climate and school culture.

School physical environment is the physical space that facilitates a variety of curricula and co-curricular activities that promote social interaction by offering its occupants a quiet, safe, stimulating, and comfortable environment. School climate is a multifaceted construct that describes the

quality of a student's academic environment. It includes school safety, instructional practices, social relationships, school facilities, and school connectedness (Kearney, Sanmartín & González, 2020) ^[12]. School climate encompasses all aspects related to how members of the school community perceive and experience the school.

In the past decade, the issue of school environment safety has become very worrisome to institutions of learning in Nigeria (Musa, 2021; Ojukwu & Nwanma, 2015) ^[17, 19]. In the Northern part of the country, the Boko Haram sect and the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) are on the rampage, attacking and destroying public places, including schools. Over 1,500 school students were kidnapped in 2021 alone (Edutorial, 2023) ^[7]. Many of the 278 Chibok students kidnapped by the Boko Haram sect in 2014 are yet to be released. Also, the Fulani Herdsmen attack in the middle belt States of Benue and Plateau, and the extreme north States of Kano, Sokoto and Zamfara, are hindering the smooth running of schools in those areas. In the other parts of the country, the South-East region, the South-South region and the South-West region, there have been violent agitations, which have disrupted school activities. The threat of terrorism, insurgency and destruction of physical infrastructures like school fences and killing of security operatives have caused the death, injury and disappearance of some school children and staff. According to GOV.UK report (2022), there were six major terrorists' attacks since 2022. In all these attacks, schools were burnt and so many students died. These are indications that schools, especially secondary schools are facing serious environmental challenges.

Another dimension to school environment challenges is the one perpetuated by the students themselves. Some secondary school students belong to secret cults, which give them access to and possession of dangerous weapon such as guns. Ike (2015) ^[10] reported that in a clash between students of Government College and Command School in Benue State, about fifteen students were seriously wounded and properties of the schools were destroyed. In another incident, a fifteen-year-old female student was reportedly stabbed several times on the chest and back by another student in a quarrel over boy friend in Government Girls High School in Gindiri, Plateau State. There are also civil insecurity issues occasioned by trade union disputes in the school system. During such disputes, teaching and learning stops and students idle away their time due to school activities that are usually put on hold during the period of these disputes. These idle periods create opportunities for students to engage in unwholesome behaviours such as bullying, sexual escapades and secret cult activities that tend to undermine safety of the school environment.

These happenings in the school system in the country have become a source of worry to parents, guardians and other concerned citizens in the education sector. These worries border on incessant cases of violence, kidnapping, abduction, rape, cult activities, bullying, and others that now characterize the school system. Another source of worry is the apparently growing decline in quality of graduates turned out yearly from the school system. Many of these graduates seem not to have basic numeracy skills, writing

and speaking proficiency in English, and even the ability to critically think or make wise judgments regarding their own goals. The researchers have also observed that many of these students disobey school rules and regulations, engage in different forms of social vices that undermine the seriousness of their academic pursuit. Many of them are habitual latecomers and truants, and even when in the classroom, they do not concentrate because of different distractions, especially, the ones arising from their social networking habits. Some of these students are indolent and disobedient to teachers and even their parents. In fact, many schools may not be able to vouch for their students as worthy in character and learning because of the different acts of misconduct and frivolousness exhibited by the students, in and out of school.

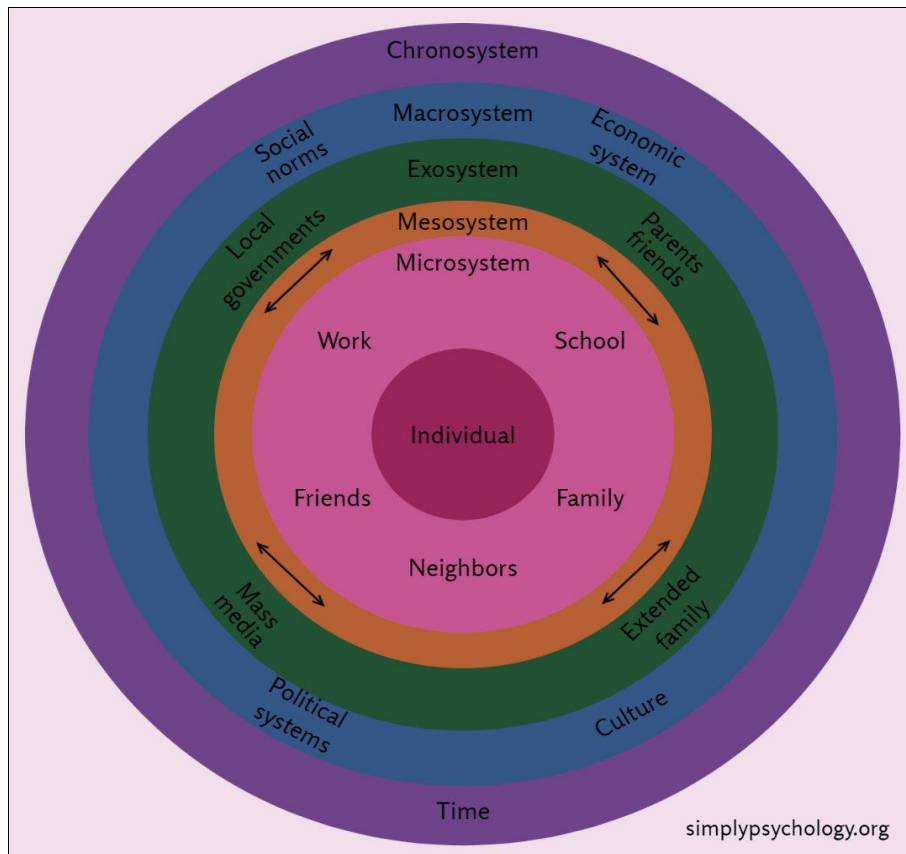
Cases abound in secondary schools in Edo State of teachers being threatened, verbally and physically assaulted by students in the course of discharging their lawful duties. There are also instances where students assault their teachers and fellow students with weapons, use abusive and offensive language on them, and even threaten or intimidate their teachers with positions of their 'highly placed' parents. The overall impact of these school environment challenges seem to now influence the attitude and behaviour of the students towards their studies. Many of them appear not to be serious with their studies. It is against this backdrop that the researchers investigated the relationship between school environment (physical environment, school climate, school culture) and attitude to study of students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State, Nigeria. Thus, the study sought to answer the question: Is school environment a correlate of attitude to study of students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State?

The study was guided by the following hypothesis:

H₀: School environment (physical environment, school climate and school culture) does not correlate with attitude to study of students in Upper Basic Schools in Edo State.

Theoretical Framework

The study was hinged on Ecological Systems theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory examined the complex interactions and relationships between an individual and the individual's multiple social and physical environments during adolescent development. The theory suggests that human development occurs through the complex, reciprocal interactions that an individual has with others and the surrounding environment. The theory posits that children become entangled in a variety of ecosystems, ranging from their most personal home ecological system to the bigger school system, and finally to some of the most expansive system, which incorporates society and culture. In the course of growing up, these ecological systems unavoidably interact with and impact the development of the child. The theory outlined five ecological development settings that influence the growth of the child. The settings are the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The settings are categorized from the most intimate environment to the broadest environment.



Source: www.simplepsychology.org

Fig 1: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory of Child Development

As depicted in Figure 1, the microsystem is the immediate small environment where the child exists. This includes the child's family, other close groups the child interacts with such as peers and community environment. The interplay of several microsystems in which the child find himself is referred to as the mesosystem. The mesosystem is essentially an interaction among microsystems, that is, connections between home and school, peers, family and community. The exosystem refers to the connections that might exist between environments, which may not include the one where the child develops, but nevertheless has an indirect impact on the child. People and places where the child does not directly engage with may nonetheless have an influence on the life of the child, according to Bronfenbrenner's theory. Such people and places include extended family members, workplaces of the parents and the child's neighborhood. The macrosystem is the largest and furthest collection of people and places for the child that nonetheless has a substantial impact on him. The child's cultural patterns and values, particularly his dominating beliefs and ideas, including political and economic structures, make up the macrosystem. Lastly, according to the theory, the chronosystem encompasses all the experiences that a child has passed and endured over time. These include environmental events, major life transitions and historical events. The ecological systems theory has the value dimension of time with the chronosystem. It highlights the impact of both change and consistency in the settings of children. Events in family structure, residence, and parents' professional status, as well as massive societal changes like economic cycles and wars, are all part of the chronosystem. According to Bronfenbrenner, these ecological systems jointly and individually influence the behaviour and development of the child.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory explains how environment impacts children's development. The theory highlights the significance of observing them in a variety of situations, referred to as ecological systems. The thrust of the Ecological Systems theory is on the impact environmental settings have on behavioural development and attitude formation of the child. The theory holds that the direction of a child's development is a product of the different environmental settings (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem) that the child experienced and passed through in the course of the child's growth. These different environmental experiences individually and jointly shape the child's attitude and overall behaviour in life.

Literature Review

Studies on school physical environment and attitude of students to study have been carried out by different scholars (Abari & Akoh, 2022; Musheer, Govil & Gupta, 2022; Ikegbusi, Eziamaka & Iheanacho, 2021) ^[11, 18]. Abari and Akoh (2022) found that school environment has a significant impact on the attitude of students and that school facilities greatly affect student attitude to learning Mathematics. Also, the study showed that physical environment such as safety and quality of instruction affect secondary school students' attitude to learning of Mathematics in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State. Musheer, Govil and Gupta's (2022) ^[18] found that physical safety, socio-emotional safety, quality of instruction and respect for diversity influences attitude of students to study in Aligarh Muslim University, India. Ikegbusi, Eziamaka and Iheanacho (2021) ^[11] found, among others that there was a serious influence of school physical structure on pupils'

learning interest and behaviour in schooling. In another related study, Baafi (2020) ^[3] examined the effect of the school physical environment on academic achievement and learning disposition of senior high school students in Ghana. The findings confirmed that the students in senior high schools with a pleasant physical environment perform better than those where the learning environment is not conducive. The result further showed that adequate school facilities provide a positive attitude of students to study in senior high schools in Ghana.

There are also related studies (Osuji, Wey-Amaewhule & Akide, 2023; Semukono, Orobia & Arinaitwe, 2021; Omolo, Otara & Atieno, 2020) ^[20, 21, 22] that have established relationships between aspects of school environment and attitude to study of students and school environment and academic performance of students. Osuji, Wey-Amaewhule and Akide (2023) ^[21] examined the influence of classroom climate on students' attitude to learning in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis. The study revealed that social, physical and psychological classroom climate influence students' attitude to learning in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis. Semukono, Orobia and Arinaitwe (2021) ^[22] examined learning environment, students' attitude and performance in quantitative course units of undergraduate Business students in Makerere University Business School. The findings indicated that while academic environment and students' attitude are positively associated with performance in quantitative courses, students' attitude towards quantitative courses causes more variations in performance. The result further showed that academic environment security influences attitude of students to study in Makerere University Business School. Omolo, Otara and Atieno (2020) ^[20] investigated the influence of school environmental factors on students' attitude to study and academic performance in Migori County. The study established that school environmental factors had a strong influence on students' attitude to study and academic performance. In another related study, Adekoya, Ayanwale & Adeyemi (2020) ^[2] found that academic environment components such as classroom building; adequate furniture; and the use of instructional materials, have positive effect on the attitude of students to study in Junior Secondary Schools in Ogun State.

School climate's dynamic effect on students has also been explored in research (Lunetti *et al.*, 2022; Lombardi *et al.*, 2019) ^[15, 16]. Lunetti *et al.* (2022) ^[16] investigated the relationship between the perception of positive and negative school climate and students' maladjustment during adolescence. The results showed that a higher perception of positive school climate and its instability predicted higher academic performance while a higher perception of negative school climate and its instability predicted higher risk behaviours. Lombardi *et al.* (2019) ^[15] investigated the factors promoting students' engagement at school and supporting their well-being experience. The result confirmed school climate as an important factor to be considered when improvement in student engagement in school activities is required. Researches (Khaneghahi, Sefatgol & Siyasar, 2022; Begenyeza, Tieng'o, & Ngussa, 2021; Uğraş & Özen, 2020) ^[5, 13, 25] have also shown that school culture has a significant impact on students' learning behaviours. Khaneghahi, Sefatgol and Siyasar (2022) ^[13] investigated the relationship between school culture and

academic enthusiasm with academic hope and motivation among high school students in Zahak city. The result showed that a positive and significant relationship exists between academic motivation and students' academic enthusiasm. The results also revealed that there was no significant relationship between school culture and academic motivation and school culture does not have the power to predict academic motivation.

Begenyeza, Tieng'o, and Ngussa (2021) ^[5] investigated the influence of school culture on students' attitude towards the learning of Mathematics among students in secondary schools in Arusha District, Tanzania. The result showed that teachers' encouragement of students and the rewards given by teachers fostered confidence in learning Mathematics and also encouraged the students to work. Similarly, Uğraş and Özen (2020) ^[25] investigated the relationship between students' attitudes towards physical education course and belonging to school. The results found that there were significant positive correlations in all the sub-domains of attitude and school belonging dimensions to physical education course.

The literature reviewed show that different studies (Musheer, Govil & Gupta, 2022; Ikegbusi, Eziamaka & Iheanacho, 2021; Lunetti *et al.*, 2022; Lombardi *et al.*, 2019; Begenyeza, Tieng'o, & Ngussa; 2021) ^[5, 11, 15, 16, 18] have been undertaken to investigate factors that influenced students' attitude to learning in different parts of the world. However, many of these studies were restricted to specific school environment variables such as school physical environment and attitude to study of specific subjects, neglecting other dimensions of school environment such as the psychological and sociological dimensions. Besides, not many studies, to the researchers' knowledge, have been carried out in this regard in Edo State. It is part of this existing gap that this study covered. The study holistically examined the relationship among school physical environment, school climate, school culture and attitude to study of students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State.

Materials and Methods

The study adopted the correlational research design. The population consisted all the 39,560 Basic 9 students in the 317 Upper Basic Schools in Edo State, Nigeria as at 2023/2024 academic session (Ministry of Education Edo State, 2024). A sample size of 362 students was used for the study. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula for the determination of sample size (Levy & Lemeshow, 2013) ^[14]. The simple random sampling technique was applied in the selection of sample size.

Two instruments were used to collect data for the study. The first was a questionnaire titled "School Environment Questionnaire" (SEQ), which elicited information on school physical environment, school climate and school culture. The second questionnaire titled "Attitude to Study Questionnaire" (ASQ) elicited information on the students' attitude to study. Items in the SEQ were adapted from five different scales, namely: "University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Student Engagement Project"; Skiba, Simmons, Peterson, & Forde (2006) "SRS Safe Schools Survey"; Fraser (1986) "Classroom Environment"; "California Healthy Kids Survey" (2019) and U.S. Department of Education's "School Climate Questionnaire" measuring school climate, classroom environment, safe schools and student

engagement. The items in the ASQ items were adapted from six different scales, namely: Akinade (2018) “Students Study Habits Inventory (SSHI)”; “Attitude to Learning Descriptors: Student Guide 2021/2022”; “Sackville School Attitude to Learning Descriptors”; “University of Exeter’s Attitude to Learning Criteria” and “Tasmanian Department of Education’s Core Beliefs About Learning”. The Cronbach alpha reliability procedure was adopted in establishing the reliability of the instruments, which were

0.77 for SEQ and 0.80 for ASQ. Hypotheses 1-3 were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient while hypothesis 4 was tested using Multiple Linear Regression Analysis.

Results

H₀: School environment (physical environment, school climate and school culture) does not correlate with attitude to study of students in Upper Basic Schools in Edo State.

Table 1: School Environment Variables and Attitude to Study

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	β	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.298	3.607	1.192	.234
	School Physical Environment	.951	.501	.150	1.896
	School Climate Environment	2.695	.272	.690	9.894
	School Culture Environment	3.869	.596	.513	6.495

a. Dependent Variable: Attitude to Study

Note: R=.938, R²= .880, Adjusted R-square=.878, F = 461.305*, P < .05, Df = 5, 315

The data in Table 4 shows an r-value (R) of .938, which implies that school physical environment, school climate and school culture jointly and positively correlate with attitude to study of students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State. Also, the F-value of 461.305, which test for joint influence of the predictor variables is statistically significant (p<0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, which means that school physical environment, school climate and school culture jointly correlate with attitude to study of students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State. The adjusted R-square and R square (R²) values are .878 and .880 respectively. These coefficients of .878 and .880 are the goodness of fit of the model which implies that 87.8% to 88% of variations in attitude to study of students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State could be attributed to school physical environment, school climate and school culture. The result further showed that school climate has the strongest influence on attitude to study, followed by school culture while school physical environment has the weakest influence in the joint relationship. School social and academic environments also have weak influences in the joint relationship.

Discussion

The result showed that there is strong positive relationship between school physical environment and attitude to study of students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State. The strategic role of school physical environment in school goal achievement cannot be undermined. This could be one of the reasons why there is a strong positive relationship between school physical environment and attitude to study of students in Upper Basic schools in the State. Again, attitude to learning is formed and developed from the complex nature of the interactions that take place between the learner and his learning environment. When the school physical environment is secure and favourable, learners will no doubt develop a positive attitude towards their study; but if on the contrary, the environment is insecure and unfavourable, learners will display a negative attitude towards their learning. The school physical environment in Upper Basic schools in Edo State appears secured and favourable, hence the result showed a strong positive relationship between school physical environment and attitude to study of students in Upper Basic schools in the

State. Another probable reason for this result could be that schools, generally, in Edo State have not experienced any attack from bandits or insurgents, so the students feel safe and secure whenever they are in the school. This assurance of safety and security might, somehow, have stimulated their interest in learning, hence the display of positive attitude to learning.

The finding corroborates that of Abari & Akoh (2022) who reported that school physical environment such as safety and quality of instruction affected secondary school students’ attitude to learning of Mathematics in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State. The result agrees with that of Musheer, Govil & Gupta (2022) [18] who found that physical safety, socio-emotional safety, quality of instruction and respect for diversity influenced attitude of students to study in Aligarh Muslim University, India. The result also agrees with that of Ikegbusi, Eziamaka & Iheanacho (2021) [11] that found, among others, that school physical structure influenced pupils’ learning interest and behaviour in schooling in Eti Osa Local Government Area of Lagos State. The finding corroborate that of Baafi (2020) [3] who reported that adequate school facilities provide a positive attitude of students to study in senior high schools in Ghana. Furthermore, the result agreed with that of Osuji, Wey-Amaewhule & Akide (2023) [21] who found, among others, that psychological classroom climate influence students’ attitude to learning in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis. The result corroborates that of Semukono, Orobia & Arinaitwe (2021) [22] who found that academic environment security positively influenced attitude of students to study in Makerere University Business School. The result agrees with that of Omolo, Otara & Atieno (2020) [20] who found that school environmental factors have a strong influence on students’ attitude to study and academic performance. The finding also corroborate that of Adekoya, Ayanwole & Adeyemi (2020) [2] who found that academic environment components such as classroom building; adequate furniture; and the use of instructional materials, have positive effect on the attitude of students to study in Junior Secondary Schools in Ogun State.

Furthermore, the results of the study showed that there is a strong positive relationship between school climate and attitude to study of students in Upper Basic schools in Edo

State. School climate encompasses all aspects related to how members of the school community perceive and experience the school. It borders on the extent to which a school community creates and maintains a safe school campus; a supportive academic, disciplinary, and physical environment; and respectful, trusting, and caring relationships throughout the school community. This is probably why school climate has the highest “r” value of .92, making it the school environment variable that has the strongest impact on attitude to study of students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State.

A positive school climate helps school members feel socially, emotionally and physically safe in schools. This could be a reason why there was a strong positive relationship between school climate and attitude to study of students in the State. When the students feel safe, supported, and engaged in their school environment, they are more likely to have a positive attitude toward studying and learning. A positive school climate could create an environment where the students feel motivated to participate in class, engage with the study materials, and even develop a deeper interest in studying. The government of Edo State has been striving to create a positive school climate at the Basic level of education through the initiatives such as EdoBest and EDOSTAR. These initiatives might have positively impacted on the school climate in a manner that has engendered positive attitude to study among the students. This finding agreed with that of Lunetti, *et al* (2022) ^[16] who found that a higher perception of positive school climate predicted higher academic performance, while a higher perception of negative school climate and its instability predicted higher risk behaviours. The result also agreed with that of Lombardi *et al* (2019) ^[15] whose study confirmed school climate as an important factor to be considered when improvement in student engagement in school activities is required.

The results of the study showed that there is a strong positive relationship between school culture and attitude to study of students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State. The strong positive relationship between school culture and attitude to study of students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State could be attributed to the positive school culture that exists in Upper Basic schools in the State. Upper Basic schools in Edo State could be said to have experienced relative peace over the years. There is a cordial relationship among the students, teachers, school administration and the school community, which might have fostered and promoted a sense of belonging, mutual respect and inclusivity among them. Also, this might have created a school culture that supported students’ well-being and academic engagement, which might have been responsible for the strong positive relationship between school culture and attitude to study of students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State.

The finding agreed with that of Khaneghahi, Sefatgol & Siyasar (2022) ^[13] that found that a positive and significant relationship between academic motivation and students’ academic enthusiasm to study. The result also agreed with that of Begenyeza, Tieng’o, & Ngussa (2021) ^[5] whose study found that teachers’ encouragement of students and the rewards given by teachers fostered confidence in learning Mathematics and also encouraged the students to study harder in secondary schools in Arusha District, Tanzania. The result agreed with that of Uğraş & Özen

(2020) ^[25] that found significant positive correlations in all the sub-domains of attitude and school belonging dimensions.

Conclusion

The study has established that school environment (physical environment, school climate and school culture) is a significant variable that influences the attitude to study of students in Upper Basic Schools in Edo State. Therefore, building and sustaining favourable school environment is imperative for school heads, teachers and other stakeholders in the education sector. In addition to engendering positive attitude to study, a positive school environment also has the potential of enhancing academic performance of students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government and concerned stakeholders should endeavour to improve on the present conditions of the school physical environment in Upper Basic schools in Edo State in order to enhance the positive attitude to study of the students.
2. School climate encompasses all aspects related to how members of the school community perceive and experience the school. Therefore, all members of the school community should collaboratively work towards building a positive and favourable school climate that would make all of them to positively perceive and experience all aspects of the school.
3. All members of the school community, especially school principals and teachers should endeavour to build a school culture that emphasizes positive beliefs, healthy relationships, sense of belongingness and implement humane rules and regulations, whether written or unwritten. By these, students would be more favourably disposed towards their study.

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