

ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BENUE NORTH EAST SENATORIAL DISTRICT, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated administrative effectiveness and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study, while two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 1,860 teachers from the 123 public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria. A sample of 465 teachers was selected using multi-stage sampling procedure. The instrument used for data collection was titled "Administrative effectiveness Questionnaire (AEQ) and Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire (SAPQ)". The instruments were validated by three experts and the reliability was determined using Cronbach Alpha reliability. The result yielded reliability coefficients 0.93 for AEQ and 0.92 for SAPQ respectively. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to answer the research questions and test hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study showed that school climate and supportive learning environment have very strong positive significant relationship with students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria. It was concluded that increased administrative effectiveness leads to improved students' academic performance in public secondary schools. It was recommended that the government of Benue State should prioritize creating an effective school climate by providing adequate infrastructure, recruiting qualified personnel, enforcing student discipline policies and ensuring school safety. Also, administrators of public secondary schools should promote a supportive learning environment by ensuring that classrooms are learner-centered, emotionally safe, and inclusive.

Keywords: Administrative effectiveness, academic performance, school climate, supportive learning environment

Introduction

Students' academic performance is significant as it reflects the effectiveness of the educational system and determines learners' mastery of knowledge, skills and readiness for future opportunities. The challenge of students' academic performance in secondary schools is an issue of public concern in many countries including Nigeria. In countries like India and Kenya, poverty, insufficient school funding and language barriers significantly impact student outcomes (United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO), 2022). Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated learning gaps, particularly among marginalized groups, due to disrupted schooling and limited access to digital learning tools (World Bank, 2021). In Nigeria, limited access to quality instructional materials and overcrowded classrooms hinder students' academic performance (Adebayo & Lawal, 2020). Academic performance is considered to be the centre around which the whole education system revolves. It determines the success or failure of any education students' academic progress. It is one of the most demanding cognitive challenge students especially secondary schools students seem to face in their school lives.

Students' performance in external examinations in Nigeria has remained generally low over the years. For example, only 30.99% of candidates obtained the required five credit passes including English Language and Mathematics in the 2011 WAEC examinations, while in 2019, 50.92% achieved similar results nationwide (Eze & Eze, 2018; National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). In Benue State, although WAEC results for 2019 and 2021 showed moderate improvements, with 59.58% and 66.47% of candidates respectively attaining the required credits, performance in Benue North East Senatorial District remained poor, with only 23.6% passing core subjects such as English Language and Mathematics (Kuku, 2022). These disparities suggest uneven academic outcomes across public secondary schools, which may have reduced parents' confidence and could be associated with weaknesses in administrative effectiveness (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

Administrative effectiveness refers to conditions that gear towards improved outcome at school level such as strong leadership, high expectations and good atmosphere (Scheerens, 2024). Administrative effectiveness may therefore be seen as all the contextual variables related with school such as teaching, learning, administration, students' motivation and community involvement. García-Machado, Martínez Ávila, Dospinescu (2024) proposes quantitative measuring for administrative effectiveness, while Harber and Muthukrishna (2020) proposes an index of administrative effectiveness and improvement which entails how stakeholders regularly review the school based on its quality of output. Odiri (2015) identifies factors that make a school effective, such as good management, strong governance, a healthy school environment, good infrastructure, motivated learners with good teachers, school climate, quality instructional delivery, instructional supervision and use of instructional materials. In Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria, the researchers observed that administrative factors which seem to affect students' academic performance may be school climate and supportive learning environment.

School climate can be referred to the quality and character of school life which is often describes as the heart and soul of the school or that essence of a school that leads a child, a teacher as well as an administrator to love the school and to look forward to being there each school day (Wang & Degol, 2016). A positive school climate could provide a conducive atmosphere for both the school administrator, teachers, students and parents as well as community members to interact freely for the success of students' academic performance whereas a negative school climate could mar students' academic performance. Research by Fakunle and Ale (2018) revealed that there was a significant difference between students' academic performances in schools having open climate and the academic performance of students in schools having controlled climate. Also, Enwezor (2021) indicated

that school climate has significant impact on students' academic performance by maintaining a manageable student-teacher ratio in the classroom; promotion of fundamental moral values; prevention of acts of bullying and when students are treated fairly. Therefore, it is vital for a school administrator to create a positive school climate which could promote students' academic performance through a supportive learning environment.

Supportive learning environment is an environment which allows all the elements of teaching-learning process such as the teacher, students, content, learning process and learning situation to generate quality education outcome (Arul-Laurence, 2022). Supportive learning environment is seen as one of the administrative effectiveness variables which could affect students' academic performance in education. According to Pobbi, Kor and Opare (2018), school climate had positive and significant effect on the academic performances of students. Usman and Madudili (2019) also found that learning environment with accessible and utilizable facilities have significant positive effect on teaching and learning process as well as academic performance of students. The teaching-learning process cannot take place in a vacuum in formal education settings. It occurs as a result of interaction among components of the learning environment as earlier mentioned. The interaction of these processes may positively or negatively affect students' academic performance. Due to the seeming declining nature of students' academic performance which appears to persist in the study area, the researchers therefore sought to investigate the administrative effectiveness as determinant of students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Persistent poor performance of students in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District has continued to generate concern among education stakeholders. Evidence from external examination bodies such as the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and the National Examinations Council (NECO) indicates fluctuating and in many cases, low pass rates in core subjects including English Language and Mathematics over the years. National reports by WAEC and NECO have consistently shown that a significant proportion of candidates 60–70% fail to obtain the minimum five credits, including English and Mathematics, required for admission into tertiary institutions (Enwezor, 2021). In Benue State, particularly within the Benue North East Senatorial District, anecdotal school-level records and state summaries similarly suggest that many students either record marginal passes or outright failures in these examinations, thereby limiting their academic progression and career opportunities.

Despite various interventions by government and school authorities, students' academic performance has not shown sustained improvement. This persistent underachievement raises concerns about the effectiveness of school administration in public secondary schools. Administrative effectiveness, especially in terms of creating a positive school climate and providing a supportive learning environment, plays a critical role in influencing teaching quality, student motivation, discipline, and overall academic engagement. However, there are indications that some schools in the district may be characterized by overcrowded classrooms, inadequate instructional materials, weak supervision, poor teacher motivation, and limited guidance and counseling services. Such conditions may contribute to an uncondusive learning atmosphere, low student morale, irregular attendance, and limited academic support.

Although several studies such as Egwunyenga (2020) and Owoeye and Yara (2021) have examined factors affecting students' academic performance in Nigeria, limited empirical attention appears to have been given specifically to how administrative effectiveness particularly school climate and supportive learning environment relates to students' outcomes

in WAEC and NECO examinations within Benue North East Senatorial District. Consequently, the problem of this study is to examine whether the persistent poor academic performance of students external examinations in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District may be attributed to inadequate administrative effectiveness, especially in terms of fostering a positive school climate and providing a supportive learning environment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate administrative effectiveness as a determinant of students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

- 1 ascertain the relationship between school climate and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.
- 2 determine the relationship between supportive learning environment and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

- 1 What is the relationship between school climate and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria?
- 2 What is the relationship between supportive learning environment and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- 1 School climate has no significant relationship with students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.
- 2 Supportive learning environment has no significant relationship with students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Richard Schechner Performance Theory 1938, emphasizing that performance is not limited to the theatre stage but encompasses everyday actions, rituals and social behaviours through which individuals demonstrate competence, rehearse roles and express learned patterns within specific contexts. The theory views performance as a dynamic process shaped by environment, interaction, rehearsal, feedback and cultural expectations. In relation to a study on students' academic performance, it suggests that academic achievement can be understood as a form of social and cognitive performance where students display acquired knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies during examinations, classroom participation, assignments and other evaluative activities. Thus, students' academic outcomes are influenced not only by intellectual ability but also by preparation, learning environment, motivation, teacher support and institutional structures that shape how effectively they "perform" academically within the school setting.

Methodology

The study adopted correlational research design. The population of the study is 1,860 teachers from the 123 public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District,

Nigeria (Benue State Teaching Service Board Makurdi, 2025). A sample of 465 teachers representing 25% of the total population was selected from 30 schools out of 123 schools representing 25%. This is in line with Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommendation that 10% and above is adequate for a population of 1000 and more. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used. The instrument used for data collection was two researcher's structured questionnaires titled "Administrative effectiveness Questionnaire (AEQ) and Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire (SAPQ)". The AEQ was made up of 10 items, while the SAPQ contained 10 items. The instrument was structured on four-point rating scale of Strong Agree (SA)=4, Agree (A)=3, Disagree (D)=2 and Strongly Disagree (1)=1. Face and content validity of the questionnaire was carried out by three research experts in the Department of Educational Foundations, Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and it yielded reliability coefficients of 0.93 for AEQ and 0.92 for SAPQ. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to answer research questions and test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule for answering research questions was that if r value is 0.00–0.19, there is a very weak relationship. If it is 0.20–0.39, there is a weak relationship. If it is 0.40–0.59, there is a moderate relationship. If it is 0.60–0.79, there is a strong relationship and if it is 0.80–1.00, there is a very strong relationship. For the test of hypotheses if P -value is less than alpha value (0.05), there is positive significant relationship, therefore the null hypothesis would not be rejected (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). However, if it is otherwise, there is negative relationship and the null hypothesis was rejected.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the relationship between school climate and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria?

Table 1: Correlation of School Climate and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria

Variables		\bar{X}	SD	School Climate	Students' Academic Performance
School Climate	Pearson	2.68	1.00	1	.85**
	Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)				.000
	N			462	462
Students' Academic Performance	Pearson	2.82	0.98	.85**	1
	Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	
	N			462	462

* Correlation coefficient is significant at $p < 0.05$; **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher's Field Survey Results (2026).

The result in Table 1 shows that the Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient (r) between school climate and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria is 0.85. Since the r value of 0.85 falls within the range of 0.80–1.00, it signifies a very strong positive correlation. This implies that an improvement in school climate is strongly associated with students' academic performance in public secondary schools.

Research Question 2

What is the relationship between supportive learning environment and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria?

Table 2: Correlation of Supportive Learning Environment and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria

Variables		\bar{X}	SD	Supportive Learning Environment	Students' Academic Performance
Supportive Learning Environment	Pearson	2.66	1.05	1	.95**
	Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)				.000
	N			462	462
Students' Academic Performance	Pearson	2.62	1.02	.95**	1
	Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	
	N			462	462

* Correlation coefficient is significant at $p < 0.05$; **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher's Field Survey Results (2026).

The result in Table 2 shows that the Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient (r) between supportive learning environment and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria is 0.95. Since the r value of 0.95 falls within the range of 0.80–1.00, it signifies a very strong positive correlation. This implies that the more supportive learning environment, the higher the level of students' academic performance in public secondary schools.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypotheses One

School climate has no significant relationship with students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Table 3: Significant Correlation of School Climate and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria

Variables		School Climate	Students' Academic Performance
School Climate	Pearson	1	.85**
	Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	462	462
Students' Academic Performance	Pearson	.85**	1
	Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	462	462

* Correlation coefficient is significant at $p < 0.05$; **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher's Field Survey Results (2026)

The result in Table 3 shows that the Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient (r) between school climate and students' academic performance is 0.85, with a significant value of $p = .000$. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis which stated that school climate has no significant relationship with students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria was rejected. This implies that school climate has very strong positive significant relationship with students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Hypotheses Two

Supportive learning environment has no significant relationship with students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Table 4: Significant Correlation of Supportive Learning Environment and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria

Variables		Supportive Learning Environment	Students' Academic Performance
Supportive Learning Environment	Pearson	1	.95**
	Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	462	462
Students' Academic Performance	Pearson	.95**	1
	Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	462	462

* Correlation coefficient is significant at $p < 0.05$; **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher's Field Survey Results (2026)

The result in Table 4 shows that the Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient (r) between supportive learning environment and students' academic performance is 0.95, with a significance value of $p = .000$. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis which stated that supportive learning environment has no significant relationship with students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria was rejected. This implies that supportive learning environment has very strong positive significant relationship with students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of the study revealed that school climate has very strong positive significant relationship with students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria. This implies that a well-structured and supportive school climate marked by effective teacher-student interactions, discipline and conducive learning environments plays a crucial role in enhancing academic outcomes among students. The finding of this study agreed with that of Fakunle and Ale (2018) which revealed that there was a significant difference between students' academic performances in schools having open climate and the academic performance of students in schools having controlled climate. The finding also aligns with the finding of Enwezor (2021) which indicated that school climate has significant impact on students' academic performance by maintaining a manageable student-teacher ratio in the classroom; promotion of fundamental moral values; prevention of acts of bullying and when students are treated fairly.

The second finding of the study revealed that supportive learning environment has very strong positive significant relationship with students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Benue North East Senatorial District, Nigeria. This implies that when schools provide learners with adequate physical facilities, emotional support, mutual respect and safety, students tend to perform better academically due to increased motivation and reduced distractions. This finding is in agreement with Pobbi, Kor and Opare (2018) who reported that school climate had positive and significant effect on the academic performances of students. Similarly, the result is supported by Usman and Madudili (2019) whose finding showed that learning environment with accessible and utilizable facilities have significant positive effect on teaching and learning process as well as academic performance of students.

Overall, this finding reinforces the importance of creating a supportive and enabling learning atmosphere in schools as a key strategy for enhancing students' academic success. A well-structured school environment not only nurtures students intellectually but also fosters psychological safety and a sense of belonging, which are essential for effective learning.

Conclusion

Administrative effectiveness plays a significant role in shaping students' academic performance in public secondary schools. Based on the results of the study, it was established that administrative variables such as school climate and supportive learning environment are associated with academic performance and emphasize that findings are correlational.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government of Benue State should prioritize creating an effective school climate by providing adequate infrastructure, recruiting qualified personnel, enforcing student discipline policies and ensuring school safety.
2. Administrators of public secondary schools should promote a supportive learning environment by ensuring that classrooms are learner-centered, emotionally safe and inclusive.

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