



Research Paper

The Role of Parents' School Climate Perceptions on Achievement Expectations of Secondary School Science Students in Obio/Akpor, Rivers State

Otuturu, F.G.&Adolphus, T

Department of Science Education,
Faculty of Education, Rivers State University,
Nkpolu-Oroworikwo, Port Harcourt, Nigeria
Corresponding Author: Otuturu, F.G.

Abstract

Parent's attitudes about their children's schools can have far-reaching effects. Their perceptions may influence student attitudes about school, whether and how parents engage with the school, and even parents' decisions about which school their child will attend. The aim of this paper is to investigate the role of parent's school climate perception on achievement expectations of secondary school science students. The study employed descriptive survey design; two research questions were posed to guide the study. The Population of this study comprises all the parents in the six selected Government Secondary Schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government area of Rivers State. Simple random sampling techniques was used to select fifty (50) parents from each of the six (6) government secondary school from the population, making a total of 600 parents. The instrument used for data collection was a self-structure questionnaire designed on a 4-point rating scale. Cronbach Alpha reliability co-efficient method was used for reliability test which yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.89. Data was analysed using mean and standard deviation for the two research questions. Findings from this study revealed that parent's agreed that school climate influence parents perceptions on achievement expectations of secondary school science students. Based on the findings, it is recommended that. Principals should treat students fairly, equally and with respect, provide a safe environment for staff and students, increased parent and community involvement in school process.

Keywords: School climate, parental involvement, education process

Received 10 Nov., 2022; Revised 22 Nov., 2022; Accepted 24 Nov., 2022 © The author(s) 2022.

Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. Introduction

Parents school climate perceptions refers to parents' beliefs about several factors in their children's school including, order and safety, fairness in discipline, care and support from teachers and peers. Attitudes of teachers, staff towards parents, Physical space, quality of the academic program and general cleanliness. Many researchers acknowledge the important role and the strong positive link between home and school plays in children's development and education. Carter et al. (2009) defined climate as situations that can be easily seen in a school, and is often defined by terms like, clean, open, wholesome, cold, dark, friendly, safe, and good learning atmosphere. Mitchell and Bradshaw (2013) established that school climate is an important element of an effective and successful educational environment. School climate is the school facilities and buildings, demographic and social characteristics of students, administrators, teachers, and school staff, school policies, values and rules, and the type of interaction that occurs between teachers, staff, students, and parents. National School Climate Centre (2012) described school climate as the quality and character of the school life that fosters or undermines children's development and learning achievement.

School climate is a wide term that relates to opinion of teachers about the general work climate and environment of the school (Hoy, Miskel, & Tarter, 2013). On the other word, the group of internal characteristics that differentiate one school from another school and influence the actions of each school's staff in the organizational climate of the school. Hoy and his colleagues (2013) mentioned that, this term is related to the school environment quality which is observed by school staffs, students, and parents. This environment has

effects on their behaviors, and is related to their collective cognitions of behavior in schools. The school climate is a learning environment built by the interaction of interpersonal relationships, psychological atmosphere, and physical setting. The climate of the school depends on people's experiences during school life, and it reveals norms, values, goals, human relationships, organizational structure, and teaching and learning practices (Cohen et al., 2009).

Over the past two decades, researchers and educators have increasingly recognized the importance of school climate. According to Kepenekci & Nayir, (2014), a positive school climate is an environment where teaching and learning takes place. Because of the importance of individual perceptions, schools often assess how students or teachers or parents feel about their school, and school climate has often been associated with improved school achievement which occurs as a result of the school's relations with each other, such as administrators, teachers, students, and parents. Hoy, Miskel, & Tarter (2013) opined that school life refers to the level of safety which a school provides, the kind of relationships that exist between school, staff, students, and physical environment. A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe environment. On the other hand, Ramsey (2016) claim that parent's attitudes about their children's schools can have far-reaching effects in their academic development. Their perceptions may influence student attitudes about school, whether and how parents engage with the school, and even parents' decisions about which school their child will attend. Parents who perceive a more positive school climate for parents are more likely to report that their children were enthusiastic about learning and enjoyed school, more likely to believe that their children were getting a high-quality education, and were more likely to recommend the school to others. It has been found that a positive school climate can yield positive educational and psychological outcomes for students and school personnel; similarly, a negative climate can prevent optimal learning and development. This is because schools are now being evaluated and compared for their effectiveness and quality based on the results of their student achievement outcomes (Epstein, 2011). Most of the studies assessing parents' school climate perceptions have addressed parents' beliefs about how schools treat parents. Parents' perceptions of how schools treat parents involves, parents' feelings about the extent to which their children's school made parents feel welcome, whether school staff was helpful and courteous, and whether teachers and the principal were interested and cooperative when discussing their children. Also, researching various literatures surrounding the issue of parent involvement studies have shown that the activities in this area has been scant, qualitative research has demonstrated that parents make decisions about where their children will attend school based on their perceptions of the nature of the experiences that their children may have in their schools because they worry about how negative experiences harm children's chances for academic success (Cooper, 2005).

There are considerable number of researches that have shown that school climate has impact on mental and achievement of students and their outcomes (Payton et al., 2008; Way, Reddy, & Rhodes, 2007). Thapa et al. (2013) identified some dimensions of school climate as: safety, relationships, teaching and learning and institutional environment.

Abraham Maslow in his theory (1973), opined that feeling safe is a basic human need. Feeling safe in school strongly supports student learning and healthy development (Devine & Cohen, 2007). However, there are a lot of researches that have shown that some students do not feel safety in their schools (Astor, Guerra, & Van Acker, 2010).

The cooperation of principals, teachers, and parents to implementation of good school climate is necessary. This cooperation shows the kind of relationship that exists between people in the school community. There is a fundamental relationship between teaching activities and learning process. The goals, values, and communications that make relationships in schools present a vital part of school climate. It is important how the relationship is and connected between principal, teachers, parents and learners in school (Gregory & Cornell, 2009).

Teaching and Learning is another school climate dimension. One of principals and teachers responsibility is to define the aims and values which made the teaching and learning environment. Positive school climate increase learning ability of students. Cooperative learning, group cohesion, respects, and mutual trust is encouraged by positive school climate. These exacting features have been shown to have direct effect to improve the learning environment (Finnan, Schnepel, & Anderson, 2003; Ghaith, 2003).

This dimension of school environment is categorized in two parts: (a) school connectedness/engagement and (b) physical layout and surroundings of school as well as resources and supplies. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2009) defines school connectedness as "the belief by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals. Ruus et al. (2007) and Whitlock (2006) reported that school connectedness is an influential predictor of students' behavior, feeling of safety and academic achievement. Educators and parents have multiple options to enhance school climate and students' overall educational experience. Astor et al. (2010), listed the following possible interventions to improve school climate:

1. Increased parent and community involvement
2. Promotion of fundamental moral values in children
3. Prevention of acts of bullying
4. Teachers and principals treat students fairly, equally and with respect
5. Provide a safe environment for staff and students

This study tries to identify the current situation of school climate and level of parent perception about the school their child attended and also determine how it affects their academic achievement in science subjects.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of parent's school climate perceptions on achievement expectations of secondary school science students in Obio/Akpor Local Government area of Rivers State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Ascertain the extent school climate influences parents' choice of secondary schools their children attend in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.
2. Determine the extent to which school climate influence parents' perception of their child academic achievement in science subjects in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. To what extent does school climate influence parents' choice of secondary schools their children attend in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?
2. To what extent does school climate influence parents' perception of their child academic achievement in science subjects in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?

II. Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. According to Maduabum (2007), a survey research design is one in which a group of people or item is studied by collecting, analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. The Population of this study comprises all the parents in the six selected Government Secondary Schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government area of Rivers State. Simple random sampling techniques was used to select fifty (50) parents from each of the six (6) government secondary school from the population, making a total of 600 parents. This sample was considered a good representative sample of the study A self- structured 18 items questionnaire designed by the researchers tagged: Questionnaire on the Role of Parent's Climate Perception on Achievement Expectations of Secondary School Science Students (RPCPOAESSSS). The instrument was face validated by two experts: a measurement and evaluation specialist and a science educator. Irrelevant items were deleted as a result of their suggestions. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha. Copies of the instrument were administered to 50 respondents who were not part of the sample, using a purposive sample method. The data obtained from the respondents was used in computing the reliability of the study. The coefficient obtain was 0.89 which was considered high enough to permit the use of the instrument.

The six selected Government Secondary Schools were visited by the researchers personally and 600 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the parents in regard to their perceptions of the school climate at their specific school site, parents completed anonymous questionnaire upon their visit to the school on a parent-teacher conference (PTA) day. The administration of the questionnaire was carried out within a period of one day per school, totalling a number of six days. The respondents were given 20 minutes to fill out the questionnaires. They were assured that the completed questionnaires were confidential. A total of 600 copies of the questionnaire were sent out, only 590 questionnaires were retrieved, making approximately 93% returned, their responses were later used for data analysis. The response pattern of the instrument was a four-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE- 4points), High Extent (HE-3points), Low Extent (LE-2points), and Very Low Extent (VLE-1point) was used for research question one and two. Mean and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions. A bench mark mean of 2.5 obtained by taking the mean of the rating scale of the instrument was set for decision making; any mean response of 2.5 and above was considered high Extent and accepted, if the mean score is less than 2.5 are considered low Extent.

III. Results

Research Question 1

To what extent school climate influence parents' choice of secondary school their children attend in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 1

Mean and standard deviation of parent responses on extent of school climate influence parents' choice of secondary schools attended by their children?

| S/N | Items | Mean | SD | Decision |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------|-------------|
| 1 | To what extent does school climate influence parents' choice of secondary schools attended by their children? | 3.15 | 0.84 | High extent |
| 2 | School climate influences parents' perceptions of how supportive the school environment is for students' learning. | 3.28 | 0.72 | High extent |
| 3 | School climate influences the relationship between parent, teachers and the administrators of the school their child attend. | 3.08 | 1.11 | High extent |
| 4 | School climate influence parents perception about safety and physical environment of the school. | 2.80 | 0.68 | High extent |
| 5 | How much respect do you think the teachers at your Childs school have for the children | 3.48 | 0.84 | High extent |
| 6 | School climate influence parent thinking on the level of school safety and discipline given to their child | 3.11 | 0.76 | High extent |
| 7 | To what extent does the school vale the diversity of children's backgrounds? | 2.97 | 0.99 | High extent |
| 8 | To what extent School climate influence parent perception on how open communication is between the teachers and the students. | 3.16 | 0.72 | High extent |
| 9 | What extent do you think that children enjoy going to your Childs school? | 2.88 | 0.84 | High extent |
| Grand Mean | | 3.10 | | |

The result from Table 1 shows the item by item analysis of the mean rating of parents on the extent to which school climate influence parents' choice of secondary school their children attend in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. From the table it could be seen that parents were of the opinion that school climate influence parent choice of schools their children attends with a mean response of 3.15 and standard deviation of 0.84. Also, Item two shows that school climate influence parent's perceptions of how supportive the school environment is for students learning with a mean value of 3.28 and a standard deviation of 0.72. It is agreed that School climate influences the relationship between parent, teachers and the administrators of the school their child attends with a mean value of 3.8, SD = 1.11. On the whole, parents agreed to statements on item 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, with a mean value of 2.80, SD=0.68, 3.48, SD=0.84, 3.11, SD=0.76, 2.97, SD=0.99, 3.16 SD=0.72, 2.88 SD=0.84, with a grand mean of 3.10. This imply that parents are in agreement that school climate, open communication, school safety and physical environment, discipline, respect and how children response enjoy going is to school is influence by school climate to a high extent, these were their perception.

Research Question 2

To what extent school climate influence parents' perception of their child academic achievement in science subjects in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 2

Mean and standard deviation of parent responses on extent of school climate can influence parents' perception of their child academic achievement in science subject

| S/n | Items | M | SD | Decisions |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------|-------------|
| 10. | School climate has impact on mental and achievement of students and their learning outcomes. | 2.70 | 0.66 | High extent |
| 11. | Parent's attitudes about their children's schools can have far-reaching effects. Their perceptions may influence student attitudes about school and academic performance. | 3.20 | 0.65 | High extent |
| 12. | Parents perception about their child school can Creates a climate in which students display initiative and assume a personal responsibility for learning. | 3.00 | 0.89 | High extent |
| 13. | Do Positive school climate reflects in a supportive teacher student relationship, and students' high academic expectations. | 3.19 | 0.96 | High extent |
| 14. | Do you think parents perceptions of school environment and safety influenced their child academic achievement directly and indirectly. | 3.28 | 0.72 | High extent |
| 15. | How well do administrators at your child's school create a school culture that helps students learn and impact on their achievement | 2.89 | 0.99 | High extent |
| 16. | Do you think a supportive school climate is a good indicator for student well-being and social development that can lead to academic achievement | 3.17 | 0.80 | High extent |
| 17. | How motivating are the classroom lessons at your child's school? | 3.07 | 0.83 | High extent |
| 18. | How well do administrators at your child school create a school environment that helps children learn? | 2.77 | 0.73 | High extent |
| Grand Mean | | 3.02 | | |

The result from Table 2 shows the item by item analysis of the mean rating of parents on the extent to which school climate influence parents perception of their child academic achievement in science subject in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. From the table it could be seen that parents were of the opinion that school climate has impact on mental and achievement of students and their learning outcomes, with a mean response of 2.70 and standard deviation of 0.66. Also, Item two shows that Parent's attitudes about their children's schools can have far-reaching effects. Their perceptions may influence student attitudes about school and academic performance, with a mean value of 3.20 and a standard deviation of 0.65. It is agreed that Parents perception about their child school can Creates a climate in which students display initiative and assume a personal responsibility for learning, with a mean value of 3.00 and standard deviation of 0.89. Positive School climate reflects in a supportive teacher-students relationship and promote high academic expectations, with a mean value of 3.10 SD = 0.96. On the whole, parents agreed to statements on item 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 respectively, with a mean value of 3.28, SD=0.72, 2.89, SD=0.99, 3.17, SD=0.80, 3.7, SD=0.83. 2.77 SD=0.73, with a grand mean of 3.02. This implies that parents are in agreement that school environment and safety can influence their child academic achievement directly or indirectly. Also that administrator at their Children School create a school culture that helps students learn and impact on their achievement and that supportive school climate is a good indicator for students wellbeing and social development that can lead to high academic achievement to a high extent, these were their perception.

IV. Discussion of findings

Findings from this study revealed that parent's agreed that school climate influence parents perceptions on achievement expectations of secondary school science students. It also influence parents' choice of secondary schools attended by their children and how supportive the school environment is in term of safety, discipline, open communication and respect given to the students' learning influences the relationship between parent, teachers and the administrators of the school their child attend and how the children response enjoy going to school is influence by school climate to a high extent, these were their perception. This finding is in agreement with the view of Cohen et al (2009) who opined that climate of the school depends on people's experiences during school life, and it reveals norms, values, goals, human relationships, organizational structure, and teaching and learning. The finding on the second research question show that parents were of the opinion that school climate has impact on mental and achievement of students and their learning outcomes that parents are in agreement that school environment and safety can influence their child academic achievement directly or indirectly. Also that administrator at their Children School create a school culture that helps students learn and impact on their achievement in the sense that supportive school climate is a good indicator for students wellbeing and social development that can lead to high academic achievement to a high extent. This is in agreement with the finding of Ramsey (2016) claim that parent's attitudes about their children's schools can have far-reaching effects in their academic development. Parents who perceive a more positive school climate are more likely to report that their children were enthusiastic about learning and enjoyed school, more likely to believe that their children were getting a high-quality education, and were more likely to recommend the school to others. He further established that a positive school climate can yield positive educational and psychological outcomes for students and school administrator; similarly, a negative climate can prevent optimal learning and development.

V. Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion made from the study, the conclusion reached by the researchers established the fact that school climate influence parents perception of their child academic achievement in science subject in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State

VI. Recommendations

1. Principals should treat students fairly, equally and with respect provide a safe environment for staff and students increased parent and community involvement, Promotion of fundamental moral values in children and Prevention of acts of bullying.
2. Principals should bond with school personnel and parents to involve more parents in school process. that could positively influence decision making in secondary schools but should be open to both parents and students in taking decisions that will be in the interest of all, at all times and situations.

Reference

- [1]. Astor, R. A., Guerra, N., & Van Acker, R. (2010). How can we improve school safety research? *Educational Researcher*, 39(1), 69-78.
- [2]. Carter, G., Lee, L., & Sweatt, O. (2009). Lessons learned from rural schools. *The Center for Rural Alabama*, 1(1), 1-37.
- [3]. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2009). Youth risk behavior surveillance-United States, surveillance summaries, 2009 (Vol. 59): Morbidity and mortality weekly report.

- [4]. Cohen, J., McCabe, E., Michelli, N., & Pickeral, T. (2009). School Climate: Research, Policy, Practice, and Teacher Education. *Teachers College Record*, 111, 180-213.
- [5]. Cohen, J., Pickeral, T. & McCloskey, M. (2009). The Challenge of Assessing School Climate.
- [6]. Cooper, C. W. (2005). School choice and the standpoint of AfricanAmerican mothers: Considering the power of positionality. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 74(2), 174–189. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40034542>.
- [7]. Devine, J. F., & Cohen, J. (2007). Making your school safe: Strategies to protect children and promote learning. New York: Teachers College Press. *Educational Leadership*, 66(4). Retrieved 3rd of February 2022 from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/dec08/vol66/num04/The-Challenge-of-Assessing-School-Climate.aspx>.
- [8]. Epstein, J. L. (2011). *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools* (2nd ed.). USA, Philadelphia: Westview Press.
- [9]. Finnan, C., Schnepel, K. C., & Anderson, L. W. (2003). Powerful Learning Environments: The Critical Link Between School and Classroom Cultures. *Journal of Education for Students Places at Risk*, 8(4), 391-418.
- [10]. Gregory, A., & Cornell, D. (2009). "Tolerating" Adolescent Needs: Moving Beyond Zero Tolerance Policies in High School. *Theory Into Practice*, 48(2), 106-113.
- [11]. Hoy, W. K., Miskel, C. G., & Tarter, C. J. (2013). *Educational Administration: Theory, Research, and Practice* (9th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- [12]. Kepenekci, Y. K., & Nayir, K. F. (2014). Questioning the School Climate in Terms of Sensitivity to Human Rights: A Research on High Schools. *Journal of Trakya University Faculty of Education*, 4(1), 1-16.
- [13]. Maslow, A. H. (1973). On Dominance, Self-Esteem, and Self-Actualization: Maurice Bassett.
- [14]. Mitchell, M., & Bradshaw, C. (2013). Examining Classroom Influences on Student Perceptions of School Climate: The Role of Classroom Management and Exclusionary Discipline Strategies. *Journal of School Psychology*, 51, 599–610.
- [15]. National School Climate Centre (2012). What is School Climate? Retrieved 6th April 2022 from <http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/>.
- [16]. National School Climate Centre (2019). What is School Climate and Why is it Important? <http://www.Schoolclimate.org/climate/>, retrieved 15th March 2022
- [17]. Payton, J., Weissberg, R. P., Durlak, J. A., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., Schellinger, K. B., &
- [18]. Ramsey, C. M., Spira, A. P., Parisi, J. M., & Rebok, G. W. (2016). School Climate: Perceptual Differences Between Students, Parents and School Staff. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement: An International Journal of Research Policy and Practice*, 27(4), 629–641.
- [19]. Ruus, V.-R., Veisson, M., Leino, M., Ots, L., Pallas, L., Sarv, E.-S., & Veisson, A. (2007). Studentswell-Being, Coping Academic Success, and School Climate. *Social Behaviour and Personality: an International Journal*, 35(7), 919-936.
- [20]. Thapa, A., Cohen, J., Guffey, S., & Higgins-D' Alessandro, A. (2013). A Review of School Climate Research. *Review of Educational Research*, 83(3), 357-385.
- [21]. Van Acker, R., Grant, S. H., & Henry, D. (1996). Teacher and Student Behavior as a Function of Risk for Aggression. *Education & Treatment of Children*, 19, 316-334.
- [22]. Way, N., Reddy, R., & Rhodes, J. (2007). Students' Perceptions of School Climate During the Middle School Years: Associations with Trajectories of Psychological and Behavioral Adjustment. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 40(3-4), 194-213.
- [23]. Whitlock, J. L. (2006). Youth Perceptions of Life in School: Contextual Correlates of School Connectedness in Adolescence. *Applied Developmental Science*, 10(1), 13-29.