



SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT INFLUENCES ON ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) (A CASE STUDY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN GEZIRA STATE: SUDAN)

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine how school environment influence students' academic performance. The main objective of the study is to analyse how school facilities, teachers and environment significantly affect secondary school students' academic performance in Gezira State, Khartoum. Descriptive Survey Research design was used in which data from 400, 26 teachers and 374 students' responses was collected using self-administered questionnaire from 14 selected secondary schools within Gezira State. Stratified random sampling technique was used to sample the respondents. The data was analysed using regression analysis. The result of the study indicated that classroom sizes, adequacy of textbooks, school support, unqualified teachers and the less enabling environment. Finally, recommendations were given to parents, teachers, policy makers and educational administrators.

Keywords: classroom environment; learning resources; academic performance

Byoung-suk, K. (2012) stated that children need safe, healthy and stimulating environment in which to grow and learn. During the school year, children can spend 6 to 8 hours at the school where the environment plays a significant/critical role in child development. More of the time is spent in the school yard or travelling to and from school. This condition requires careful planning and designing to optimize experiences that support education, health and stewardship. Therefore, the school environment is of paramount importance in shaping and reshaping intellectual ability. However, supportive and favourable school environment enriched with enough learning facilities, and favourable climate makes students more comfortable, more concentrated on their academic activities that resulted in high academic performance. The forces of the environment begin to influence growth and development of the individual right from the womb of his mother. The educational process of development occurs in physical, social, cultural and psychological environment. A proper and adequate environment is very much necessary for a fruitful learning of the child. The favourable school environment provides the necessary stimulus for learning experiences. The children spend most of their time in school, and this school environment is exerting influence on performance through curricular, teaching technique and relationship (Arul Lawrence A.S. 2012).

However, educational institutions are intimately linked with society as a whole. They are the temple of knowledge and agent of social change and transformation. The general condition of our schools, colleges

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and universities are a matter of great concern to the nation. It plays a significant role in the development of the personality of the students. As the students spend most of their life at school, the school environment is highly responsible for the inculcating of high values into them. For example, the Kothari Commission (1964-1966) posited that "The destiny of Indian is now being shaped in her classroom" (p.2). This quotation indicated the significant role a school environment plays in a student in particular and nation in general. Therefore, student being a backbone of every nation need a healthy school environment that support them to perform well.

A document prepared by policy studies association (PSA) reviewed in 2014. Washington D.C. indicated that students achievement is more heavily influenced by teacher quality than by students' race, class, prior academic record or school a student attend. This effect is particularly strong among students from low-income families and African-American students. The benefit being taught by good teachers are cumulative. Research indicated that the achievement gap widens each year between students with most effective teachers and those with less effective teachers. It suggests that the most significant gains in student achievement will likely be realised when students receive instruction from good teachers over consecutive years.

Poor and minority students are the least likely group to be taught by teachers with experience, knowledge and credentials. The elements of teacher quality that the researcher demonstrates are strongly associated with high students' achievement. Research also showed that these students produce most gains when assigned to competent teachers. Indeed, this finding leads to many researchers and analysts to assert that the lack of good teachers is the major contributor to the achievement gap. A Californian study suggested that schools hit a "tipping point" when approximately 20% of the school faculty is comprised of unqualified teachers who do not meet minimum state requirements. After this point, schools begin to lose their ability to improve students' achievement. The best strategy for closing achievement gaps is to make sure that a school serving poor and minority students has their fair share of qualified teachers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Eric, S. (2005) in an article the role of the supportive school environment in promoting academic success postulates that the school environment has broad influence on students' learning and growth, including a significant aspect of their social, emotional and ethical development. When students find their school environment supportive and caring, they are less likely to become involved in substance abuse, violence and other problem behaviour. The research indicated that supportive schools foster these positive outcomes by promoting students sense of connectedness, belongingness or community. These terms are used interchangeably here to refer to students' sense of being in a close, respectful relationship with peer and adult at school. Therefore, building in a school community is a means of fostering academic success. Students who experience their school as a caring community become more motivated, ambiguous and engage in their learning. In particular, students' active connection with teachers and their perceptions that teachers care about them are what stimulate their effort and engagement.

Another research by Oworye, J.S. (2011) showed that there is a significant difference between the academic achievement of students in rural and urban secondary schools as measured by senior school certificate examinations. To him the geographical location of schools has a significant influence on the academic achievement of students. Also he pointed out that uneven distribution of resources poor school mapping, facilities, problem of qualified teachers refusing appointment or not willing to perform well in isolated villages, lack of good road, poor communication and nonchalant attitude of some communities to school among others are some of the factors contributed to a wide gap between rural and urban secondary schools. Schools located in rural areas lack qualified teachers. It is because, they do not want going to rural

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areas that lack social amenities. They prefer to stay in urban schools. It is also observed that a lot of coaching of urban students is done to prepare them for public examinations, thus promoting the spirit of competition and rivalry that may be lacking in the rural pupils, probably, owing to limitations in exposure and experience. Also, the study has proven that students in urban areas had better academic achievement than their rural counterpart. In other word, students in urban locations have a very advantage of favourable learning environment that apparently enhance their academic performance.

Arul Lawrence, A.S, Vimala, A. (2012) conducted a research on the school environment and academic achievement of standard six students. The data from 400 sample participants is used to determine the relationship between school environment and academic achievement. The result of this study indicated that there is no significant difference in the school environment of standard six students in term of gender, medium of instruction. But there is an important difference in the school environment of standard six students in term of locality of school. The urban students have better school environment than the rural students. The urban students are having a stressful environment in their day life very much because they are living in the mechanical and hurry burry life. So they feel school environment is not very convenient for their studies. Therefore, school environment enriched with modern facilities makes the student feel comfortable in their studies that result to high academic performance.

A research by Sunday, A.A. (2012) revealed that there is a significant relationship between physical school environment and students' academic performance in senior secondary school physics. To him, the physical school environment has some influences on students' academic achievement in senior secondary school physics. The physical facilities, human resources, and the relationship among them determine the physical environment of the school. The result indicated that students with adequate laboratory facilities in physics perform better than those in school with less or without facilities, this simply because laboratory forms part of enrich the physical school environment. It was also discovered that poor facilities and inadequate space, as well as the arrangement of items including seats in the classroom, library and laboratory, would affect the organisation of learning environment. Favourable school climate gives room for students to work hard and enhance their academic achievement.

The result of this research agrees with the opinion of most psychologists; that weak relationship between teachers and students has a diverse effect on students attitude in respect of events in teaching – learning environment. Therefore, the teacher should be friendly and not mean, appear admirable but not seductive. He should attend to the need of students and be aware of the differences between them and be fair and firm in dealing with them. It is important to note that when healthy teacher-teacher relationship exist in school. It goes a long way in the promotion of learning among students. And this enables them to share knowledge and experience that will enhance the better school environment.

Denial, K.K. Felix, K. (2014) examined the impact of the school environment and peer influence on the students' academic performance. The study assessed school environment factors and peer influence in term of the level of psychological impact they have on learners. Twenty-one public secondary schools in sabbatic established that school environment exert a potent influence on students' academic performance. The school as an institution of learning which also acts as a second home for learners has been found to have a strong relationship with students' academic performance. Therefore, the head teacher and the teachers should provide a favourable learning environment where students are free to consult them when in need. They should also provide adequate education facilities that can arouse interest in the students and to motivate them to work hard. It is believed that a cordial relationship between the head teacher and students create an environment favourable to learning as discussions encouraged, and learners are listened. The head teacher

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works together with students on how to succeed in life and academic work. In such a school, every member is important in the decision-making process, and students are usually disciplined and possess positive academic attitude. The important role of the teacher in the learning process is unquestionable. Teachers have a lot of influence on their classroom practices. Teachers should have and apply specific abilities without which their influence may not be reflected in their students' performance in their subject. It is important to note that teachers have a substantial impact on students' academic performance. However, the school sector (private or public) and class size are two important structural components of the school. Private school tends to have both better funding and smaller sizes than public school. The additional funding for private schools leads to a better academic performance and more access to resources such as a computer that have been shown to enhance academic achievement.

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- I. To examine how school environment influence students' academic performance.
- II. To identify the influence of teachers on students' academic performance.
- III. To analyse how school climate influence students' academic performance.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i. How school environment influence students' academic performance?
- ii. In which ways teachers do influence students' academic performance?
- iii. How school climate influence students' academic performance?

5. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

- i. School environment does not influence students' academic performance. .
- ii. Teachers have no any influence on students' academic performance. .
- iii. School climate does not influence students' academic performance. .

6.1 METHOD AND MATERIALS

The research design for this study is descriptive survey research design, which always concern with finding, describing and interpreting what it is. It is not intended to examine new phenomenon but the concern with relation or condition that exists. It is quantitative research. Danial (2004) defined the Quantitative method of data collection as the explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analysed using mathematically based method (a statistical method).

6.2 Population

The population of this study consists of 374 secondary school students from secondary schools within Gezira State, Sudan and 26 English teachers.

6.3 Sample

The sample is taking a portion of the population out many to represent and generalise the whole. Therefore, 374 respondents were selected from 14 different secondary schools within Gezira State.



6.4 Procedure for Data Analysis

The data collected was analysed using statistical package for social science (SPSS), version 20. It is examined using regression analysis. Therefore, the data is explained in descriptive analysis.

7.1 RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The result of this study as explained above is presented in two forms, thus descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. Therefore the result and analysis are as follows:

7.2 Results/Findings

HO: School Environment does not Influence Students' Academic Performance To test the hypothesis and assess whether school environment has a significant influence on students' academic performance. The data of school environment and students, academic performance collected from the 400 respondents, 26 teachers and 375 students and their respective schools were analysed using the regression analysis.

Table 1 Average class size.

Class size	Teachers' response Frequency %	Students' response Frequency %
10-20	3 (11.5)	36 (9.6)
21-30	2 (7.7)	28 (7.5)
31-40	15 (57.7)	238 (63.7)
41-50	4 (15.4)	51 (13.6)
51-60	2 (7.7)	21 (5.6)
Total	26 (100)	374 (100)

As indicated in Table and the figure above 11.5% of the teachers taught on average classes of between 10-20 students 7.7% taught classes of between 21 – 30 students and a massive 57.7% taught classes of between 31-40. 15.4% of the teachers taught classes of between 41-50 students and 7.7% taught on average classes of between 51-60 students. Teachers who taught in classes of above 30 students would have their efficiency affected negatively because it may not be possible to pay attention to individual students in such large classes. Wako (1995) in his study on basic indicators of educational systems performance correctly observes that pupils-teachers ratio is one of the most common indicators of planning. He further argues that a low number of pupils per teacher indicate that pupils will have better chances of contact with the teacher and hence better teaching/learning process.

Table 2 Adequacy of English Textbooks

Responses	Students' responses Frequency %	Teachers' responses Frequency %
Strongly agree	50 (13.4)	4 (15.4)
Agree	286 (76.5)	19 (73.2)
Undecided	8 (2.1)	1 (3.8)
Strongly disagree	23 (6.1)	1 (3.8)
Disagree	7 (1.9)	1 (3.8)
Total	374 (100)	26 (100)

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The table and the figure above show that 15.4% of the teachers strongly disagreed with the view that there were adequate teaching and learning resources (Course books, supplementary books etc.), 73.2% disagreed, 3.8% were undecided, 3.8% agreed and 3.8% strongly agreed. The data is similar to the one from the students. From the data above, there is an agreement that schools have inadequate textbooks. This scenario impacts negatively on the performance in English.

Table 3 satisfaction with the school support .

Teachers' responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	2	7.7
Agree	1	3.8
Undecided	6	23.2
Strongly disagree	1	3.8
Disagree	16	61.5
Total	24	100

From the table and the figure above 3.8% of the teachers strongly disagreed with the view that they were satisfied with the school support. 61.5% disagreed, 23.2% were undecided. 3.8% agreed and 7.7% strongly agreed. This data shows that more than 60% of the teachers were not happy with the support. This means that there may have been few symposia, live performances of set books and inadequate number of textbooks. This scenario could be due to shortage of funds, personal difference between the teachers and principals or lack of proper communication to prepare the principals to budget for these expenses.

Table 4 An unqualified teacher is unable to use appropriate teaching skills

Agreement level	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	1	1.0
Undecided	3	4.0
Agree	9	34.0
Strongly agree	13	61.0
Total	26	100.0

According to the above table and figure 61% respondents are strongly agree 34% respondents are agree 4% respondents are undecided and 1% respondent is disagree. Alkhuli (1990,8) argues that " teachers with limited or no training on teaching a foreign language methods find it rather difficult to vary their methods". This proves that an untrained teacher negatively affecting teaching English.

Table 5 An unmotivated teacher negatively affects students outcome

Agreement level	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	1	2.0
Undecided	3	3.0
Agree	8	36.0
Strongly agree	14	59.0
Total	26	100.0

The above table and figure show that 59% respondents are strongly agree, 36% respondents are agree, 3% respondents are undecided and 2% respondents are disagree Haenakon (2012,548) claims that "teacher's lack

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of motivation greatly affects learning process. When teacher poorly motivates for the teaching process, he will directly affect learner outputs". This proves that an unmotivated teacher negatively effects on students' performances.

Table 6 How often teachers advise students on attaining the highest marks.

Response	Teachers' response Frequency %	Students' response frequency %
Never	0 (0)	0 (0)
Once a term	3 (11.5)	75 (20.1)
Once a month	20 (76.9)	229 (61.2)
Once a week	1 (3.8)	47 (12.6)
Every lesson	2 (7.8)	23 (6.1)
Total	26 (100)	274 (100)

From the table above 11.5% of the teachers advised students on attaining good marks once a term or less, 76.9% about once a month, 3.8% about once a week and 7.8% nearly in every lesson. Among the students, 20.1% reported that teachers advised them on attaining good marks once a term or less 61.2% about once a month, 12.6% about once a week and 6.1% reported that teachers advised them on attaining good marks nearly in every lesson. These results are depressing since it is clear that majority of the teachers do not advise students on the value of hard work and attaining good marks. As a result, this can contribute to a majority of students lacking direction and focus as they do not know why they should work hard and practise good study habits. This does not help in improving performance.

Table 7 How often teachers of English use comprehensible language in class

Response	Teachers' response Frequency %	Students' response frequency %
Never	0 (0)	0 (0)
Once a term	1(3.8)	16 (2.8)
Once a month	2 (7.7)	20 (5.3)
Once a week	2 (7.7)	298 (97.7)
Every lesson	21 (80.8)	40 (10.7)
Total	26 (100)	274 (100)

The table above show 3.8% of the teachers use comprehensible language once a term or less, 7.7% once a month, 7.7% once a week and 80.8% nearly in every lesson. Students too reported similar results to show they understood their teachers in class, a situation that may improve performance in English.

7.3 Discussion of Findings

The study posits that school environment play a significant role on students' academic performance. From the analyzed data of 400 secondary schools respondents within Gezira State area, school environment appeared to have significant influence on students' academic performance. Based on the regression statistical analysis, school environment affects the academic performance . It signifies that school environment account 40% change on students' academic performance. However, from the data collected, it appears that the school with adequate modern equipment enhances learning. The result of the data proves that the school enriched

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with modern equipment such as computer internet, enriched laboratory and library make learning easier and faster. Likewise school enriched with intelligent teachers, favourable learning atmosphere, an excellent teacher- student relationship and good school-parent relationship facilitates learning development. Therefore, these advantages result in high academic performance. Therefore, the importance of school environment on influencing academic performance cannot be over emphasized. Students need school with favourable learning facilities to perform well. This means that when school environment is enriched with modern educational facilities it facilitates learning.

Several researchers are supported this study. Some of these researchers are that of Arul Laurance et al. (2012) and Danial, K.K. et al. (2014) who revealed from their studies that the school environment has a significant influence on academic performance. Others are Orlu, C. (2013), Eric, C. (2005), Owarye, J.S (2011). Sunday, A.A. (2012) and Antaka et al. (2013).

8. CONCLUSION

It is important to note that, the finding of this research indicated that school environment significantly influence students' academic performance. As observed from the research, students from school with adequate learning facilities, good teacher-students relationship and favorable learning environment perform well. Therefore, the research concludes that school environment does influence students' academic performance.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Teachers should understand and appreciate the diverse domestic environment of their students.
- ii. Parents should involve actively with school authority about their children education to enable them understand the progress or otherwise of their children.
- iii. Future researchers should try to conduct more researches on the factors affecting academic performance to other levels of education.

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