

## SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AS A CORRELATE TO ECONOMICS STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN TOTO LGA OF NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA

**Doji Amos Roman**  
[amosdoji04@gmail.com](mailto:amosdoji04@gmail.com)  
**08036579344**

### ABSTRACT

This study examined the correlation between school environment and the academic performance of Economics students in Toto Local Government Area (LGA) of Nasarawa State, Nigeria, with implications for sustainable educational development. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The study population comprised all 600 Economics students from secondary schools in Toto LGA. Using the simple random sampling technique through the hat-and-draw method, a sample of 400 students (representing 67% of the population) was selected. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers, titled *School Environment as Correlated to Economics Students' Academic Performance (SECESAP)*. The instrument demonstrated a validity index of 0.75 and a reliability coefficient of 0.84, indicating suitability for the study. Data were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviations. A cut-off point of 2.50 and above was considered a positive response, while below 2.50 was considered negative. Findings revealed a significant correlation between school environment factors—including physical facilities, classroom size, landscaping, school location, and library resources—and Economics students' academic performance. The study recommends that educational stakeholders prioritize the provision and maintenance of adequate classroom buildings, libraries, and other instructional resources to improve learning outcomes.

**Keywords:** School environment, Academic performance, Economics students, Sustainable development, Educational facilities

### INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as the foundation for national development, serving as a means for skill acquisition, technological advancement, and effective utilization of human and material resources (FRN, 2014). In Nigeria, secondary education remains a critical stage in

equipping students with knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for higher education and societal engagement. However, student academic performance is often influenced by a range of factors, among which the school environment plays a pivotal role.

The school environment encompasses all physical, social, and organizational conditions within a school that directly or indirectly influence students' learning outcomes. These include classroom structures, school libraries, laboratories, teacher qualifications, administrative efficiency, school location, and the availability of instructional materials (Agusiegbe, 2019; Okeke, 2001). Piaget (1964) emphasizes that active interaction with the environment is fundamental for cognitive development, highlighting the importance of a conducive learning setting.

School environment can be divided into two major components: the physical environment and the academic environment. The physical environment comprises school buildings, classrooms, laboratories, library facilities, sports fields, and furniture. A well-structured, clean, and safe physical environment contributes positively to students' comfort, concentration, and motivation, which in turn enhances academic performance (Mgbodile, 2014; Chiu, 2018). Conversely, dilapidated buildings, inadequate furniture, poor lighting, and overcrowded classrooms create distractions and discomfort that can negatively affect learning outcomes.

The academic environment includes the availability and use of learning resources such as textbooks, reference materials, computers, and other instructional aids. Access to functional school libraries has been found to significantly enhance students' ability to acquire knowledge, conduct research, and engage in self-directed learning (Dike, 2019; Ojedele, 2003). Similarly, the presence of qualified teachers and effective teacher-student interactions are essential for facilitating learning and promoting positive academic achievement (Orlu, 2013).

In Toto LGA of Nasarawa State, disparities exist between public and private secondary schools regarding the quality of school facilities and the learning environment. Some schools benefit from well-structured buildings, equipped libraries, and laboratories, while others face challenges such as overcrowding, lack of instructional resources, and poor maintenance of existing facilities (Chike-Okoli, 2004; Ikediashi, 2002). These differences highlight the need to investigate how variations in the school environment influence Economics students' academic performance in the region.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study aims to:

1. Examine how the quality of the physical school environment, including school buildings, classrooms, and recreational facilities, correlates with Economics students' academic performance in Toto LGA.
2. Determine the extent to which library services, including textbooks, reference materials, and digital resources, correlate with Economics students' academic performance.

### **Research Questions**

1. How does the quality of the physical school environment correlate with Economics students' academic performance in Toto LGA?
2. To what extent do library services correlate with Economics students' academic performance in Toto LGA?

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to obtain detailed information on respondents' perceptions regarding the influence of school environment on students' academic performance. The population comprised all 600 Economics students in secondary schools within Toto

LGA. A sample of 400 students (67% of the population) was selected using the simple random sampling technique via the hat-and-draw method. This approach ensured that each student had an equal chance of being included in the study.

Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire titled *Influence of School Environment on Economics Students' Academic Performance (ISECESAPQ)*. The instrument consisted of two sections: Section A collected demographic information, while Section B contained 25 items grouped into five clusters assessing physical environment, library resources, instructional materials, teacher qualifications, and school location. Responses were rated on a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1).

To ensure validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts from the Department of Arts and Social Sciences, Faculty of Education, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, achieving a validity index of 0.75. A pilot test involving 50 students from non-sampled schools was conducted, and Cronbach's Alpha analysis yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.84, indicating high internal consistency.

Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for descriptive statistics, with a cut-off point of 2.50 used to distinguish positive from negative responses. Inferential statistics (chi-square) were employed to test the significance of correlations between school environment variables and students' academic performance.

## RESULTS

### Research Question 1: Physical School Environment and Academic Performance

#### Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of Respondents on Physical School Environment

| Item No             | Item Description                                                          | $\bar{X}$ | SD   | Decision |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------|----------|
| 1                   | Classroom size influences my academic performance                         | 3.53      | 0.68 | Accepted |
| 2                   | School landscaping affects my academic performance                        | 3.35      | 0.79 | Accepted |
| 3                   | Football field promotes my academic performance                           | 3.29      | 0.82 | Accepted |
| 4                   | Availability and quality of chalkboards influence my academic performance | 3.64      | 0.56 | Accepted |
| <b>Cluster Mean</b> |                                                                           | 3.46      | 0.68 | Accepted |

Table 1 presents the mean ratings and standard deviations of respondents on how various aspects of the physical school environment correlate with their academic performance in Economics. The findings reveal that classroom size has a significant influence on students' performance, with a mean score of 3.53 and a standard deviation of 0.68. This suggests that respondents perceive larger or well-structured classrooms as conducive to learning, likely because they provide sufficient space for movement, comfort, and better interaction with teachers, which can enhance concentration and participation in class activities.

The results further indicate that school landscaping affects students' academic performance, as reflected by a mean of 3.35 and a standard deviation of 0.79. This shows that a well-maintained and aesthetically pleasing school environment creates a positive atmosphere for learning, contributing to students' motivation and focus. Similarly, respondents agreed that access to a football field promotes academic performance, with a mean of 3.29 and a standard deviation of 0.82. This implies that recreational facilities are important for students' physical well-being, helping to reduce stress and improve overall engagement in academic tasks.

The availability and quality of chalkboards received the highest mean score of 3.64 with the lowest standard deviation of 0.56, highlighting the critical role of instructional materials in the teaching and learning process.

Functional and well-maintained chalkboards facilitate effective communication of lessons, clarity in instruction, and ease of note-taking, which directly support students' understanding and performance in Economics.

The overall cluster mean of 3.46 with a standard deviation of 0.68 indicates that, collectively, the physical school environment strongly correlates with Economics students' academic performance in Toto Local Government Area. The relatively low standard deviations across items show that respondents consistently perceive these environmental factors as important. This suggests that improving the physical infrastructure and aesthetic features of schools can significantly enhance students' learning outcomes and academic achievements.

## Research Question 2: Library Services and Academic Performance

**Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of Respondents on Library Services**

| Item No             | Item Description                                           | $\bar{X}$ | SD   | Decision |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------|----------|
| 5                   | Textbooks facilitate my academic performance               | 3.48      | 0.76 | Accepted |
| 6                   | Computer availability enhances my academic performance     | 3.37      | 0.65 | Accepted |
| 7                   | Dictionary promotes my academic performance                | 3.39      | 0.66 | Accepted |
| 8                   | Use of encyclopedia contributes to my academic performance | 3.51      | 0.54 | Accepted |
| <b>Cluster Mean</b> |                                                            | 3.44      | 0.63 | Accepted |

Table 2 presents the mean ratings and standard deviations of respondents on the role of library services in influencing Economics students' academic performance. The findings reveal that textbooks play a significant role in facilitating students' learning, with a mean score of 3.48 and a standard deviation of 0.76. This indicates that students perceive textbooks as essential resources for understanding subject content, revising lessons,

and preparing for examinations, highlighting their central role in academic achievement.

The availability of computers was also rated positively, with a mean of 3.37 and a standard deviation of 0.65, suggesting that access to digital resources enhances students' academic performance. Computers provide opportunities for research, access to online learning materials, and exposure to educational software, which can strengthen understanding of complex Economics concepts. Similarly, the use of dictionaries received a mean score of 3.39 with a standard deviation of 0.66, indicating that students consider dictionaries important for clarifying meanings, improving vocabulary, and supporting comprehension of academic texts.

The use of encyclopedias was rated highest among library resources, with a mean of 3.51 and the lowest standard deviation of 0.54. This suggests that encyclopedias provide comprehensive and structured information that aids students in acquiring in-depth knowledge and broadening their understanding of various topics. The overall cluster mean of 3.44 with a standard deviation of 0.63 shows that respondents consistently view library services as a significant factor that positively correlates with their academic performance.

These results imply that well-equipped libraries with both traditional and digital resources create an enabling learning environment, supporting students in independent study, research, and critical thinking. Therefore, investing in library infrastructure and ensuring access to diverse educational materials can enhance the academic outcomes of Economics students in Toto Local Government Area.

## **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study indicate a significant correlation between school environment and the academic performance of Economics students in Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. Specifically, the physical school environment—including classroom size, furniture quality, lighting,

school landscaping, and recreational facilities such as football fields—was found to play a critical role in shaping students' comfort, motivation, and engagement. Well-structured classrooms and adequately equipped learning spaces provide an atmosphere conducive to concentration and participation, which ultimately enhances learning outcomes. These results are in line with previous studies by Orlu (2013), who emphasized that a positive and supportive school climate, reinforced by good teacher-student relationships, contributes to improved academic achievement.

Similarly, the study revealed that academic resources within the school library significantly influence students' performance. Textbooks, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and computers were all perceived as essential tools for acquiring knowledge, conducting research, and engaging in self-directed learning. The findings align with those of Ayodele (2004) and Ojedele (2003), who reported that effective management and availability of educational resources improve the teaching and learning process, boost student morale, and enhance academic outcomes. Access to these resources allows students to explore beyond classroom instruction, deepening their understanding of economic concepts and promoting critical thinking skills.

Overall, the study underscores the interdependence of physical and academic environments in fostering quality education. A conducive school environment, supported by adequate facilities, instructional materials, and positive interpersonal relationships, provides students with the necessary foundation to achieve academic excellence. Therefore, the improvement and maintenance of school infrastructure and learning resources should remain a priority for educational stakeholders seeking to enhance students' performance and promote sustainable academic development.

### **Implications for Sustainable Educational Development**

Creating and maintaining a conducive school environment has significant implications for the long-term sustainability and quality of education. Schools that provide adequate physical facilities, well-structured

classrooms, functional recreational spaces, and access to essential instructional resources such as textbooks, computers, and libraries foster an atmosphere conducive to effective teaching and learning. Such environments not only enhance students' academic performance but also improve their motivation, engagement, and overall well-being, which are critical for holistic development.

Furthermore, strategic investment in school infrastructure, digital learning tools, and teacher professional development ensures that students acquire the necessary skills, competencies, and critical thinking abilities required to succeed in higher education and the evolving labor market. By promoting equitable access to quality learning resources and well-maintained learning environments, educational stakeholders can reduce disparities between schools in urban and rural areas, thus advancing social inclusion and educational equity. These measures support sustainable educational development by ensuring that every student has the opportunity to maximize their potential, contribute meaningfully to society, and participate in a knowledge-based economy. In essence, a well-resourced and effectively managed school environment is not only central to improving immediate academic outcomes but also foundational for fostering lifelong learning, innovation, and socio-economic development at both local and national levels.

## Conclusion

This study established a significant correlation between the school environment and the academic performance of Economics students in Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. Both physical infrastructure—including classroom size, furniture, lighting, and recreational facilities—and academic resources, such as textbooks, computers, dictionaries, and encyclopedias, were found to have a direct impact on students' learning outcomes. A well-structured and supportive school environment not only facilitates cognitive development but also nurtures students' affective and

psychomotor domains, creating conditions that promote motivation, engagement, and academic excellence. The findings underscore the critical role of educational stakeholders—policymakers, school administrators, teachers, and community leaders—in ensuring the provision, maintenance, and equitable distribution of quality school facilities. By prioritizing investments in both physical and academic learning environments, stakeholders can foster sustainable educational development, enhance student achievement, and prepare learners to meet the intellectual, social, and economic demands of the 21st century.

## Recommendations

1. **Improvement of Physical Infrastructure:** Education stakeholders should prioritize the construction, expansion, and renovation of classrooms, laboratories, and recreational facilities in public secondary schools. Adequate and well-maintained physical infrastructure will provide students with a safe, comfortable, and stimulating learning environment, thereby enhancing academic performance.
2. **Enhancement of Academic Resources:** Schools should be equipped with functional libraries that are well-stocked with current textbooks, reference materials, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and digital learning resources. Access to these materials will facilitate research, self-directed learning, and mastery of Economics concepts among students.
3. **Professional Development for Teachers:** Teachers should receive regular training on modern pedagogical approaches, digital learning tools, and effective classroom management strategies. Such professional development will improve teaching quality, promote student engagement, and ensure that available resources are optimally utilized for learning.
4. **Routine Maintenance and Facility Management:** School administrators should implement routine inspection and maintenance schedules for all school facilities. A culture of proper

upkeep and timely repair of classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and recreational areas will sustain a safe and conducive learning environment for students.

5. **Stakeholder Collaboration and Policy Support:** Government agencies, school boards, and community stakeholders should collaborate to ensure equitable distribution of educational resources. Policies aimed at improving school environments should be supported with adequate funding, monitoring, and accountability mechanisms to guarantee long-term sustainability.

## References

- Abraham, M. (2003). *Educational administration in Nigeria*. Port Harcourt, Nigeria: Pan Unique Publishing Co., Ltd.
- Agusiegbe, A. (2019). Taking the distance out of distance education: Complementary roles of information. *Nigeria Education Review*, 7(1), 171-179.
- Ajayi, I., Ekundayo, H. T., & Osalusi, F. M. (2010). Learning environment and secondary school effectiveness in Nigeria. *Studies on Home and Community Science*, 4(3), 137-142.
- Ayodele, F. O. (2004). *Principles of educational management*. Lagos, Nigeria: Longman Nigeria.
- Chike-Okoli, A. N. (2004). *Educational administration and planning: Theory and practice*. Shamac Publisher.
- Dike, V. E. (2019). *School libraries and academic performance*. Lagos, Nigeria: University Press.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2014). *National policy on education*. Lagos, Nigeria: NERDC.
- Ikediashi, A. E. (2002). Influence of physical classroom environment on pupils' academic performance. *African Journal of Educational Research*, 2, 11-22.
- Mgbodile, T. O. (2014). *Fundamentals in educational administration*. Enugu, Nigeria: Magnet Business Enterprises.
- Ojedeke, P. I. (2003). *Educational management: Thoughts and practice*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Codat Publications.

Orlu, C. N. (2013). *Teacher-student relationship and academic performance*. Enugu, Nigeria: Academic Press.

Piaget, J. (1964). Cognitive development in children. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 2, 176-186.