

THE INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN KUALA TERENGGANU, MALAYSIA

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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 Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia. Descriptive Survey Research design was used in which data from 377 respondents was collected using self-administered questionnaire from 4 selected secondary schools within Kuala Terengganu. Stratified random sampling technique was used to sample the respondents. The data was analysed using regression analysis. The result is explained in three forms; Demographic information, descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. The result of the study indicated that students from a school with adequate facilities, good teachers and favourable environment perform well than those from schools with fewer facilities, unqualified teachers and the less enabling environment. Finally, recommendations were given to parents, teachers, policy makers and educational administrators.

Keywords: school environment, academic performance

1. INTRODUCTION

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 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 in 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 have 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 peers 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, ambitious 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 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.

Orlu, C. (2013) conducted a research among six hundred teachers and students with the aim to find out environmental influence on the academic performance of secondary school students, in Port Harcourt local government area of river state. The result of this research indicated that the school environment has a significant influence on academic performance. The location of the school affects students' performance. For example, when a school is sited in a noisy area like an airport or in the heart of a city where activities disrupt the teaching-learning of the student. One will not expect such students in this area to be doing well academically. Noise in anything interferes with teaching/learning process.

However, the physical structure of the school building and the interactions between teachers and students are also influence students' performance. School climate can be a positive influence on the health of the learning environment or a significant barrier to learning. The school environment can affect many areas and people within schools. For example, a positive school climate has been associated with fewer behavioural and emotional problems for students. Therefore, it is believed that positive interpersonal relationship and optional learning opportunities for students in all demographic environments can increase achievement behaviour. Positive student teacher relationship brings about a positive and supportive school climate for students for smooth running of academic activities which results in good academic performance.

Anta, K. Jairo, K.M. Odhiambo, O. & Mary, E.A. (2013) conducted a research in Nandi District, Kenya, aimed to established the relationship teachers' characteristics and students' academic achievement. The findings revealed that students' academic achievement (in 2007, 2008 and 2009) was below average for 45% of the schools, 6 (30%) performance was on average while 5(25%) of schools had high student academic achievement. The poor performance was attributed to an inadequate number of teachers in most secondary schools within the district. On teacher qualification, the study established that 65% of teachers were degree holders, 25% had diploma certificates while only 10% were untrained. Cross tabulation results suggest that there was no difference in performance between teachers who had degree or diploma, suggesting that teacher qualification did not lead to increased students' academic achievement. It also indicated that a participation of teachers in professional development programmes has benefited a lot with the improvisation of teaching methods.

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 act 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 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. METHOD AND MATERIALS

6.1 Research Design

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 26,569 secondary school students from 32 secondary schools within Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia.

6.3 Sample

The sample is taking a portion of the population out many to represent and generalise the whole. Therefore, 377 respondents were selected from 4 different secondary schools within Kuala Terengganu. It means that 100 respondents were approximately taken from each secondary school to form the sample size

6.4 Instrument

The instrument used for this study is a questionnaire that contained two parts. Part 1 and 2, the part one contains question related to demographic information while part 2 contains questions related to the school environment.

6.5 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 three forms, thus, Demographic information, descriptive analysis and inferential analysis.

7. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The result of this study as explained above is presented in three forms, thus, Demographic characteristic, descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. Therefore, the result and analysis are as follows;

7.1 Demographic Information

A total of three hundred and seventy-seven (377) respondents were selected as a sample size for this study. The respondents were chosen from four different secondary schools within Kuala Terengganu area. They are selected by using stratified random sampling technique and respondents from each school were stratified in term of gender; male and female. It means that almost half of the respondents were male, and the other half were female. After classified them based on gender, simple random sampling technique is applied to select the required sample size.

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents

	Sex		Age		Location		Tribe	
	Boys	Girls	12-16	17-19	Rural	Urban	Malay	Chinese
Freq.	185	192	286	91	193	184	372	5
%	49.1%	50.9%	75.9%	24.1%	51.2%	48.8%	98.7%	1.3%

The demographic information of the respondents as presented in Table 1 above reveals the distribution of the respondents, base on demographic characteristics. By gender 185(49.1%) were boys, and 192(50.9%) were girls. Based on the age of the respondents 286(75.9%) were between the age of 12-16 while 91(24.1%) were between the age of 17-19. Concerning the location of the respondents 193(51.2%)

were from the rural area while 184(48.8%) were from the urban area. Based on tribe 372(98.7%) were Malay, and 5(1.3%) were Chinese. It indicated that all the schools were dominated by Malay students.

7.2 Description of the Study Variables

The main variables examined in this study were school environment (independent variables), and academic performance (dependent variable). Descriptive finding for all the variables is presented in Table 2 below

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

Variables	Mean	St. D	No.
Performance (Y)	54.34	21.199	377
School Environment(X)	3.18	0.351	377

Based on the data collected from three hundred and seventy-seven (377) respondents in the table above, the mean academic performance (dependent variable) of the respondents is 54.34 with a standard deviation of 21.199. It means that the performance is generally above average. While school environment has the mean score of 3.18 with standard deviation of 0.351

7.3 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 377 respondents and their respective schools were analysed using the regression analysis. And the hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance as presented below (Table 3 and 4)

Table 3: Summary of Regression Analysis Results

Regression Model	Dependant Variable (Students Performance)
R	.20
R Squared	0.040
Adjusted R Squared	0.037
Observation	377

The Table 3 above summarises regression results. Therefore, the result indicated that there is a positive correlation between the school environment and academic performance. In the regression statistics $r=0.20$, while R-squared is 0.040. It means that the independent variable (school environment) explained 4% variations from the expected and actual results of the dependent variable (academic performance). These indicate a good fit of the regression equation. Thus, this is an accurate reflection that, academic performance is influenced by the school environment.

Table 4: Test of significance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95% C.I	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	15.987	9.774		1.636	.103	3.223	35.206
1 School Environment	12.048	3.052	.20	3.948	.000	6.047	18.049

The test of significance results, as presented in Table 4 above, shows that $t=3.948$, with $df=375$ and p -values ($0.00 < 0.05$). It indicated that at 5% level of significance there is enough evidence that the regression equation is well-specified that a significant relationship between the school environment and academic performance exists. Based on the findings we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the school environment has a significant influence on students' academic performance. We are 95% confident that the slope of the actual regression line is somewhere between 6.047 and 18.049. In other words, we are 95% sure that enriching school environment will influence academic performance somewhere between 6.047 and 18.049.

7.4 Discussion of Findings

The study posits that school environment play a significant role on students' academic performance. From the analyzed data of 377 secondary schools respondents within Kuala Terengganu area, school environment appeared to have significant influence on students' academic performance. Based on the regression statistical analysis, school environment r value in relation to academic performance is (0.20), and $r^2=0.040$. 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 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 is facilitate learning. Schools within Kuala Terengganu are enriched with modern facilities, have good teacher- student relationship that make the students to have excellent academic performance.

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 (Sunday, A.A. 2012).

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).

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 favourable learning environment perform well. Therefore, the research concludes that school environment does influence students' academic performance.

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 researchers on the factors affecting academic performance to other levels of education.

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