

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT, TEACHERS' RETENTION AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LAGOS STATE.

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Abstract: This research investigated school environment, teachers' retention, and students' academic achievement in Catholic secondary schools in Lagos State. Three research questions guided the investigation. It employed a correlational survey method adopting *ex-post-facto* design. The participants included fifty-one (51) principals and vice-principals working in all the Catholic secondary schools in Lagos State. The sample for the study is made up of the entire population, principals, and vice principals in Catholic secondary schools in Lagos State. Census sampling method was utilized for the research. A self-developed questionnaire titled "School Environment and Teachers Retention" Questionnaire, (SETRQ)" was used by the researcher to gather information from the respondents. The questionnaire was administered to 13 respondents in Catholic secondary schools outside the area of study and their responses were computed using Cronbach alpha. The results showed that the school environment scale yielded co-efficient 0.82 while teachers' retention yielded co-efficient 0.63. Mean scores and standard deviation were employed to answer research questions. The finding from the research identified substantial connection between school environment and academic outcome of learners in Catholic secondary education in Lagos State. Moreover, a favourable relationship between conducive environment and higher academic achievement was established. The study highlights the interaction between school environment, retention of teaching staff and academic attainment of students, emphasizing their benefit in the light of Catholic secondary schools in Lagos State. Arising from this investigation, it was suggested that Catholic schools in Lagos State should strive to boost a progressive academic environment for both tutors and learners. Schools should apply various ways to retain effective, hardworking, and experienced teachers. In addition, schools should continuously assess the standard of academic achievement, school environment, and human resource management practices.

Keywords: School environment, teachers' retention, students' academic achievement, Catholic Secondary schools in Lagos State.

1. INTRODUCTION

Apart from the family that is the primary agent of change for students, the school system is another primary agent of social change and citadel of knowledge for national development. According to Raj (2018), education is one of remarkable tool to boost personal endowment, build capacities, overcome barriers and at the same time, increase available opportunities and choices to sustain attitude of humanity. School is a hallowed place where students are grounded in the

dos and don'ts of society. Furthermore, it depicts a centre for training of skills, talent, growth and academic success for students and teachers. In essence, it refers to a place where manpower is developed for the good of individuals and the society.

In educational institutions, especially in secondary education, academic attainment is paramount to parents, administrators, teachers, and all lovers of education. This is why parents are more particular in the choice of schools for their children. Poonam (2021) believed that parents leave no stone unturned to help their children achieve academic excellence. Academic achievement refers to the degree to which goals of education or particular curriculum has been achieved among students (Adeniyi, 2020) while Yusuf, Okafor and Damina (2019) defined opined that academic achievements are the aftermath from students learning outcome which includes knowledge, skills and ideas acquired and trained through their course of study within and outside the classroom situation. Academic achievement relates to the outcome or performance of education. (Suvarna & Ganesha, 2019). Thus, academic achievement of learners identifies the extent to which students attain their educational ladder.

At the secondary level, students' learning is directly related to academic achievement. Moreover, students are mostly rated with grades from their internal and external examination in schools. They are also assessed through tests, projects, examinations and so on. The importance of these assessments is to know the extent they have been imparted knowledge in the classrooms during the term/session.

Since academic achievement of student is a bone of contention to parents and stakeholders in education; it becomes apparent that the academic success of schoolchildren is related by so many determinants such as quality teaching staff, instructional materials, learners' disposition to learning, school environment, social, retention of tutors, and many too numerous to mention. When these indicators are adequately in order, the success rate of learners increases. Ugwunyim, Bartholomew, and Camila, (2023) agreed that these inputs have been identified as essential elements that contribute to students' learning experiences and outcomes.

Among the various elements that have effects on the academic outcome of students, school environment and retention of educators play very significant role in it. For any academic to reach its peak at the secondary level, students need necessary facilities, conducive learning environment and teachers' ability to spend more time in a particular teaching environment. Chime, Obinene, and Ekweogu (2023) describe school environs as an academic environment where educational instructions are given to learners based on curriculum. Moreover, it is a learning space where students and teaching staff come together for the purpose of inculcating knowledge. School comprises primary, secondary, and tertiary education in Nigeria. Especially in secondary education, both instructors and learners spend a major part of their day in this learning environment.

The National Policy on Education (2004) affirmed the necessity for school's environment especially physical environment should be made conducive to expedite the learning process. The physical facilities should be well constructed, spacious, and necessary facilities available for learners with the purpose of motivating their academic outcome. It is pertinent that a favourable school environment has so much influence on productivity of educators and the academic excellence of learners, shaping what becomes of them. It is crucial for schools to retain talented teaching staff. When outstanding teachers for any reason or purpose leave the school setting, it would portray a setback on students and general attainment of the institution (Agboola and Offong 2018). An unhealthy atmosphere has ample consequence for the tutors and students. The educational development of students is formed within this school system. Hence, a proper and stable environment provides a successful learning experience for both learners and educators.

Not only does the environment count towards scholastic attainment of students, but also the ability of the teachers to work for a longer period within a particular secondary school has a great impact concerning the educational success of students. Teachers are an important element in the academic achievement of students. It is through them that teaching and learning take place. Atanda (2020) stressed on the role of teachers in educational quality is a concern to educational stakeholders. Teachers are second parents, they guide, train, counsel, mold, instruct, discipline, and encourage students to put in their best. Teachers, who are vital agents in the teaching-learning process play a crucial role in expanding the manpower needed for the advancement of any society. They inculcate knowledge, facts, skills, attitude, beliefs, ideas, and values in their students, ultimately becoming beneficial to the society through their diverse professions (Abiodun-Oyebanji, 2021). With the basic role of instructors in secondary education, it is pertinent for administrators to make sure teachers are

valued and stay longer in a particular school. In truth, teachers' retention is a key factor in determining the academic achievement of learners. It adds value to the academic success of every schoolchild in learning institutions. Teachers are the core resources in the education system at any level, owing to this, the strength of an educational system largely build on the calibre and quantity of teachers (Agboola and Offong 2018). Frequent movement of teaching staff has a negative impact on students' progress in secondary education.

Numerous reasons which include low or little motivation, poor remuneration, poor work environment, high cost of living lead to frequent movement of teachers in secondary education in Nigeria. Teachers feel that they are unimportant, and their work is not valued by society (Mbonabucya, 2023). It is a phenomenon which is characterized by teachers leaving the classrooms and the system entirely in pursuit of other jobs or better still seek for greener pasture in other professions especially in private and Catholic secondary schools. In Nigeria, many people view teaching profession as the most stressful, unattractive, and not valued, probably due to unattractive salary, low social recognition, meagre incentive, poor work environment, low standard of living, lack of job, and other factors. Catholic education has always been viewed as among the best when it relates to standard, exceptional and integral education. Many people have enjoyed Catholic education in Lagos state and other parts of the country. Lately and with the influence of technology, parents, and all stakeholders are concern with the value of academic outcome of students especially in examinations like Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE), and National Examination Council NECO in Nigeria. There seems to be many students struggling in their academics especially in classroom or external examinations.

2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

There exists a connection between academic achievement of students, school environment and teachers' retention in secondary education especially Catholic schools in Nigeria. Parents, principals, and other educational investors deem it fit to put their children in a school environment embedded with seasoned teachers and discipline. Despite the calibre of instruction provided by Catholic secondary schools in Lagos state, there is still a great concern among parents and other stakeholders about educational service delivery especially as it concerns school environment and retention of teachers in Catholic secondary schools. This could be due to poor remuneration, inadequate reward, inadequate physical facilities, and an unhealthy environment. In view of the above, the aim of this research is to examine school environment, teachers' retention, and students' academic achievement in Catholic secondary schools in Lagos State.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To pilot the study, the following research questions were raised:

1. What is the relationship between school environment and students' academic achievement in Catholic Secondary School in Lagos State?
2. What is the relationship between teachers' retention and students' academic achievement of students in Catholic Secondary Schools in Lagos State?
3. What is the relationship between school environment, teachers' retention, and students' academic achievement in Catholic Secondary School in Lagos State?

4. METHODS

This research is a correlational survey method adopting ex-post-facto design. The participants consist of fifty-one (51) principals and vice-principals working in Catholic secondary schools in Lagos State. The sample include the entire population principals and vice principals in Catholic secondary schools in Lagos State. The research employed census sampling method. A self-developed questionnaire titled "School Environment and Teachers Retention" Questionnaire, (SETRQ)" was used by the researcher to gather information from the respondents. The questionnaire was validated through face and content validity, which was administered to 13 respondents in Catholic secondary schools outside the area of study and their responses were computed using Cronbach alpha. The outcome of the study revealed that the learning environment scale yielded co-efficient 0.82 while teachers' retention yielded co-efficient 0.63. Mean scores and standard deviation, co-efficient of determination, Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Regression were employed to answer research questions.

5. RESULT

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between school environment and students’ academic achievement in Catholic Secondary Schools in Lagos State?

Table 1: Relationship between school environment and students’ academic achievement

Variables	Lagos State		R	r ²	r ² %	Remark
	Mean	SD				
School environment	3.38	0.65	.826	.682	68.2	Positive Relationship
Students’ academic achievement	1.81	.37				

Table 1 presents the harmony between school environment and students’ academic achievement. The result reveals the meaning of 3.38 and 1.81 on school environment and students’ academic achievement. The relationship was $r = .826$ which shows a positive relationship. R^2 of .682 shows that work environment is related to students’ academic achievement by 68.2%. Thus, a strong merge exists between school environment and students’ academic achievement in Catholic secondary schools in Lagos state.

2. What is the relationship between teachers’ retention and students’ academic achievement of students in Catholic secondary schools in Lagos State?

Table 2: Relationship between teachers’ retention and students’ academic achievement of students

Variables	Lagos State		R	r ²	r ² %	Remark
	Mean	SD				
Teachers’ retention	3.32	.66	.519	.269	26.9	Positive Relationship
Students’ academic achievement	1.81	.37				

Table 2 identifies the relationship between teachers’ retention and students’ academic achievement. The result shows a mean of 3.32 and 1.81 on teachers’ retention and students’ academic achievement. The relationship showed $r = .519$ which shows a positive relationship. R^2 of .269 shows that teachers’ retention is related to students’ academic achievement by 26.9%. Thus, a strong merge exists between teachers’ retention and students’ academic achievement in Catholic secondary schools in Lagos State.

3. What is the relationship between school environment, teachers’ retention, and students’ academic achievement in Catholic Secondary school in Lagos State?

Table 3: relationship between school environment, teachers’ retention, and students’ academic achievement.

Variables	Lagos State		R	r ²	r ² %	Remark
	Mean	SD				
School environment	3.58	.65	.884	.781	78.1	Positive Relationship
Teachers’ retention	3.32	.66				
Students’ academic achievement	1.81	.37				

Table 3 presents the relationship between school environment, teachers’ retention, and students’ academic achievement. The result shows mean scores of 3.38, 3.32 and 1.81 on school environment, teachers’ retention, and students’ academic achievement. The relationship between the three variables was $r = .884$, which shows a positive relationship. R^2 of .781 shows that in the school environment, teachers’ retention was related to students’ academic achievement by 78.1%. Thus, there is a positive relationship between school environment, teachers’ retention, and students’ academic achievement in Catholic secondary schools in Lagos state.

6. DISCUSSION

Findings on research question 1 reveals that there is a significant relationship between school environment and students’ academic achievement in the Catholic Secondary Schools in Lagos State. The findings of this study suggest that the school environment of teachers is a key indicator to students' academic achievement. Schools can improve students' academic achievement by creating a healthy school climate for tutors together with necessary support from the school

managers. This is because the learning climate has great implications on the morale and productivity of staff have positive impact on students' educational achievements. When schools are dedicated to establishing a positivity, collaboration, and caring environment for staff and students, then instructors are motivated and well-equipped to contribute to student success. Creating a supportive and favourable work environment goes beyond physical facilities also comprises team spirit, collective attitude, interpersonal dynamics, and the overarching culture within a school setting. By cultivating an environment characterized by mutual respect, dialogue, and a joint commitment to influence the students' growth, schools foster a sense of belonging among the teachers. This, in turn, amplifies their motivation and loyalty to their roles, ultimately driving their efforts to support and uplift students. This finding agrees with Adebayo, & Owoloporoku, (2023) who emphasized that work incentives for teachers have significant advantages on the academic excellence on learners. Teachers with good motivation to teach are compelled to create a sustainable atmosphere for students. This will lead to higher academic achievement among students. Adekola, & Adebayo, (2023) agreed that work environment and job satisfaction of teachers had enormous effect on academic attainment of students. Schools with a productive climate and teachers who were content with their tasks tend to have lofty academic achievement with students. Nkedishu (2020) who found that school environment was significantly related to teachers performance.

Moreover, findings on research question 2 disclosed the significant alliance between teachers' retention and academic achievement of learners in Catholic Secondary Schools in Lagos States. Schools that retain their teachers have a strong probability of attaining a stable, efficient, and experienced labour force. This is important for the continuity of quality education in a school system and academic attainment of learners as they benefit from having teachers who are familiar with them and their learning needs. Schools that prioritize teachers' retention lay the basis for fertile school atmosphere defined by consistency, acquaintance, and a deeper knowledge of learners' academic needs. The capacity to retain teachers boosts the progression of a unified and experienced workforce. Teaching staff who were able to participate in professional development opportunities have the penchant to progress in the teaching profession. The findings of these studies suggest that teachers' retention is a crucial element that influences academic achievement of learners. Schools can improve learners' academic achievement by creating a more concerned environment for teachers and by providing them with opportunities for professional development. This finding concurs with the reports of Ajibade, and Adebayo, (2023) who affirmed that retention of qualified teachers had a significant influence on students' academic achievement. Schools that were able to keep hold of qualified teachers give rise to higher academic achievement of students. Azeez, and Adebayo, (2023) also found that the retention of competent tutors had a remarkable connection on students' academic achievement.

Finally, findings on research question 3 makes manifest the important relationship between school environment, teachers' retention, and students' academic achievement in Catholic Secondary schools in Lagos State. The significance of this discovery lies in the union of two vital factors of school environment and teachers' retention which showed their collaborative aftermath on students' academic accomplishments. The standard of teacher determines the calibre of instruction and guidance that students receive. When these professionals are motivated, proficient, and engaged, their collective efforts yield an enriched learning experience. This, in turn, harmonizes seamlessly with the learning environment, which encompasses factors like physical facilities, supportive policies, and a healthy climate. A well-structured school environment builds and influences teachers' optimal teaching and student engagement. Consequently, when these integral components collaborate, they propel student achievements to new heights, underlining the potential for a transformative educational journey. Adewuyi (2012) ascribed principal's leadership strategies significantly influence on academic achievement of learners. Principals with supportive mechanism and participative style of leadership had students who achieved higher scores on standardized tests. Samphina (2023) who found that human resource management process which include recruitment and staffing, training and development, and performance management all had a beneficial effect on students' academic attainment. These studies suggest the strong relationship between school environment, teachers' retention, and students' academic achievement. By investing in effective teachers and the school environment, schools can create conditions that are most conducive to learning and success.

7. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study identifies significant findings regarding Catholic secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. The research identified the interconnection between conducive learning environments and higher academic achievement was established. Moreover, the study investigated the correlation between teachers' retention and students' academic

achievement, it further revealed the intricate interplay between school environment, teachers' retention, and students' academic achievement, emphasizing their combined importance with reference to Catholic secondary schools in Lagos state.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Using as a yardstick the findings of the study in Catholic secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance overall academic achievement and foster a conducive learning environment:

- Schools should strive to boost robust learning environments for tutors and students. Providing adequate physical facilities, instructional resources, and promoting a lusty climate to enhance a conducive atmosphere for education and training.
- Schools should establish reward systems that recognize exceptional teachers. Acknowledging their contributions can motivate them to discharge their tasks properly.
- Schools should apply tangible ways to retain efficient, hardworking, and experienced teachers.
- Schools should consistently evaluate the standard of academic achievement, learning environment, and human resource management practices. They should identify areas that need intervention.
- Schools should establish a more robust approach in curriculum design and teaching practices mainly focused on students. Bridging the gap between informative methodology and students' diverse learning styles for better performance.

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