

**SCHOOL SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT FACTORS AND ACADEMIC  
WELLBEING OF JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN IBADAN  
RURAL COMMUNITIES**

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**Abstract**

*This study investigated the influence of school social environment factors on academic wellbeing (school value, school burnout, schoolwork engagement, satisfaction with educational choice) of JSSS in Ibadan rural communities. The descriptive survey design was adopted. Multi-stage sampling frame was adopted. Four Local Government Areas (LGAs) were randomly selected. Twenty schools (four per LGA) were selected randomly, while 350 JSS3 students were selected using proportionate technique. The academic wellbeing ( $r = 0.88$ ), supportive teacher relationship ( $r = 0.81$ ), supportive students' relationship ( $r = 0.74$ ), supportive peer relationship ( $r = 0.71$ ), disciplined learning environment ( $r = 0.83$ ) and empathy ( $r = 0.76$ ) rating scales were used to collect data. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), Pearson product moment coefficient and multiple regression were used to analysis data at 0.05 level of significance. School social environment ( $3.13 \pm 1.37$ ) of junior secondary school students in Ibadan rural communities was good with rooms for improvement, while academic well-being ( $1.84 \pm 1.00$ ) was low. The school social environment made significant contribution (68.7%) to the variations in the academic wellbeing of JSS3 students in Ibadan rural communities (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.687$ ,  $F_{(5, 312)} = 843.23$ ). School principals in rural communities should create conducive school environment where social security is guaranteed for students, through good rapport with staff and sufficient attention to the feelings and academic needs of students.*

**Keywords:** Supportive relationships, Empathy, Discipline learning environment, Performance in studies, Ibadan rural secondary schools

**Introduction**

Access to education encompasses all academic, financial, social and psychological characteristics that are capable of enhancing or deterring the chances of an individual. Academic wellbeing is a psychological construct and mental health issue that encompasses emotions, academic engagement, accomplishment and learning achievement of students, which seems to be discouraging in Ibadan rural schools. Academic wellbeing, especially when it is not in proper perspective, is capable of reducing personal academic accomplishment through feelings of decline in the student's competence. Life satisfaction, optimism, pessimism, anxiety and stress are the major elements of wellbeing, which tend to have influence on student's cognition. Its strength in

### *School Social Environment Factors and Academic Wellbeing of Junior Secondary School*

the determination of students' motivation and efforts toward learning has made it to be a popular issue in academic discuss in the recent time. The expectation that a student has about his or her own action has psychological effects on his or her academic work. Gilman, Huebner and Furlong (2009) observed that students, who feel satisfied with their academic life, having low level of anxiety and depression attain enviable academic achievement. Thus, environment plays a major role in the life of every individual and students tend to learn better in more academically conducive environments.

The Junior Secondary School (JSS) students, according to the Federal Government of Nigeria, (2013) are adolescents in the age bracket 12-15 years whose developmental stage is characterised by psychosocial challenges. The school as a social institution performs two non-exclusive roles of providing avenue for social interaction as well as agent of social integration for students. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA – 2018, 257-281) listed supportive relationships with peers, teachers and students, and a disciplined learning environment as well as feelings about social life as components of school social environment. Thus, social environment of schools should be a positive academic atmosphere for this category of students.

However, secondary schools in Ibadan rural communities, and many of such places in Nigeria, have peculiarities that could affect social environments negatively. On one hand are the rural peculiarities, which are mostly demographic and physical. The communities have low population density (around 20 people per square kilometre), and with majority of dwellers engaged in low-income primary occupations (farming, hunting, fishing and sand mining). In addition, the Ibadan rural communities have villages and hamlets spread in large geographical areas and educational institutions especially secondary schools located in a few communities in such a way that most students and teachers are likely to trek distances to school and back to their residence. On the other hand, is the lack of infrastructural facilities particularly tarred roads, good medical services, electricity, portable water and telecommunication services are features of Ibadan rural communities. In addition, many schools in Ibadan rural communities are characterised by poor physical environments, among which are dilapidated buildings, lack of furniture, inadequate infrastructure and absence of library, laboratory and toilet facilities. The lack of social amenities and aforementioned facilities could make social security, discipline and friendliness among staff and students to be deficient, and consequently have adverse effect on academic wellbeing of Junior Secondary School students (JSS). It is against this background that this study was designed to investigate the contributions of social environment factors to academic well-being of JSS students in Ibadan rural communities.

#### **Literature Review**

The multidisciplinary and multidimensional views of wellbeing are popular in literature. Gräbel, (2017) observed the multidisciplinary usage of wellbeing in the social, psychological and medical fields as social wellbeing, psychological wellbeing, emotional wellbeing and mental health, while Keyes, (1998); Ryff & Singer, (2008); Diener, (1984)

and World Health Organisation, (2005) explained its various components. In the school system, various constructs have also been used for academic wellbeing, among which are student well-being – Hidayah, Pali, Ramli & Hanurawan, (2016); students' well-being at school - Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2015) and CIEP (2012); wellbeing – Miller, Connoly, & Maguire (2013); and academic wellbeing (Muurlink & Matas, 2011).

Conceptualisation of wellbeing at school that this study refers to as academic wellbeing is a complex concept due to the diversity of its view among scholars. For example, Hidayah et al (2016) explained student well-being at school as attitude and emotions towards the school in general, which entails positive academic self-concept, enjoyment in school activities and free of anxiety feeling in school. It was also described as positive feeling and opportunity to live a flourishing life through relationships with self, others and environment (Miller, Connoly & Maguire, 2013). Positivity of feeling, attitude, and psychological disposition of students in the school setting are common features of academic wellbeing in literature. Thus, academic wellbeing encompasses physical and mental health as well as psychological comfort of students that creates a sense of belonging, purpose, self-responsibility and enhanced learning.

Noddings (1992) observed that the academic objectives of schools could not be achieved unless students have learning environment that is socially and emotionally healthy. That observation is supported by findings that emotionally supportive classrooms are related to greater student - motivation, interest, enjoyment and engagement (Marks, 2000; Curby, Grimm, & Cameron, 2009; and Woolley, Kol, & Bowen, 2009). Other findings underscoring the importance of academic wellbeing are better student coping strategies in Ruus, Veisson, Leino, Ots, Pallas, Sarv, & Veisson (2007); less violent behaviour in Sprott (2004) and greater school adjustment and academic achievement (Luo, Huang, & Najjar, 2007; Pianta, Belsky, Vandergrift, Houts, & Morrison, 2008; Rudasill, Gallagher, & White, 2010 and Ruus et al., 2007).

Literature has linked some aspects of social environments of the school to academic wellbeing of students. Mick (2011) reported that school physical and social environments (the physical plant, the academic support, available facilities, mental health support services as well as the fairness and adequacy of disciplinary procedures) support the extent to which school settings promote students' safety and health. Also, positive school environment has been explained by lower levels of alcohol and drug use in LaRusso, Romer & Selman (2008); bullying in Meyer-Adams & Conner (2008), Brand, Felner, Seitsinger, Burns & Bolton (2008); and harassment (Attar-Schwartz, 2009). Specifically, schools with positive social environment tend to have less student discipline problems as reported by Cohen & Geier (2010), aggressive and violent behaviour in Gregory, Skiba & Noguera (2010), fewer school suspensions in Lee, Cornell, Gregory & Fan (2011).

In addition to reducing students' exposure to risk factors, an aspect of positive school social environment, can promote positive youth development. For example, a socially favourable school environment has been linked with higher student academic

### *School Social Environment Factors and Academic Wellbeing of Junior Secondary School*

motivation and engagement in Eccles, Wigfield, Buchanan, Reuman, Flanagan et al. (1993), as well as elevated psychological well-being (Ruus et al., 2007 and Shochet, Dadds, Ham, & Montague, 2006). Not surprisingly, schools that promote engaging learning environments tend to have fewer student absences in Gottfredson, Gottfredson & Payne, (2005) and improvements in academic achievement across grade levels (Brand, Felner, Seitsinger, Burns & Bolton, 2008 and Stewart, 2008).

On the contrary, Crampton & Thompson, (2008) found that unhealthy and unsafe school conditions made it difficult for students to concentrate, while a healthy environment was actually making schools conducive for learning. Noguera (2010) opined that the total environment within a school should be comfortable, pleasant and psychologically uplifting. Thus, negative emotions (fear, shame and embarrassment for being wrong) in a school will be de-motivating to the pupils and reflect in their academic well-being. Thus, school social environment represents the total of all the social factors that could influence academic wellbeing among students.

#### **Research Questions**

- i. What are the conditions of junior secondary students' social environment factors in Ibadan rural secondary schools?
- ii. What is the status of academic well-being of junior secondary students in Ibadan rural schools?

#### **Hypothesis**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** Social environment factors do not make significant contribution to academic wellbeing of junior secondary school students in Ibadan rural communities.

#### **Methodology**

Descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The population comprises all third year Junior Secondary School (JSS3) students in Ibadan rural communities. There were 47 secondary schools in the identified rural communities spanning six Local Government Areas (LGAs). Multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted, while at the first stage, four LGAs were randomly selected. Subsequently, twenty schools (four per LGA) were selected randomly, while 350 JSS3 students were selected using proportionate technique.

A set of self-developed academic wellbeing and social environment interval rating scales of four-point and five-point Likert-type scales respectively were used to collect data. Three of the PISA, (2015) components of students' social environment (student's relationships with other students, teachers and peers); and absence of bullying from Meyer-Adams & Conner (2008), Brand, Felner, Seitsinger, Burns & Bolton (2008) were adopted; while empathy was adapted from (Attar-Schwartz, 2009) for social environment factors. The five items measuring each of the components were freedom of expression among (students, peers, and with teachers), availability and willingness (of students, peers and teachers) for academic discussion, motivation for academic

excellence (by students, peers, or teachers), absence of bullying (among students, peers and teachers) and empathy (among students, peers and teachers). Items used in measuring disciplined learning environment include commitment to student discipline, fairness, promptness and objectivity in handling student disciplinary cases.

The academic wellbeing scale had eight items, while the social environment scale had five variables (supportive teacher relationship, supportive students' relationship, supportive peer relationship, disciplined learning environment and serenity of school environment) with each having five items. The five points of the scales: Excellent (5), Very Good (4), Good (3), Fair (2) and Poor (1) were used for social environment factors. The items in the academic wellbeing scale were school value, school attendance, access to books, lesson attendance, avoidance of distraction in class, attention rate during lessons, assimilation rate during lessons and satisfaction with academic work. The four points of the scales: Very High (4), High (3), Low (2) and Very Low (1) were used for academic wellbeing. The reliability coefficients of the scales were academic wellbeing ( $r = 0.88$ ), supportive teacher relationship ( $r = 0.81$ ), supportive students' relationship ( $r = 0.74$ ), supportive peer relationship ( $r = 0.71$ ), disciplined learning environment ( $r = 0.83$ ) and empathy ( $r = 0.76$ ). The academic wellbeing scale was complemented with average performances of candidates in class exercises on mathematics and English language during the academic term, which was obtained from respondents' notebooks and rendered in percentage to ensure uniformity of magnitude.

Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to answer research questions adopting the intervals: Excellent (5 – 4.5), Very Good (4.4 – 3.5), Good (3.4 – 2.5), Fair (2.4 – 1.5) and Poor (1.4 – 1) for social environment factors, and Very High (4 – 3.5), High (3.4 – 2.5), Low (2.4 – 1.5) and Very Low (1.4 – 1) for academic wellbeing. All frequencies were approximated to the nearest whole number. Pearson product moment coefficient and multiple regression analysis were used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

## **Results**

The results of this study were presented under each of the research questions and hypothesis as follow.

**Research Question 1:** What are the conditions of junior secondary students' social environment factors in Ibadan rural secondary schools?

*School Social Environment Factors and Academic Wellbeing of Junior Secondary School*

**Table 1: Conditions of school social environment factors**

Items	N	E	VG	G	F	P	Mean	S.D	Remark
Empathy	320	52	100	67	59	42	3.13	1.28	Good
Supportive teacher relationship	320	10	25	60	140	85	2.18	1.01	Fair
Supportive student relationship	320	103	135	35	34	13	3.88	1.10	Very Good
Supportive peer relationship	320	112	123	60	15	10	3.98	1.00	Very Good
Disciplined learning environment	320	30	42	60	100	88	2.46	1.27	Fair
<b>Summary of Social Environment</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>3.13</b>	<b>1.37</b>	Good

Table 1 shows that the school social environment ( $3.13 \pm 1.37$ ) was good. However, the result depicts that there are rooms for improvement, as the value indicates the middle of the five-point scale. In addition, supportive teacher relationship ( $2.18 \pm 1.01$ ) and disciplined learning environment ( $2.46 \pm 1.27$ ) were each rated fair, and observed to be below the average of the five-point scale. Supportive student relationship ( $3.88 \pm 1.10$ ), Supportive peer relationship ( $3.98 \pm 1.00$ ) and Empathy ( $3.75 \pm 1.14$ ) were very good.

**Research Question 2:** What is the status of academic well-being of junior secondary students in Ibadan rural schools?

**Table 2: Status of junior secondary school students' academic well-being in rural communities of Ibadan**

Items	N	E	V.G	G	F	P	Mean	S.D.	Remark
School value	320	11	17	40	122	130	1.93	1.02	Low
School attendance	320	10	19	42	121	128	1.94	1.02	Low
Access to books	320	5	9	15	136	155	1.67	0.82	Low
Lesson attendance	320	24	32	42	103	119	2.18	1.24	Low
Avoidance of distraction in class	320	8	13	18	130	151	1.74	0.92	Low
Attention rate during lessons	320	9	19	24	117	151	1.81	1.00	Low
Assimilation rate during lessons	320	14	17	38	108	143	1.91	1.08	Low
Satisfaction with academic work	320	4	11	30	123	152	1.73	0.86	Low
<b>Summary</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>1.84</b>	<b>1.00</b>	Low

**Table 3: Performance in Studies**

Class Mark (%)	N	85	70	57	35	15	Mean	S.D.	Remark
Average Score	299	4	9	124	121	41	43.1	16.1	Low

Academic well-being ( $1.84 \pm 1.00$ ) of junior secondary school students in Ibadan rural communities was low (Table 1). All items measuring academic wellbeing: school value ( $1.93 \pm 1.02$ ), school attendance ( $1.94 \pm 1.02$ ), access to books ( $1.67 \pm 0.82$ ), lesson attendance ( $2.18 \pm 1.24$ ), avoidance of distraction in class ( $1.74 \pm 0.92$ ), attention rate during lessons ( $1.81 \pm 1.00$ ), assimilation rate during lessons ( $1.91 \pm 1.08$ ), and satisfaction with academic work ( $1.73 \pm 0.86$ ) were low. Average performance of candidates in class exercises in mathematics and English language ( $43.1 \pm 16.1\%$ ) during the academic term, obtained from respondents workbooks was low. These results depict deplorable state of academic wellbeing of junior secondary school students in Ibadan rural communities.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Social environment factors do not make significant contribution to academic wellbeing of junior secondary school students in Ibadan rural communities.

**Table 4: Anova of school social environment factors and students' academic wellbeing**

R						0.865
R Square						0.748
Adjusted R Square						0.687
	Sum	ofDf	Mean	F	Sig.	
	Squares		Square			
Regression	147.565	5	29.513	843.23	.000	
Residual	10.990	312	.035			
<b>Total</b>	<b>158.555</b>	<b>318</b>				

From Table 3, social environment factors ( $R = 0.865$ ) had significant joint relationship with academic wellbeing of junior secondary school students in Ibadan rural communities. The school social environment made significant contribution (68.7%) to the variations in the academic wellbeing of junior secondary school students in Ibadan rural communities ( $\text{Adjusted } R^2 = 0.687, F_{(5, 312)} = 843.23$ ). Supportive teacher relationship ( $\beta = .231$ ), empathy ( $\beta = .203$ ) and disciplined learning environment ( $\beta = .196$ ) made significant positive contributions to academic wellbeing of junior secondary school students in Ibadan rural communities, while the contributions of supportive student relationship ( $\beta = -.161$ ) and supportive peer relationship ( $\beta = -.197$ ) were negative (Table 5).

*School Social Environment Factors and Academic Wellbeing of Junior Secondary School*

**Table 5: Contributions of school social environment factors on academic wellbeing of junior secondary student in Ibadan rural communities**

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients Beta	T	P	Remark
	B	Std. Error				
Constant	0.164	0.027		5.977	0	Significant
Empathy	0.285	0.141	0.203	2.021	0.012	Significant
Supportive teacher relationship	0.231	0.139	0.231	1.662	0.011	Significant
Supportive student relationship	-0.264	-0.231	-0.161	-1.143	0.038	Significant
Supportive peer relationship	-0.267	-0.201	-0.197	-1.328	0.035	Significant
Disciplined learning environment	0.198	0.124	0.196	1.596	0.021	Significant

**Discussion of Findings**

The school social environment factors (supportive teacher relationship, empathy, disciplined learning environment, supportive student relationship and supportive peer relationship) jointly made positive contribution to academic wellbeing of junior secondary schools in Ibadan rural communities. This finding corroborated those of Eccles, Wigfield, Buchanan, Reuman, Flanagan et al. (1993) as well as (Ruus, Veisson, Leino, Ots, Pallas, Sarv, & Veisson, (2007); Shochet, Dadds, Ham, & Montague (2006) which found positive relationship between favourable school social climate and higher student academic motivation and engagement, and elevated psychological well-being respectively.

The positive contributions of supportive teacher relationship, empathy and disciplined learning environment had influence to academic wellbeing (school attendance, lesson attendance, attention rate during lessons, assimilation rate, performance in studies and satisfaction with academic work) of junior secondary school students in Ibadan rural communities. This finding corroborates the works of Marks (2000); Ruus et al., (2007); Luo, et al. (2007), Ruus et al. (2007); Pianta, Belsky, Vandergrift, et al. (2008); Curby, et al. (2009); Woolley, et al. (2009) and Rudasill, et al. (2010). However, the negative contributions of supportive student relationship and supportive peer relationship to academic wellbeing observed in this study differ from the pattern of results obtained for previous works. This difference could be due to differences in the locale of study and variations in social-cultural factors.



## **Conclusion**

Teacher supportive relationship and disciplined learning environment of schools were each rated fair despite their positive contributions to academic wellbeing of students. This could imply that the students had negative view of the teachers' enforcement of discipline in schools. On the contrary, relationships among students and peers contributed negatively to academic wellbeing but were each rated very good students. It is most likely that students don't make proper use of their relationships with peers and other students, or that the socially supportive relationships are not academically supportive because all components of academic wellbeing were each rated low.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations were made with the aim of improving students' academic well-being in schools.

- i. Providers of education in rural communities should create socially conducive school environment for staff and students.
- ii. The principals of rural public secondary schools should give adequate attention to the feelings and academic needs of students.
- iii. Teachers and principals in rural schools should find ways by which friendliness among students could be made to enhance academic wellbeing of the latter.

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### *School Social Environment Factors and Academic Wellbeing of Junior Secondary School*

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*School Social Environment Factors and Academic Wellbeing of Junior Secondary School*

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