

# Social-Emotional Learning, School Climate And It's Impact On The Academic Achievement Of Senior Secondary School Students' In Rivers State Of Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *This study examined Social- Emotional learning, School Climate and its impact on the Academic Achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State, with the moderating impact of gender, and school location. As a result of this, 4 research questions were raised while 4 corresponding null hypotheses were formulated and tested to guide the study. The population of the study is 42,767 male and female SSS2 students in the public schools of Rivers State. The sample size of 1,428 male and female senior secondary school two students (SSS2) was selected for the study through the Multi-Stage sampling procedure and Proportionate Stratified sampling technique. The research instrument used for data collection is: Social-Emotional Learning Scale and School Climate Inventory. Cronbach's alpha method was used to test the reliability Coefficient of the instrument: Social-Emotional Learning has  $r = .94$  while school climate has  $r = .91$ . The data was analyzed using Simple Correlation and Regression statistics to answer research questions and test the hypotheses respectively. All hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance. The findings of the research revealed that a significant positive Correlation was observed between social-emotional learning and academic achievement in Rivers State ( $r = .04$ ,  $P \geq .05$ ). No correlation was found between school climate and academic achievement of students. Analysis investigating the influence of moderating variables in the relationship between social-emotional learning, school climate, and academic achievement revealed that there was a positive joint correlation amongst them. Based on the findings, conclusion was drawn that social-emotional learning supports students' academic achievement. Recommendations were made for the practice of educational psychologists and teachers for the enhancement of life transformation of secondary school students.*

**Keywords:** *Social-Emotional Learning, School Climate, Gender, and Students' Academic Achievement.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Education as an asset of our nation ought to assist in technological development of the nation. This however, has not been achieved due to the decrease in the academic achievement of students in Nigeria. This is not far from the fact that student's behaviours are not only governed by environmental events such as socio-economic status of parents but also psychological events that can or cannot be expressed by students. The problem of poor academic achievement generally whether in private or public schools emotionally creates sad feelings in both parents and students.

Academic achievement is the outcome of a course of study to show that learning has taken place. It implies the total outcome of both the teachers' and the students' effort in day to day learning in school work. It involves the end of each students physical, social, emotional, and intellectual well-being, it is an index of general mental abilities which are responses to tests of different kinds. Academic achievement is measured by the test or examination results and is one of the main features in a school system. In classifying academic achievement, Qualette (2000) says it is either low or high depending on the subject. This according to him implies that students who are above the stipulated GPA (Grade Point

Average) are performing up to expectation academically, while those who are below it are as performing below the desired/ accepted standard.

The way students and teachers react to their feelings influences students' social, emotional and mental development. Social-emotional learning is an important factor that could lead to improved academic success and a quality interpersonal relationship between both the teachers and students, and a decrease in problem behaviour (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Tylor and Schellinger, 2011). For instance, there is a growing recognition at the local, state, and federal levels in the United States (US) and around the world that schools must meet the social and emotional developmental needs of students for effective teaching and learning to take place and for students to reach their full potentials (<http://casel.org/research/sel-in-your-state/>). Heckman, (2008) has written that the greatest returns on educational investments are "from nurturing children's non-cognitive skills, giving them social, emotional and behavioural training that enhances achievement in school and also success in life. Efforts have been made towards training students to contribute positively to the society and workforce which suggest that some of the basic needs of students are not being provided. For instance, the problems of emotional disturbances secondary school students in Nigeria generally is widespread.

Social-emotional learning environment (SELE) refers to the environment in which academic, social-emotional learning occurs. (Odojin, 2018). It involves process of using critical thinking and feeling in order to be aware of one self and others, and be able to make effective decisions and manage one's own behaviors and those of others (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Frey, Greenberg, Haynes, Shriver, 1997). Schools are implementing SEL policies in the curriculum in order to improve quality relationships among the teachers and students, and reduce conflict among learners, that will foster a greater sense of students safety, and the development of social and emotional skills in students, teachers and school leaders (Greenberg, Weissberg, O'Brien, Zins, Fredricks, Resnik, & Elias 2003). The institution for social and emotional learning is a nonprofit organization that provides high quality training for both the teachers and students with the following skills to be associated with: self-awareness, self-motivation, social awareness, interpersonal skills, positive decision making skills, and adjustment (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). SEL is one entry way for educators to influence students' outcomes by teaching competencies that contributes to optimal outcomes which leads to major educational life transformation of students'.

School climate is the quality and way of school life. School climate refers to how students, parents and teachers' experiences school life and the values, goals, beliefs, communication, the teaching and learning processes and the physical structures of the school environment. When students feel safe at school, they are welcomed at school, are encouraged and being treated with respect, and given the opportunities to learn, they will therefore, meet their academic potential and learn positive moral and social norms. When the school climate is positive, students will perform better, student attendance in school and discipline are more likely to increase,

and teacher retention could be positively influenced (National school climate council, 2007).

Positive school climate is an important element in the school that lead to students' achievement, behavioural and psychological wellbeing for students. Specifically, schools with positive climates tend to have less students discipline problems (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgen's, 2013) and aggressive and violent behaviour (Gregory et al, 2010), and fewer high school suspensions (Lee, Cornell, Gregory & Fan, 2011).

The study also investigates if gender and school location influences social-emotional learning, school climate in relation to academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Rivers state.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In Nigeria, since academic achievement determines how well students capture the essence of their educational pursuit, they are always worried about its outcome. Some efforts have been put in place in the educational sector to enhance academic achievement of students. For example, some subjects have recently been introduced and made compulsory (Civic education, Information and Communication Technology) to help students learn or understand their rights and improve on their studies. But the student's self-awareness, self-management appears to be largely ignored. If solutions to poor academic achievement is to be found, the student as a person, with his or her self-regulating system has to be taken seriously. Social-Emotional learning and school climate play a very significant role in directing students efforts toward their academic work.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- ✓ What is the nature of relationship between social-emotional learning and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State?
- ✓ Is there any relationship between school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State?
- ✓ What is the possible moderating impact of gender in the relationship between social-emotional learning, school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State?
- ✓ What is the moderating effect of school location in the relationship between social-emotional learning, school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State?

## HYPOTHESES

- ✓ There is no significant relationship between social-emotional learning and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.
- ✓ There is no significant relationship between school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

- ✓ There is no significant moderating impact of gender in the relationship between social-emotional learning, school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.
- ✓ There is no significant moderating effect of school location in the relationship between social-emotional learning, school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to examine social-emotional learning, school climate and its impact on academic achievement of secondary school students' in Rivers State and the moderating influence of gender and school location. In specific terms, the study was designed to achieve the following objectives:

- ✓ To determine the extent of relationship between social-emotional learning and academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.
- ✓ To determine the extent of relationship between school climate and academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.
- ✓ Investigate the possible moderating impact of gender in the relationship between social-emotional learning, school climate and academic achievement of students in Rivers State.
- ✓ Examine the moderating effect of school location in the relationship between social-emotional learning, school climate and academic achievement of students in Rivers State.

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The society at large would benefit from this study because if students can change their thoughts, they will change their ways of life, which will invariably lead to an orderly society. People with high level of social-emotional learning are more mutually independent and are likely to function more successfully in the society. Improve self-awareness and confidence can help student's adjustment to do well in many diverse situations. The idea can actually be extended to other areas of life outside academics. It will encourage a positive change of attitude for better life transformation.

#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is based on Social Cognitive Learning theory. It is an interconnected set of behavioural, cognitive and social factors propounded by educational psychologist Albert Bandura (1977). The major component of this study is developing a comprehension about how social cognitive factors influenced academic achievement through social-emotional learning of students. According to Bandura, internal thought processes and external behaviours/actions are influenced by human interactions. The social cognitive learning theory revolves around the notion that learning correlates to the observation of a role model, and intentionally picking up a challenge. Social cognitive learning theories is

based on the ideals that people learn, emulate and aspire for greater heights by watching what others do, and that human thought processes are central to understanding personality, it's main concept is that an individual's actions and reactions in almost every situation is influenced by the behaviours which the person has seen in other people. The behaviours or actions are recalled by the person and help organize his/her social behavior and mental processes. Observation learning modeling which has it that people learn by observant which is also described as vicarious learning i.e watching the behaviors and their effects of others in the environment.

#### II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopted a correlation method. From a population of 42,767 male and female senior secondary school two students, a total sample size of 1,303 male and female students were selected from the population through the proportionate stratified sampling technique and Multi-stage sampling procedure. The participants responded to 1,428 copies of the questionnaire titled Social-Emotional Learning Scale and School Climate. Social-Emotional Learning Scale (SELS) consists of 15-items questionnaire designed to measure expression of emotions in self and others, responsible decision making skills and utilization of emotions in solving problems while school climate consists of 14 items to collect adequate information from secondary school students based on the physical environment, emotional safety, and relationship between teacher-student in the school that fosters or undermines children's development and learning achievement. The average scores of each student's *academic records were used as valid and reliable measures of the criterion variable of academic achievement for each participant. These scores are made up of the cumulative average academic records in all school based subjects of centrally controlled examination process with a relative uniformity of standards common in every secondary school involved in this study.* The research instrument were scored on 4 Point Likert Scale of Strongly Agreed (4), Agreed (A), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagreed (1).

The reliability coefficient was established by Cronbach Alpha method to estimate the items internal consistency. The reliability coefficient for Social-Emotional Learning Scale has  $r = .94$ ; while school climate has  $r = .91$ . That is to say the instruments are adequately reliable and suitable for data collection in the study. The data generated from the research instrument were analyzed using Simple and Simple Regression Statistics. All hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance. All data were subjected to analysis using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 23.

#### III. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

*RESEARCH QUESTION 1:* What is the extent of relationship between social-emotional learning and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State?

**HYPOTHESIS 1:** There is no significant relationship between social-emotional learning and academic achievement among secondary school students in Rivers State.

In order to answer research question 1, a simple correlation and regression was computed. The result of the data analysis is presented in Table 1.

Source	N	Mean	SD	SS	Df	MS	F	r	r <sup>2</sup>	r <sup>2</sup> adjusted	P
Regression	1428	41.54	10.45	1552.69	1	388.17	2.32	.11	.10	.11	.04
Residual				131264.5	1427	92.25					
Total				132817.2	1428						

Independent Variable: Social-Emotional Learning.

Dependent Variable: Academic Achievement.

*Table 1: Regression Analysis of the Relationship between social-emotional learning and academic achievement among secondary school students*

Table 1, shows that the computed Simple Correlation Statistic produced an output  $r=.11$ . It revealed that there is a positive linear relationship between social-emotional learning and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State of Nigeria. *The finding is that there exists a positive linear correlation between social-emotional learning and academic achievement of secondary school students.* This provides an answer to research question 1.

In order to test Hypothesis 1, the calculated  $F = 2.32$ ,  $df (1, 1427)$ ,  $P \leq .05$  level of significance. The null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative holds true. Therefore, the finding is that students' social-emotional learning has significant relationship with their academic achievement in secondary schools involved in the study. *the conclusion is drawn that social-emotional learning has a significant relationship with students' academic achievement.* the  $R^2$  adjusted value of .11 shows that 11% amount of variance in academic achievement was accounted for by social-emotional learning in secondary schools in Rivers State.

**RESEARCH QUESTION 2:** Is there any relationship between school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State?

**HYPOTHESIS 2:** There is no significant relationship between school climate and academic achievement among secondary school students in Rivers State.

In order to answer research question 2, a simple correlation and regression was computed. The result of the data analysis is presented in Table 2.

Source	N	Mean	SD	SS	Df	MS	F	r	r <sup>2</sup>	r <sup>2</sup> adjusted	P
Regression	1428	35.85	9.17	1498.54	1	499.51	5.42	.06	.04	.04	.09
Residual				131318.7	1427	92.12					
Total				132817.2	1428						

Independent Variable: School Climate.

Dependent Variable: Academic Achievement.

*Table 2: Simple Regression Analysis of the Relationship between school climate and academic achievement among secondary school students*

Table 4.2 shows the relationship between school climate and academic achievement of students in secondary school. The mean score of school climate was 35.85 with a SD of 9.17. the table produce an  $r$  value of .06. This produce an answer to research question 2. It implies that there is a positive relationship between school climate and student's academic achievement.

In order to test the hypothesis, the calculated  $F = 5.42$ ;  $P \geq .05$  level of significance. The result obtained proved that the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternative holds true. *The*

*conclusion is drawn that, school climate has no impact on academic achievement of students in Rivers State.*

**RESEARCH QUESTION 3:** What is the moderating influence of gender in the relationship between social-emotional learning, school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State of Nigeria?

**HYPOTHESIS 3:** There is no significant moderating influence of gender in the relationship between social-emotional learning, school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State of Nigeria.

In order to answer research question 3, Multiple Correlation and Regression outputs were computed. The summary of the outputs is presented in Table 3.

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> adjusted	P
Regression	43927.47	3	10981.87	66.98	.07	.04	.03	.00
Residual	447096.6	1425	163.95					
Total	491024.1	1428						

$N = 1428$ ,  $P \leq .05$  Level of significance. Moderator Variables: Gender. Independent Variables: Social-Emotional Learnings, school climate. Dependent Variable: Academic Achievement.

*Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis of the moderating influence of gender between social-emotional learning, school climate and academic achievement among secondary school students*

The result in Table 3 reveals that there was a positive correlation between independent variables, moderator variable and academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Rivers State  $R = .07$ . This implies that the answer to research question 3 is that, variable of gender has a positive moderating influence on social-emotional learning, school climate and academic achievement of students.

The adjusted  $R^2$  of .03 shows that 0.3% amount of the variance in academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State was accounted for by the moderating variable of gender.

In testing the hypothesis, the output in the Table 3 showed that there was a positive relationship between moderator variable (Gender), independent variables of social-emotional learning, school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.  $F = 66.98$ ,  $P \leq (0.05)$ . The null hypothesis is therefore rejected and the alternative holds true. Therefore, gender has a significant moderating influence on social-emotional learning, school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

**RESEARCH QUESTION 4:** What is the moderating impact of school location in the relationship between social-emotional learning, school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State of Nigeria?

**HYPOTHESIS 4:** There is no significant moderating impact of school location in the relationship between social-emotional learning, school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State of Nigeria.

In order to answer research question 4, Multiple Correlation and Regression outputs were computed. The summary of the outputs is presented in Table 4.

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> adjusted	P
Regression	1713.32	3	428.33	2.39	.08	.06	.05	.00
Residual	489310.8	1425	179.43					
Total	491024.1	1428						

$N = 1428$ ,  $P \leq .05$  Level of significance. Moderator Variable: School Location. Independent Variables: Social-Emotional

*Learnings, school climate. Dependent Variable: Academic Achievement.*

*Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis of the moderating impact of school location between social-emotional learning, school climate and academic achievement among secondary school students*

The result in Table 4 reveals that there was a positive correlation between independent variables, moderator variable and academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Rivers State  $R = .08$ . This implies that the answer to research question 4 is that, variable of school location has a positive impact on the relationship between social-emotional learning, school climate and academic achievement of students.

The adjusted  $R^2$  of .05 shows that 0.5% amount of the variance in academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State was accounted for by the moderating variable of school location.

In testing the hypothesis 4, the output in the Table 4 showed that there was a positive relationship between moderator variable (Gender), independent variables of social-emotional learning, school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.  $F = 2.39$ ,  $P \leq 0.05$ ). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected and the alternative holds true. Therefore, school location has a significant moderating impact among social-emotional learning, school climates and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

#### IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In testing the relationship between social-emotional learning and academic achievement of students in Rivers State, there was a significant correlation between social-emotional learning and academic achievement, there was also a significant relationship among all the mediator variables. This result indicates that social-emotional learning, gender and school location plays a vital role in academic achievement of students in Rivers State. Previous researchers examined social-emotional learning and academic achievement are consisted with these findings. For instance, the study carried out by Payton (2008), which undertook the largest and most rigorous assessment of the impact of school-based social-emotional learning programs on children; this finding revealed that social-emotional learning could lead to improved achievement of children. The 217 school children that were used in this study, were between the age bracket of 5-14 years. The results from this review are very impressive compared to students in the control groups, children participating in social-emotional learning programs demonstrated improvement in multiple areas including; enhanced social and emotional skills, improved attitudes towards self, school and others, enhanced positive social behavior, reduction in problem behaviour, e.g, aggression and bullying peers at school, reduction in emotional disturbances such as depression, anxiety which lead to success in school and improved school grades. Social and emotional learning skills and programmes actually increases students' performance on standardized tests and grades. Toldson (2008) found out that social, emotional and cognitive

factors impact positively to the academic achievement of African-American students with four components that are inter-connected to academic achievement were classified, they include: (1) emotional factors, (2) family factors, including household composition, parent's education and relationship with their children; (3) social and emotional factors, including economic factors and (4) school factors.

Klein and Konold (2012) also conducted a study using a sample size of 3000 college students that already filled the school climate bullying questionnaire and Risk behaviour survey from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey, found that positive school climate was associated with lower student risk behavior.

Owuamanam and Olofintoye (2007) conducted research on sex differences in the psycho-social adjustment of Nigerian secondary school students using 782 participants. They found out that there was gender difference in their social adjustment where the boys were better than their female counterparts. No significance difference was however noticed between them on their psychological and psycho-social adjustments. This view is of course contrary to that of Okorodudu and Ossai, 2006 who are of the view that gender have no significant impact. Gender stereotypic views have facilitative influence on secondary school students and their academic achievement.

#### V. CONCLUSION

As a result of the findings in this study, the following conclusions were arrived at.

- ✓ There was a positive linear relationship between social-emotional learning and academic achievement of secondary school students.
- ✓ School climate had no significant relationship on academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.
- ✓ Gender has a positive moderating linear correlation between social-emotional learning and academic achievement of secondary school students.
- ✓ There was a significant moderating impact of school climate in the relationship between social-emotional learning and academic achievement of secondary school students.

#### VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has established the fact that students social-emotional learning is significantly related to their academic achievement. This is to say that students learning achievement and development to some extent is dependent on their social-emotional learning. Hence the following recommendations were made:

- ✓ It is the responsibility of the school to provide enriching environments for students to learn these skills and contribute to society since students are more likely to flourish or perform well in school when in settings that address their social and emotional needs.
- ✓ It is recommended that courses on emotional intelligence be included in orientation and training programmes for

both students and teachers. In essence, students should be made to undergo socialization programmes which should include aspects of emotional intelligence training, and the teachers will enjoy seeing their students performing well and achieving academic success through self-learning.

- ✓ It is recommended that social awareness competence testing and training of students should be done on continuous basis especially in form of seminars and workshops through in service training.
- ✓ Based on this result, it is recommended that schools should provide a positive school climate that is free from overcrowding, violent and aggressive behavior, bullying and harassment, inadequate facilities, unsafe and unsanitary conditions that affect behavioural, academic and psychological well-being for students which improve student's development and learning achievement.

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