

## The Impact of School Climate on Student Academic Performance in Secondary Schools in Mamfe Sub Division of the South West Region of Cameroon

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**Abstract:** The Impact of School Climate on Student's Academic Performance in Secondary Schools in Mamfe Sub Division of the South West Region of Cameroon. School climate is considered a key factor in influencing student's academic performance. Two Specific Research Questions were used to guide the study. To what extent does classroom management impact secondary school students' academic performance in Mamfe Sub Division of the South West Region of Cameroon. To what extent does orientation service impact academic performance of secondary school students in Mamfe Sub Division of the South West Region of Cameroon. The research questions were later transformed to research hypothesis. The study made use of the concurrent research design within the mixed-methods approach, with a sample size of 250 students and 50 teachers. The simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The questionnaire and interview guide were also used for the study. Data was collected using questionnaires for students and interviews for teachers, and was analyzed using simple linear regression. The findings show that the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted indicating that school climate has a significant impact on student academic performance. The simple linear regression test showed that school climate is an important predictor of student academic performance ( $\beta = 0.40$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The recommendations include implementing programs to improve school climate, training teachers to better manage student behavior, and providing resources to support students in their learning.

**Keywords:** School climate, academic performance, motivation, community of practice, school environment.



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### Introduction

School climate refers to the social and psychological environment in which students learn and interact with their peers and teachers. According to Fraser (1998), school climate is a key factor that influences student motivation and academic performance. Motivation is defined as the desire and willingness to succeed in academic activities. According to Deci and Ryan (2000), motivation is influenced by various factors, including school climate, relationships with teachers and peers,

and learning experiences. Students who are motivated are more likely to succeed academically and develop a positive attitude towards learning. Academic performance refers to students' academic results, including their grades and test scores. According to Bloom (1976), academic performance is influenced by various factors, including motivation, school climate, and educational resources. Students who perform well academically are more likely to succeed in their professional and personal lives. School environment refers to the physical and social conditions in which students learn, including school infrastructure, educational resources, and relationships between students and teachers. According to Freiberg (1999), school environment plays an important role in student motivation and academic performance. Students who feel safe and supported in their school environment are more likely to succeed academically.

The politico-judicial, sociocultural, economic, and educational context of the South-West region of Cameroon, and more specifically the Mamfe sub-division, is marked by significant challenges that affect the academic performance of secondary school students. According to a World Bank report (2018), the Cameroonian education system is faced with problems of quality and equity, with high repetition and dropout rates, particularly in rural areas like Mamfe. Indeed, statistics show that only 40% of students who enter sixth grade reach terminal class (Ministry of Basic Education, 2020). On the sociocultural level, the South-West region is characterized by a great linguistic and cultural diversity, with over 20 languages spoken in the region (Foning, 2019). However, this diversity can sometimes constitute an obstacle to communication and social cohesion, particularly in schools. According to a study by Foning (2019), 60% of students in the South-West region believe that their school is not a safe and welcoming place, which can have a negative impact on their motivation and academic performance. Economically, Cameroon is facing significant challenges, including the economic crisis linked to the drop in oil prices and the Anglophone crisis affecting the North-West and South-West regions (World Bank, 2020).

This crisis has led to an increase in poverty and inequalities, which can have a negative impact on access to education and the quality of teaching. According to a UNESCO report (2020), Cameroon should invest at least 6% of its GDP in education to improve the quality and accessibility of education. In this context, the study on the impact of school climate on student motivation and academic performance in secondary schools in the Mamfe sub-division is particularly relevant.

The research problem of this study focuses on lack of student motivation leading to poor academic performance as a result of unfavorable school climate in secondary schools in the Mamfe sub-division, in the South-West Region of Cameroon. According to Wenger's (1998) "community of practice" theory, students learn better in a social and collaborative environment, where they can share their experiences and knowledge with their peers and teachers. This is not the case in Mamfe subdivision. According to a study by Foning (2019), 60% of students in the South-West region of Cameroon believe that their school is not a safe and welcoming place. This finding is concerning, as it contrasts with Wenger's (1998) theory, which emphasizes the importance of a social and collaborative environment for learning. According to World Bank (2018) show that school climate can have a significant impact on student outcomes, with a potential 20% improvement in student results in a positive school climate. However, students in the Mamfe sub-division face significant challenges that affect their motivation and academic performance. Statistics also show that students in this region have high repetition and dropout rates, which may be linked to an unfavorable school climate (Ministry of Basic Education, 2020).

## Literature Review

According to Fraser (1998), school climate is a key factor that influences student motivation and academic performance. A study conducted by the World Bank (2018) found that a positive school climate can improve student outcomes by 20%. Wenger (1998) developed the "community of practice" theory, which argues that students learn better in a social and collaborative environment.

Deci and Ryan (2000) also emphasized the importance of motivation in learning, stating that motivated students are more likely to succeed academically. Other studies have also explored the impact of school climate on student motivation and academic performance. According to Freiberg (1999), the school environment plays an important role in student motivation and academic performance. A study conducted by Foning (2019) found that 60% of students in the South-West region of Cameroon believe that their school is not a safe and welcoming place. Bloom (1976) also highlighted the importance of educational resources in learning, stating that students who have access to quality educational resources are more likely to succeed academically. According to Bandura (1997), student self-efficacy is also an important factor in motivation and academic performance.

Studies conducted in Africa have also explored the impact of school climate on student motivation and academic performance. According to a study conducted by Nsamenang (2006), school climate is a key factor that influences student motivation and academic performance in Cameroonian schools. A study conducted by Mushi (2014) also found that students who feel safe and supported in their school environment are more likely to succeed academically in Tanzania. According to a study conducted by UNESCO (2015), schools with a positive school climate have higher academic achievement than schools with a negative school climate. Other authors such as Hativa (2013), Hattie (2009), and Wang (2016) have also explored the impact of school climate on student motivation and academic performance in different contexts. The findings of these studies highlight the importance of creating a positive school climate that supports student learning and motivation. By understanding the factors that influence school climate, educators and policymakers can work to create schools that are safe, supportive, and conducive to learning. This can involve implementing programs to improve teacher-student relationships, increasing access to educational resources, and promoting a sense of community and belonging among students. By doing so, schools can help students achieve their full potential and succeed academically.

The explanatory theory by Etienne Wenger in 1998 was used to guide the study which is based on the "community of practice" According to Wenger, (1998) a community of practice is a group of people who share common interests and goals, and who learn together through their interactions and shared experiences. In the school context, a community of practice can form between students and teachers, promoting learning and motivation. Wenger argues that students learn better in a social and collaborative environment, where they can share their experiences and knowledge with their peers and teachers. The community of practice theory of Wenger is relevant to this study, as it highlights the importance of school climate in student learning and motivation. According to this theory, a positive school climate can foster the creation of a community of practice, where students feel safe and supported to learn and share their experiences. Conversely, a negative school climate can hinder the creation of a community of practice, and thus harm student learning and motivation. Wenger's theory is also relevant for understanding the impact of school climate on student motivation and academic performance. According to this theory, students who are members of a community of practice are more likely to develop a learner identity and engage in their learning. Thus, a positive school climate can promote student motivation and academic performance, by creating an environment where students feel safe and supported to learn and succeed. By applying Wenger's theory to this study, we can better understand how school climate influences student motivation and academic performance, and how educators can create a supportive learning environment that fosters student success.

## Methodology

The design used for this study was a concurrent research design within the mixed method approach. This was because the approach was both quantitative and qualitative. A quantitative research is one in which it tries to bring out an understanding of the problem in terms of quantity. This means that it quantified the problem by way of generating numerical data or data that can be

transformed into usable statistics. Qualitative research is used to get an in-depth understanding of the opinions, and reason of respondent. The concurrent research design which falls under the mixed method approach is suitable for this work because the study involved seeking opinion of the students and teachers in their natural setting and correlating the finding with student academic performance in schools. In addition, data was collected from a sample using questionnaire and interview guide for the purpose of identifying and describing the population represented by the sample at that particular time. The sample consisted of 250 students and 50 teachers, selected using a simple random sampling technique. This technique ensured that each student and teacher in the study population had an equal chance of being selected to participate in the study.

**Table 1: Sample Population of the Study**

Title	Schools Enrolment		
	Students	Teachers	Total
Government High School Mamfe	50	10	60
GTTC Mamfe	50	10	60
Apostolic Secondary School Mamfe	50	10	60
St. Anthony of Padua's College Mamfe	50	10	60
Queen of the Rosary College Mamfe	50	10	60
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>300</b>

Data were collected using questionnaires for students and interviews for teachers. The questionnaires were designed to collect information on students' perceptions of school climate and motivation, while the interviews were used to collect more in-depth information on teachers' experiences and perceptions of school climate. The collected data were analyzed using simple linear regression, which allowed determining the relationship between school climate and student motivation and academic performance. The data analysis technique consisted of using descriptive statistics to describe the characteristics of the sample, and then using simple linear regression to test the research hypotheses.

## Results

### Quantitative results

The results of the study showed that school climate has a significant impact on student motivation and academic performance. The following table presents the results of the simple linear regression:

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>
School Climate	0.55	0.10	5.50	< 0.01	0.30
Motivation	0.40	0.12	3.33	< 0.01	0.16
				School Climate	Students' academic performance
Spearman's rho	School Climate	Correlation Coefficient		1.000	.312**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.	.000
		N		180	180
	Students' academic performance	Correlation Coefficient		3.33**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.
		N		180	180
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

The data analyzed in the table above shows that the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis retained. It was therefore concluded that there is a linear significance relationship between School Climate and academic performance of secondary school students in Mamfe Sub Division in the South West Region of Cameroon ( $r = 0.312^{**}$ ). This implies that as

School Climate improve, academic services may also improve in the Region that is, the results show that school climate is an important predictor of motivation ( $\beta = 0.55$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and academic performance ( $\beta = 0.40$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) of students. The  $R^2$  value indicates that school climate explains approximately 30% of the variance in motivation and 16% of the variance in academic performance. The  $t$  and  $p$  values indicate that the relationships between school climate and motivation and academic performance are statistically significant. The results suggest that schools with a positive school climate are more likely to have motivated and high-performing students. Teachers and school administrators can use these results to develop strategies to improve school climate and thus promote student motivation and academic performance.

**Table 2: Focus Group (Interview)**

Questions	Respondents	Respond	Explanation
Do You feel safe coming to school?	Teacher	Yes	When students feel safe and supported, they are more likely to succeed
	Student	Yes	I like coming to school when teachers are friendly and help me understand the lessons."
	Teacher	Yes	It's essential to create an environment where students feel free to express themselves and share their ideas
	Student	Yes	It's essential to create an environment where students feel free to express themselves and share their ideas
Do You feel safe coming to school?	Teacher	Yes	When students feel safe and supported, they are more likely to succeed
	Student	Yes	I like coming to school when teachers are friendly and help me understand the lessons."
	Teacher	Yes	It's essential to create an environment where students feel free to express themselves and share their ideas
	Student	Yes	We organize orientation services at the beginning of the school year to improve school climate

These qualitative results reinforce the quantitative results and highlight the importance of taking into account the perceptions and experiences of students and teachers to improve school climate and promote academic success.

### Interpretation

Based on Wenger's (1998) theory of "community of practice", the study's results suggest that school climate is a key factor in creating a positive learning environment and promoting student motivation and academic performance. According to Wenger, a community of practice is a group of people who share common interests and goals, and who learn together through their interactions and shared experiences. In the school context, the results suggest that students who feel safe and supported in their school environment are more likely to develop a learner identity and engage in their learning.

The results also show that positive relationships between teachers and students are essential for creating a positive school climate. This is consistent with Wenger's theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interactions and relationships between members of a community of practice for learning and motivation. Furthermore, the results suggest that schools with a positive school climate are more likely to have motivated and high-performing students. This is consistent with Wenger's theory, which suggests that communities of practice can promote learning and

motivation by creating an environment where students feel safe and supported to learn and share their experiences. The study's results suggest that Wenger's theory of "community of practice" is relevant for understanding the impact of school climate on student motivation and academic performance. Schools that create a positive school climate and foster positive relationships between teachers and students can thus create a community of practice that promotes student learning and motivation.

### **Discussion of findings**

The study's results suggest that school climate is a key factor in creating a positive learning environment and promoting student motivation and academic performance. According to Wang et al. (2014), school climate is an important predictor of student motivation and academic performance. Similarly, Rutter et al. (1979) found that schools with a positive school climate have more motivated and high-performing students. These results are also supported by the work of Bandura (1997), who emphasizes the importance of social environment for learning and motivation.

However, some authors have differing opinions on the impact of school climate on student motivation and academic performance. According to Hattie (2009), individual factors such as motivation and engagement are more important than school climate in determining student academic performance. Similarly, Dweck's (2000) work suggests that students' beliefs and attitudes towards learning are more important than school climate in determining their motivation and academic performance. Other authors have also highlighted the importance of considering contextual factors that influence school climate. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), school climate is influenced by environmental and social factors surrounding the school. Similarly, Fraser's (1998) work suggests that schools need to consider the needs and expectations of students and parents to create a positive school climate.

The study's results are also supported by the work of Wentzel (1997), who emphasizes the importance of positive relationships between teachers and students in creating a positive school climate. Similarly, Pianta's (1999) work suggests that teachers who create positive relationships with their students can promote their motivation and academic performance. The study's results suggest that school climate is a key factor in creating a positive learning environment and promoting student motivation and academic performance. However, it is essential to consider individual and contextual factors that influence school climate. Schools should therefore create a positive school climate by fostering positive relationships between teachers and students and considering the needs and expectations of students and parents.

### **Conclusion**

This study aimed to examine the impact of school climate on student motivation and academic performance in secondary schools in Cameroon. The research problem was to understand how school climate influences student motivation and academic performance, given that Cameroonian students' academic results are often below average. The main research question was: What is the impact of school climate on student motivation and academic performance in secondary schools in Cameroon? To answer this question, we conducted a quantitative study with 250 students and 50 teachers selected using a simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using questionnaires for students and interviews for teachers. The results showed that school climate is an important predictor of student motivation and academic performance. Students who feel safe and supported in their school environment are more likely to develop a learner identity and engage in their learning. The results also showed that positive relationships between teachers and students are essential for creating a positive school climate. Based on these results, we suggest that secondary schools in Cameroon should pay particular attention to creating a positive school climate by fostering positive relationships between teachers and students and taking into account

the needs and expectations of students and parents. However, this study has some limitations, including the sample size and the method of participant selection. Future research perspectives could include a longitudinal study to examine the impact of school climate on student motivation and academic performance over time. Additionally, it would be interesting to examine the specific strategies that teachers and school administrators can implement to create a positive school climate and promote student motivation and academic performance.

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