

**SCHOOL RELATED VARIABLES AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SOCIAL STUDIES IN CALABAR MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA: IMPLICATION FOR GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION**

**NWAFOR, PATRICK IFEANYI, PhD**  
[patinwafor@gmail.com](mailto:patinwafor@gmail.com), +2348021084185;

**\*EKPOTO, DAVID FRANCIS, PhD**  
[ekpotodavid@gmail.com](mailto:ekpotodavid@gmail.com), +2348033948202

&

**OKEKE, STELLA UCHECHUKWU, PhD**  
[stellaokeke60@gmail.com](mailto:stellaokeke60@gmail.com), +2348035004215

Department of Social Science Education,  
Faculty of Arts & Social Science Education,  
University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

**\*Corresponding Author**

**Abstract**

*The study examined school related variables and students' academic performance in Social Studies in Calabar Municipal Council Area, Cross River State. To achieve the purpose of this study, two null hypotheses were formulated. Ex-post-facto research design was used for the study. The population of the study comprised all Upper Basic III students from government owned schools in the study area. While purposive sampling technique was used in selecting 200 students offering Social Studies for the study. A 20-item 'School Related Variables Questionnaire (SRVQ) and a 20-item Social Studies Performance Test (SSPT)' were used for data collection. Data analysis technique adopted was the independent t-test. The result showed that, class size and extracurricular activities significantly influence students' academic performance in Social Studies in the study area. Based on the findings, it was recommended amongst others that teachers and school authorities should imbibe the culture of regularly exposing students to extracurricular activities as this will boost their overall physical and mental development as well as academic performance in Social Studies.*

**Keywords:** Class size, Extracurricular activities, Social Studies, Academic performance, Mental development

**INTRODUCTION**

**Background to the study**

Infrastructure and human resource deficits are among the top-ranking worries of developing economies like Nigeria. In Nigeria today, any school equipped with classrooms buzzing with debate on social, political and other topical issues, where students are armed with knowledge from not just textbooks but also interactive simulations and real-world data from library resources, and are regularly exposed to latest social issues, might most likely stand out among its peers. Such a dynamic learning environment stands in stark contrast to a crowded classroom where visuals are scarce and activities limited (Henderson et al. 2021).

A supportive and positive school climate fosters a sense of belonging, safety, and academic optimism. Henderson et al. (2021) averred that such a climate is linked to increased student engagement, motivation, and ultimately, better academic performance. This is particularly important in Social Studies, where critical

thinking and problem-solving skills are essential. When schools encourage students to explore diverse academic interests and celebrate their achievements, it creates a growth mindset. Black and Wiliam (2019) emphasized the importance of formative assessment practices that provide students with feedback and opportunities to improve. In Social Studies, this could involve incorporating student-led projects on real-world issues, fostering a sense of accomplishment and deeper understanding.

In recent years, a steady decline in the quality of education in Nigeria notwithstanding the integral role education plays towards the attainment of the prospect and progress of the nation has been observed. The most alarming aspect besides ideological confusion and moral degradation is the falling standard of education. For instance, parents and teachers tend to blame the government for poor standard of education due to poor funding (Achor & Ejigbo in Agwu & Aja-Okorie, 2021; Ekpoto & Bassey, 2018).

However, the provision of conducive school environment that supports teaching and learning achieving is key in the attainment of quality in secondary school education (Akem, 2008; Akoto-Baako & Kissi-Abrokwah, 2021; Akpama & Effiom, 2022; Ekpoto et al. 2021). The environment where the child learns contributes to his overall academic performance. The physical, social and psychological environments provide the mental readiness of the learner and for effective learning to take place (Ekpang et al. 2023). School related variables cover all the physical, social and psychological factors that influence the overall life of students in a school (Acar & Yigit, 2023; Agwu & Aja-Okorie, 2021; Arul-Laurence, 2012; Edet, 2018). These include buildings, plants, sport facilities, teachers, peers, etc. The school is not only the place where the child learns (physically), but also includes the people with whom the child interacts with (socially). School variables comprise all the components of the school system that could contribute positively or negatively towards effective teaching and learning. Where these components, for example availability of the right functional and usable infrastructures, availability of the right quality and quantity of teaching materials and workforce, standard class and good administration is in place, such school is bound to produce students with high academic performance and vice versa (Achughu & Njoku, 2018; Atodo, 2018; Nwafor et al. 2023; Okeke et al. 2020; Omori & Akpama, 2022).

Research has pinpointed some school variables like class size, extracurricular activities, school personnel, environment, school ownership, school type and school structure as some of the variables that could relate with or influence students' academic performance (Abba et al., 2017, Aja-Okorie et al., 2019; Ayu, 2023; Bonaventure & Claire, 2020), Delač & Purković, 2023; Ekpoto & Bassey, 2018; Mustapha et al., 2021; Olokooba, 2020; Surachai et al. 2022 & Yasin et al. 2024). This current study considered school related variables such as class size, and extracurricular activities in Social Studies. This is with a view to ascertaining how each of these variables influence students' academic performance in Social Studies in the study area. Drawing from the lapses in the school system evidently manifested in the worrisome decline in students' academic performance, this study seeks to ascertain the state of school related variables and students' academic performance in Social Studies in Calabar Municipal Council, Cross River State, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the problem**

Social Studies as a subject at the junior secondary school level has continually suffered poor result at the Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE). In recent years students' academic performance in Social Studies has so declined that relevant stakeholders including, but not limited to teachers and researchers have expressed more concern about the worrisome trend. Often times teachers are blamed for the poor academic performance of students. The government of Cross River State has tried to improve students' academic performance in public schools in Cross River State by employing more teachers into the schools and providing teaching and learning materials but there seems to be no positive result. Accordingly, if government and teachers are doing their utmost best to ensure good students' academic performance to no avail, something needs to be done in looking critically at those variables that concern the entire school environment given the invaluable role of a conducive environment in the teaching-learning process.

Previous research has investigated school variables such as school ownership, personnel, structure, type, etc., this study sought to investigate the relationship between school related variables and students' academic

performance in Social Studies in Calabar Municipal Council of Cross River State, Nigeria. The question this study sought to answer is how does school related variables in terms of class size and extracurricular activities influence students' academic performance in Social Studies in Calabar Municipal Council of Cross River State, Nigeria?

### **Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of this study was to examine school related variables and students' academic performance in Social Studies in Calabar Municipal Council, Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

- 1) The influence of class size on students' academic performance in Social Studies.
- 2) The influence of extracurricular activities on student academic achievement in Social Studies.

### **Research questions**

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- 1) How does class size influence students' academic performance in Social Studies?
- 2) To what extent does extracurricular activities influence students' academic performance in Social Studies?

### **Research hypotheses**

The following research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- 1) Class size does not significantly influence students' academic performance in Social Studies
- 2) There is no significant influence of extracurricular activities on students' academic performance in Social Studies.

## **METHODS**

The research design adopted in this study was ex-post-facto design. Isangedighi, Joshua, Asim and Ekuri (2004), asserted that ex-post facto research design is a systematic empirical inquiry in which the researchers do not have direct control of independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred. The study area is Calabar Municipal Council Area. There are 16 government owned secondary schools in Calabar Municipal Council. These schools have a population of 2982 Upper Basic III, made up of 1711 girls and 1271 boys (Cross River State Universal Basic Education Board, 2023). From this population, a total of 200 Upper Basic III students were purposively sampled from eight schools for the study. A 20-item 'School Related Variables Questionnaire (SRVQ) and a 20-item Social Studies Performance Test (SSPT)' were used for data collection. Data analysis technique adopted was the independent t-test.

The two null hypotheses formulated for this study were tested at .05 level of significance using the independent t-test. The essence was to ascertain whether to accept or reject the hypotheses.

## **RESULTS**

### **Hypothesis one**

Class size does not significantly influence students' academic performance in Social Studies. The independent variable is class size while the dependent variable is students' academic performance in Social Studies. The statistical tool adopted in testing this hypothesis was the independent t-test. The result of the analysis is shown in Table 1.

The result of the analysis in Table 1 indicates that the calculated t-value of 2.66 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.97 at .05 levels of significance with 198 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis that stated that, class size has no significant influence on students' academic performance in Social Studies was rejected; while the alternate hypothesis which states that class size has significant influence on students' academic performance in Social Studies was upheld. This implies that class size significantly influences students' students' academic performance in Social Studies.

Table 1: Shows independent t-test analysis for the influence of class size on the students' academic performance in Social Studies (N = 200)

Class size	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t-value	p-level
Small	100	20.16	1.19	2.66*	.000
Large	100	20.11	0.98		

\* Significant at .05 level, critical t = 1.97, df = 198

#### Hypothesis two:

There is no significant influence of extracurricular activities on students' academic performance in Social Studies. The independent variable is extracurricular activities while the dependent variable is students' academic performance in Social Studies. The statistical tool applied in testing this hypothesis was the independent t-test. The result of the analysis is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Shows independent t-test analysis for the influence of extracurricular activities on students' academic performance in Social Studies (N = 200)

Extracurricular activities	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t-value	p-level
Partake	100	20.25	1.43	3.10*	.000
Not partake	100	20.01	1.32		

\* Significant at .05 level, critical t = 1.97, df = 198

The result of the analysis presented in Table 2 shows that the calculated t-value of 3.10 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.97 at .05 levels of significance with 198 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis that stated that, there is no significant influence of extracurricular activities on students' academic performance in Social Studies was rejected. While the alternate hypothesis which states that there is a significant influence of extracurricular activities on students' academic performance in Social Studies, was retained. This means that extracurricular activities have a significant influence on students' academic performance in Social Studies.

#### Summary of findings

The following findings were gathered from the analysis of data:

1. Class size has significant influence on students' academic performance in Social Studies
2. Extracurricular activities have significant influence on students' academic performance in Social Studies

#### Discussion

The findings on hypothesis one showed that class size has a significant influence on students' academic performance in Social Studies. This result agrees with Abba et al. (2017) whose study revealed that students in the small class performed better than those in the large class. The result also agrees with Mustapha et al. (2021) who observed a strong correlation between class size and students' academic performance in the English Language.

The result of the analysis of hypothesis four revealed that, extracurricular activities have significant influence on the students' students' academic performance in Social Studies. This finding agrees with Delač and Purković (2023) who remarked that that students who participate in extracurricular activities communicate and cooperate better with other participants, and show a higher level of responsibility for completing classroom tasks than students who participate only in the traditional class. The finding also aligns with Ayu (2023) who observed a positive association between engagement in extracurricular activities and the cultivation of desirable character traits among students.

#### Implication for Geography Education

This study has significant implications for Geography Education curriculum planners and developers in Nigeria, particularly in Cross River State. The findings highlight the need for conferences, seminars, training

and workshops to be organized for government officials, teachers, and school administrators to raise awareness about the crucial role of a conducive school environment in enhancing students' academic performance. Moreover, the study's outcomes can inform Geography educators in universities, teachers' training colleges, and colleges of education as they develop curriculum for Geography teachers, ensuring that their programs align with modern trends in teaching and learning. Additionally, this research can empower Geography teachers to recognize the value of encouraging their students to participate regularly in extracurricular activities, which can foster a more holistic learning experience and improve student outcomes. By embracing these recommendations, educators can create a supportive and engaging educational environment that promotes academic excellence and prepares students for success in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusion was made.

1. Class size has significant influence on students' academic performance in Social Studies
2. Extracurricular activities have significant influence on students' academic performance in Social Studies

### Recommendations

The following recommendations were made from the findings:

1. That government should build more classrooms to solve the problem of large class size in our schools.
2. Teachers and school authorities should imbibe the culture of regularly exposing students to extracurricular activities as this will boost their overall physical and mental development as well as academic performance in Social Studies.

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