SCHOOL PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND INSECURITY AS CORRELATES OF ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT OF BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract
This study investigated the relationships among the school physical environment, insecurity, and academic engagement of Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study, and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population comprised 590 Business Education students in the four public tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The census sampling technique was used. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire validated by three experts: two from the Faculty of Technology and Vocational Education and one from the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, all from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using the Cronbach Alpha method, and the following reliability coefficients were obtained: 0.81 (school physical environment), 0.72 (insecurity), and 0.79 (academic engagement). The study utilized the direct method of questionnaire administration. Pearson product- moment correlation was used to analyze the research questions. Simple linear regression statistics were used to test the hypotheses. The study found that school physical environment and insecurity were correlates of academic engagement of business education students. The study recommended that tertiary institution administrators should improve the learning environment by providing adequate classroom facilities to enhance students' academic engagement.

Keywords: School Physical Environment, Insecurity, Academic Engagement, Business Education Students

Introduction

Education is a vital tool for personal and national development, and the quality of education received by an individual plays a significant role in shaping the individual's prospects. Education is a fundamental right, and it plays a crucial role in the development of individuals, communities, and societies. Schools are institutions where formal education is received and where children and adolescents spend a significant amount of their time acquiring knowledge and skills. It is in realization of the importance of education of the child that the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), in its 1999 constitution, made a declaration of the right of every Nigerian child to education, irrespective of gender, tribe, religion, or race.

In Nigeria, schools are categorized into basic, post-basic, and tertiary education. Tertiary institutions play a foundational role in shaping individuals and building nations. Tertiary institutions are expected to provide students with a supportive and conducive learning environment that fosters academic excellence. Tertiary institutions are educational institutions that offer higher and advanced forms of education. They include universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, technical training institutes, vocational schools, research institutes, and monotechnic institutions (National Universities Commission, 2020). Tertiary institutions play an important role in the development, implementation, and advancement of the Business Education Programme. As centers of higher learning, they are responsible for designing curricula, training educators, and providing the academic environment necessary for the effective delivery of Business Education.

Business education programme is a field of study and training in business practices and specific skills such as accounting, information processing, keyboard(typewriting) techniques, secretarial studies, business management, marketing, and record keeping (Okoro, 2017). These skills are very useful for office workers, teachers, and entrepreneurs. Business Education is an interdisciplinary field that combines theoretical frameworks with practical applications to prepare individuals for effective decision-making and leadership in the commercial world (Thompson, 2023). It encompasses a range of courses, including economics, finance, marketing, management, and entrepreneurship, integrating rigorous academic study with real-world experiences such as case studies, simulations, and internships. This comprehensive approach, according to Brown & White (2023), equips students with critical thinking, strategic planning, and problem-solving skills necessary to navigate complex business environments.

According to Gordon and Bursuc (2018), business education programme prepares students for successful careers in various industries and develop skills such as analytical thinking, communication, leadership, and decision-making. The Business Education programme is fundamentally designed to meet the academic and professional development needs of Business Education students. These students are the direct beneficiaries of the programme's curriculum, which integrates theoretical knowledge with practical business skills aimed at preparing students for careers in both the private and public sectors. Business Education students are individuals undergoing formal training in business-related disciplines to acquire knowledge and competencies that prepare them for careers in business, commerce or as future business educators, According to Ementa and Ile (2015), these students may be at different academic levels, including undergraduate students pursuing degrees such as Bachelor of Science in Business Education or related fields, graduate students enrolled in programmes like the Master of Business Education or Master of Business Administration and doctoral candidates working

toward a Ph.D. in areas like Business Education, Management or Marketing with diploma course in education.

Business education students, in particular, require a supportive learning environment to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for success in their field. The National Council for Business Education (NCBE) (2018) emphasized the importance of a conducive learning environment in achieving the goals of business education. The academic development and overall success of Business Education students are significantly influenced by the nature and quality of the school's physical environment in which they learn.

The school's physical environment could be described as a system within which living things interact with the other elements, while the educational environment is a place where the learners interact with learning facilities in order to be self-reliant and contribute positively to society (Okoro, 2017). According to Auman (2024), the physical classroom environment refers to the tangible conditions of the learning space, such as classroom layout, availability of instructional resources, lighting, seating arrangement, noise level, and overall organization of the classroom, which collectively influence students' engagement, participation, and academic performance.

The authors also added that the academic dimensions of the school environment include the quality of instruction given to the students and the teachers' expectations for good engagement from students. School physical environment or climate refers to the tangible, physical aspects of school setting that influence the teaching and learning experience. In such environments and climates, one expects that people will be more concerned about students and more inclined to dissuade students from engaging in behaviours that might endanger them or others. A poor physical environment creates and magnifies insecurity, while a secure, orderly environment helps reduce fear and promotes a safe learning atmosphere.

Insecurity is today threatening various facets of the nation, including the school system. Ojukwu (2021) described insecurity as a situation where the human and national security of a state is compromised by internal or external forces or interests. According to Devlin (2017), a safe and secure learning environment is essential for students to feel comfortable, focused, and supported in their academic pursuits. Security, in simple terms, means the protection of lives and property from destruction.

Insecurity is the polar opposite of what is seen as security. Insecurity breeds distrust, causes fear, distress, demoralization, a loss of focus, anxiety, and a loss of human values. It is the state of being exposed to danger, fear, molestation, and abuse, to name a few.

In Anambra State, the rise in local violence, politically motivated attacks, and the activities of unknown gunmen has escalated fears and anxiety among students, thereby disrupting academic programmes and weakening students' emotional and cognitive engagement (Umezinwa & Nwafor, 2022). Consequent upon this, human security has been encroached due to incessant insecurity menace besetting the peaceful co-existence of individuals residing within and outside the vicinity of Anambra State, Nigeria. The rate of kidnapping hired assassinations, and armed robbery in the East and the prevalence of kidnapping, bombing, and banditry in the North have adversely affected the economic, political, social, and educational development of the country (Ayornide, 2014).

However, many schools face challenges in providing a safe and supportive environment for their students. Insecurity in schools is a growing concern, with issues such as internal violence, external threats, and substance abuse affecting students' well-being and academic engagement (Gurycka, 2018; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). In Nigeria, the

situation is no different. Many schools face security challenges, including cultism, theft and violence, which can create an insecure learning environment (Adeyemi et al., 2017). Anambra State in particular, has experienced a rise in insecurity in recent years, with incidents of kidnapping, armed robbery and cultism reported in various parts of the State (Nigerian Tribune, 2022). Furthermore, Oluwatoyin (2020) held that insecurity can also have a negative impact on students' mental health and well-being, leading to increased stress, anxiety and depression. In Nigeria, education is seen as one of the means of getting to the top hierarchy in any endeavour. Thus, poor academic engagement usually brings about sadness and frustration to individuals concerned, to parents as well as other members of the family. Ojukwu (2016) posited that it gives parents and students feelings of satisfaction and joy when children excel academically.

Insecurity weakens academic engagement by creating fears, anxiety and a lack of safety, which interfere with students' ability to focus, participate and stay motivated. When students feel unsafe- either emotionally, physically or due to instability in their communities, they are less likely to attend school regularly or actively take part in academic activities. This leads to reduced concentration, lower academic interest and disengagement from learning.

Academic engagement refers to the active participation, enthusiasm and investment that students exhibit in their learning process, which is often linked to positive educational outcomes such as higher achievement, satisfaction, and persistence in academic programmes (Saleem Saleem et al., 2022). When students are highly engaged, they exhibit a deeper connection to their work, heightened motivation and increased academic achievement. Academic engagement is a widely studied and popular concept in educational psychology and has long been recognized as a key predictor of students' success, particularly in higher education settings (Gunuc & Kuzu, 2015; Vizoso, et al., 2018). A lack of academic engagement has been associated with negative outcomes such as academic stress and burnout (Palos et al, 2019; Wang et al., 2024). Conversely, academic engagement fosters a more meaningful perception of academic life. Vizoso, et al., 2018) found that students who demonstrate high academic engagement tend to manage academic challenges more effectively and proportionally.

Academic engagement is also closely related to cognitive, affective and motivational elements that teachers must assess—in terms of effectiveness and efficiency in their teaching (Schnitzler et al, 2020). Furthermore, academic engagement serves as a protective factor by promoting mental health, enhancing well-being, and reducing learning burnout and dropout rates (Carmona-Halty et al, 2022). Academic engagement requires that students maintain a satisfactory academic record and meet the obligations of the courses they are enrolled in (Ojukwu & Nwanma, 2015). Academic engagement, which encompasses students' active participation, emotional commitment and cognitive investment in learning, is a crucial factor in achieving educational success. However, understanding the relationship is crucial for developing effective, gender-sensitive strategies that support equitable learning experience for all students.

Statement of the Problem

Academic engagement is essential for effective learning and academic achievement, particularly in Business Education where students are required to participate actively in both theoretical and practical learning experiences. However, observations and concerns among stakeholders in tertiary institutions across Anambra State indicate a noticeable decline in the academic engagement of Business Education students. Many students appear less motivated, show reduced interest in learning activities and demonstrate inconsistent participation in

instructional processes. Evidence from educational studies suggests that learning outcomes are strongly influenced by the quality of the school physical environment. In many tertiary institutions, poor conditions such as inadequate classroom facilities, limited instructional resources, overcrowded lecture halls, poor ventilation and generally deteriorating infrastructures are prevalent. These unfavourable learning conditions may affect students' concentration, comfort, and willingness to engage actively in academic tasks.

Furthermore, insecurity within and around tertiary institutions has become a major challenge in Anambra State. Reports of theft, harassment, cultism, kidnapping and other security threats have created fear, anxiety and psychological tension among students. When students feel unsafe within the school environment, their emotional stability, sense of belonging and academic focus are negatively affected, thereby reducing academic engagement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between school physical environment, insecurity and academic engagement of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Specifically, the study determined the:

1. The relationship between school physical environment and academic engagement of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.
2. The relationship between insecurity and academic engagement of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the relationship between school physical environment and academic engagement of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?
2. What is the relationship between insecurity and academic engagement of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between the school physical environment and academic engagement of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.
2. There is no significant relationship between insecurity and academic engagement of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Methods

This study adopted correlational research design. According to Creswell (2015), correlational research design is a type of non-experimental research method used to examine the relationship between two or more variables. The study was carried out in Anambra State, Nigeria. Anambra state comprises twenty-one Local Government Areas, grouped into three senatorial zones: Anambra Central, Anambra North, and Anambra South, with Awka as its capital. The population for the study comprised 590 respondents made up of 200 and 300 levels business education students drawn from four public tertiary institutions in Anambra State, namely: Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam,

Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe and Federal College of Education (Tech) Umunze. The sample was selected using census sampling, as the population was small and manageable, allowing all members to be included in the study. The study instrument was validated by three experts. Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the items of the instruments. The coefficients' alpha values provided the reliability for each cluster which included school physical environment (α = .81) insecurity (α = .77), academic engagement (α = .79). Therefore, the coefficient alpha values obtained were greater than .70, which established adequate reliability and internal consistency measures of the scales (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The researcher administered 590 copies of the questionnaire with the aid of three research assistants. Out of the 590 copies administered 576, copies of the instrument representing 96.01% were filled correctly and used for data analysis. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (r) and linear regression analysis. The decision criteria for the use of PPMCC was based on the range of coefficient value (r) as recommended by Uzoagulu (2011) in the following order: coefficient r - value between +. 8 and 1.0 meant very high correlation; + .6 and +.8 means high correlation; +.4 and .6 means moderate correlation; +.2 and +.4 meant low correlation; +.0 and +.2 meant very low correlation; +1.0 means perfect correlation; and coefficient r-value of 0 meant no correlation. When a coefficient r-value was negative, it means that as one variable increases the other decreases. When a coefficient r-value was positive correlation; it meant that as one variable increases the other increases. For regression estimates, the p-values less than or equal to 0.05 implied significant (Reject H0) while probability p-value greater than .05 implied not significant (Accept H0).

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between school physical environment and academic engagement of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Table 1: Relationship between school physical environment and academic engagement

Source of variation	N	SPE	AE	Remark
School physical environment	576	1.00	0.88	Positive High relationship
Academic engagement	576	0.88	1.00	

Table 1 reveals a positive and high correlation (r = 0.88) between school physical environment (SPE) and academic engagement (AE) among Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. This indicates that a conducive school physical environment such as well-ventilated classrooms, adequate lighting, availability of instructional facilities and comfortable seating arrangements is strongly associated with higher levels of students' academic engagement, including attention, participation and commitment to learning activities. The high strength of this relationship suggests that improving the school physical environment can significantly enhance the level of academic engagement among Business Education students.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between insecurity and academic engagement of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Table 2: Relationship between insecurity and academic engagement

Source of variation	N	ISS	AE	Remark
Insecurity	576	1.00	0.84	Positive High relationship
Academic engagement	576	0.84	1.00	

Table 2 reveals a positive Sand high correlation (r = 0.84) between insecurity and academic engagement (AE) among Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. This indicates that the level of insecurity within and around the learning environment has a strong association with students' academic engagement. In context, where insecurity issues such as fear of violence, theft, harassment, or general instability are prevalent, students' focus, participation and commitment to learning activities are significantly affected. The high strength of this relationship suggests that insecurity is a critical factor influencing academic engagement, implying that reducing insecurity within tertiary institutions is essential for enhancing the learning experiences of Business Education students.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between the school physical environment and academic engagement of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Table 3: Coefficients of Linear regression for school physical environment and academic engagement

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	234.754	1	234.754	2012.126	.000[b]
	Residual	66.968	574	.117		
	Total	301.722	575			

R= .88 R^2= .77

The regression analysis in Table 3 reveals that school physical environment (SPE) has a strong and statistically significant influence on the academic engagement of Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State (F (1,574) = 2012.126, p = .000). The model summary shows a correlation coefficient of R = .882, with SPE explaining 77.8% (R^2 = .778) of the variance in academic engagement. Based on this result, the null hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that the school physical environment is a major predictor of academic engagement, implying that a conducive learning environment plays a critical role in enhancing the engagement of Business Education students.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between the insecurity and academic engagement of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Table 4: Coefficients of Linear regression for insecurity and academic engagement

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	213.988	1	213.988	1400.012	.000[b]
	Residual	87.734	574	.153		

Total	301.722	575

$R = .84$ $R^2 = .70$

The regression analysis revealed that insecurity (ISS) has a strong and statistically significant influence on the academic engagement of Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State ($F(1,574) = 1400.012$, $p = .000$). The model summary shows a correlation coefficient of $R = .842$, with insecurity explaining 70.9% ($R^2 = .709$) of the variance in academic engagement. Based on this result, the null hypothesis was rejected, and it is concluded that insecurity is a significant predictor of academic engagement, implying that the level of safety and security within and around the school environment strongly shapes students' academic involvement and participation.

Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings is as follows:

Relationship between school physical environment and academic engagement among Business Education students

This study found a strong, positive and statistically significant relationship between the school physical environment and academic engagement among Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State, indicating that improving facilities, spaces and campus conditions can substantially boost students' engagement. This is in line with the findings of (Madu, et al, 2019), which indicated a significant positive correlation between indoor/outdoor physical environment and students learning across universities in South-East Nigeria. It also aligns with (Owoseni, et al, 2020), who found that classroom physical-environment features such as lighting, ventilation, seating, visibility, safety, density and ICT access significantly impacted students' cognitive, affective and behavioural learning outcomes in Lagos schools. Similarly, Atiye-Joseph (2019) concluded that classroom facilities, class size, school plant quality and overall learning environment have a strong bearing on students' academic performance, reinforcing the centrality of the physical context to engagement and achievement. Recent evidence by Adekola & Ajayi (2024) further underscored the fact that supportive school climate and connectedness conditions closely tied to quality physical environments enhanced students' learning experiences and should be strengthened to improve outcomes. Likewise, Akinyemi (2024) identified the classroom environment as a predominant factor in students' performance and engagement, corroborating the result that better physical conditions translate to higher academic involvement. From the researcher's perspective, the findings affirm that the physical environment was not merely a backdrop to instruction but an active driver of students' engagement. In Anambra State, where infrastructural challenges remain evident in many tertiary institutions, this result emphasized the urgent need for administrators and policymakers to invest in modern facilities, conductive classroom space and safe campus environment. The implication is that Business Education students are more likely to be attentive, participatory and motivated when they learn in supportive environments.

Relationship between insecurity and academic engagement among Business Education students

This study found a strong, positive and statistically significant correlation between insecurity and academic engagement among Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State, indicating that insecurity such as threats, violence or unsafe conditions

significantly undermined students' ability to focus, participate and remain engaged academically. This is in line with the findings of (Igboeli, et al., 2021), which indicated that school insecurity had a significant relationship with students' academic engagement in public universities in Anambra State and recommended improved security measures to enhance students' participation in learning. It also agrees with (Okoye, et al, 2024) who found that insecurity was a major challenge affecting the academic performance of Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Imo State, highlighting the need for government and school authorities to strengthen security. Similarly (Offor, et al., 2023) in a study in South-East Nigerian universities revealed that insecurity created unconducive learning environments, disrupted academic activities and discouraged students from full participation, thereby negatively influencing their engagement and achievement. Ogunbunmi & Olaoye (2024) also reported that insecurity significantly diminished students' academic performance in Nigerian tertiary institutions, further supporting the conclusion that safety is essential for academic success. In the same vein, Lasisi (2024) found that school-based insecurity such as gangsterism, cultism and drug abuse significantly affected the academic performance of Basic Technology students in Oyo State, recommending strong security measures to improve engagement and learning outcomes. These findings affirmed that insecurity is not just a minor issue but a central factor shaping students' learning experiences. In Anambra State, where cases of cultism, harassment and violence around tertiary institutions remain a concern, insecurity create fears and discourages active participation.

Conclusion

The study concludes that both the school physical environment and insecurity are critical determinants of academic engagement among Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. A conducive and well-structured physical environment significantly enhances students' participation, concentration and overall commitment to learning, while insecurity poses a major challenge that undermines their engagement and academic performance. The study further shows that these factors are strong and significant predictors of academic engagement across both male and female students, with insecurity exerting a particularly strong influence on female students and the school physical environment playing a key role in boosting engagement for all students. Consequently, improving the physical learning environment and ensuring a safe and secure atmosphere are essential measures for enhancing the academic engagement and overall educational outcomes of Business Education students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that.

1. Government and security agencies should strengthen campus security through surveillance systems, security personnel and community partnerships to reduce insecurity and create safe learning environments, so that students will feel safe in the schools.
2. Lecturers and educators should utilize supportive and engaging teaching strategies that leverage the improved school environment to boost students' concentration, participation and self-efficacy.

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