

The School Climate: Challenges Facing Principals in Secondary Schools in Delta State of Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the school climate challenges facing secondary school principals in Delta State, Nigeria. It was necessitated as a result of the increasing aggression, conflict, and indiscipline observed in secondary schools amongst staff, students, and the school administrators. Thus the findings will be exceptionally beneficial to principals, teachers, students and educational policy makers who are the major actors in the educational system. The feeling and attitude that are elicited by a school's environment are referred to as the school climate. A heterogynous stratified sample of 650 respondents comprising principals, teachers, and students was used in the study. The questionnaire used for data collection was structured on a 4-point Likert scale with mean scores of 2.50 and above as acceptable level. The questionnaire was validated in face and content by experts in Educational Administration. The reliability of this instrument was determined by Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient through the test-retest method to obtain a coefficient of 0.85. The data collected were analyzed using mean scores for the two research questions raised and One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the two null hypotheses formulated and tested at 0.05 significant level. Results indicate that, there were no significant differences among the perceptions of principals, teachers, and students on school safety, teaching and learning, interpersonal relationship, the school environment, as well as on the possible solutions to the challenges of school climate faced by principals. Recommendations were made to enhance school climate and eliminate problems faced by principals to ensure effective instructional leadership. They include, among others, that school principals should increase safety by adopting violence-prevention and conflict-resolution programmes; increase students, teachers and non-teaching staff acceptance of diversity; ensure that students are treated with care, fairness and consistency; ensure that the school buildings are physically attractive and kept in good condition; that government should provide up-to-date learning materials and enforce the use of school climate as a central characteristic of school accountability and assessment system.

Keywords: school, safety, environment, teaching/learning, relationships, challenges, principals

INTRODUCTION

School environments vary greatly. Whereas some schools feel friendly, inviting, and supportive others feel exclusionary, unwelcoming, and unsafe. The feeling and attitude that are elicited by a school's environment are referred to as the school climate. Educators have recognized the importance of school climate for a hundred years. However, it was not until the 1950s that educators began to systematically study school climate (National School Climate Council (NSCC) (2007). The observed school climate in any school will likely depend on the type of principals' managerial philosophy which goes a long way in influencing the performance of the students in their academic work (Durosaro, 1992). There is no commonly acceptable definition of school climate but it has been referred to by NSCC (2007), as quality and character of school life. To NSCC (2007), school climate is based on patterns of school life experience and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices, and organizational structures. A sustainable positive school climate fosters youth

development and learning necessary for a productive, contributive and satisfying life in a democratic society. Students, families and educators work together to develop, live and contribute to a shared school vision.

The National School Climate Center (2012), found that most researchers agree that school climate is a multidimensional construct that includes physical, social and academic dimensions. The physical dimension includes appearance of the school building and its classroom, school size, ratio of students to teachers in the classroom, order and organization of classroom in the school, availability of resources, safety and comfort. The social dimension includes quality of interpersonal relationships between and among students and staff, equitable and fair treatment of students by teaching and non-teaching staff, degree of competition and social compassion between students, and degree to which students, teaching and non-teaching staff contribute to decision-making at the school. The academic dimension includes quality of instruction, teacher expectation for student

achievement, and monitoring student progress, and promptly reporting results to students and parents (National School Climate Center, 2012).

NSCC (2007) also noted that research has confirmed that teachers and parents have claimed for decades a safe and supportive school environment, in which students have positive social relationships and are respected, engaged in their work and feel competent. In addition, a growing number of reports, studies and legislation emphasize the importance of positive school climate in reducing achievement inequities, enhancing healthy development, and promoting the skills, knowledge and dispositions that provide the foundation of the 21st century school and life success (David, 2010; Moswela, 2010; Heubler, 2008; Wenglinsky, 2002; Duze, 2011, 1988; Heyneman, 1983; Arubayi, 1982; Conte, 1980).

SCHOOL CLIMATE

School climate can either be positive or be in disorder. A positive school climate needs to be actively created and sustained by members of the student, parent and school personnel groups in school and supported by the community at large. When the school community works together to understand and improve school climate, such collective action powerfully supports positive youth development and student motivation to learn (Cohen, 2006). In an overlapping manner positive school climate promotes co-operative learning, group cohesion, respect and mutual trust (Ghazi, 2003). Positive school climate, to Marzano (2007), is characterized by strong collaborative learning communities, and that research shows that this improves teacher practice as well as student learning through dialogue and collaboration around engaging classroom instruction. In other words, when students, in partnership with educators and parents, work to improve school climate they promote essential learning skills (e.g. Creativity and innovation skills, critical thinking and problem solving skills, communication and collaborative skill) as well as life and career skills (e.g. flexibility and adaptability, initiative, social and cross-culture skills, productivity and accountability, leadership and responsibility) that provide the foundation for 21st century learning (Marzano, 2007).

Safe, caring, participatory and responsive school climate tends to foster greater attachment and belonging to school as well as provide the optimal foundation for social, emotional and academic learning (Maestas, Vaquera, and Munoz, 2007). One of the fundamentally important dimensions of school climate is relational, that is, how connected people feel to one another in school and how connected the school is to the community. Karcher (2002) and Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterie, Fleming and Hawkins (2004), added that, the extent to which students feel attached to at least one caring and responsible adult at

school is an area of increased attention among school climate researchers. School connectedness is a powerful predictor of adolescent health, academic outcomes, violence prevention, and as a protective factor in risky, sexual, violent, and drug use behaviours.

How students and staff feel about their school climate underlies individual attitudes, behaviours, and group norms. Schools that feel safe, for instance, foster high-quality relationships among students and teachers while decreasing the probability of violence. Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Payne, and Gottfredson (2005), see school disorder as acts of incivility either perpetrated by students while in school or experienced by students or teachers while at school. Schools with more hostile peer climate that is characterized by bullying and teasing should have more disorder. Similarly, schools in which students maintain more aggressive attitudes should have more disorder. In contrast, schools with greater student willingness to seek help should have a more positive school climate with less disorder (Gottfredson et al., 2005).

Cornell and Sheras (2003), in their School Climate Bullying Survey, assessed the nature and prevalence of bullying at school and measured specific aspects of school climate that could guide bullying prevention efforts. Bullying research suggests that bullying not only affects the bullied victims, but also damages an entire school's atmosphere by creating a climate of fear and intimidation (Olweus and Limber, 2000; Moswela, 2010). Bullying thrives in schools because teachers and school officials are often unaware that it is taking place. Teachers only learn about it when students report it (Bradshaw, Sawyer and Brennan, 2007; Cornell and Williams, 2006; Olweus and Limber 2000). In addition, teasing and bullying have a detrimental effect on student learning and contribute to school refusal, truancy, fear, loneliness, frustration and dropout. Teasing of students in school occurs about clothing, physical appearance, sexual topics, and race (Forero, McLellan, Rissel and Bauman, 1999). Aggressive attitudes have been linked to disciplinary referral, engagement in high risk behaviours such as weapon carrying, drug and alcohol use, gang involvement, physical violence and low academic achievement (Brockenbrough, Cornell and Loper, 2002). Students who regard aggressive behavior as an acceptable, even socially desirable and effective way to deal with others, are more likely to bully others or encourage bullying by their peers (McConville and Cornell, 2003).

However, it is important to note that the climate of a school is not necessarily experienced in the same way by all of its members. Rather, there is variability in individual perceptions of school climate, and researchers (Loukas, 2007; Gottsfredson et al., 2005;

McConville and Cornell, 2003) propose that it is the subjective perception of the environment that influences individual student outcomes. Thus, if a student feels that a teacher does not care about her, this perception will impact on the students' behavior in the classroom. Moreover, individual characteristics may impact these perceptions so that students who are aggressive may perceive their school climate more negatively than those who are not. Hence, Loukas (2007) suggests that students' perception of a high quality school climate is recommended to offset the negative effects of a difficult temperament, self-criticism and low level of self-efficacy.

As a result of the importance of individual perceptions, schools assess how students feel about their school. A number of assessment instruments are available for examining student perception of school climate. The school climate survey by Haynes and Corner (1993) contains seven dimensions of school climate that specifically assesses students' perceptions in the following areas: Achievement, motivation, fairness, order and discipline, parent involvement, sharing of resources, student interpersonal relationships, student-teacher relationships. The Charles F. Kettering Ltd (CFK) School Climate Profile is also widely used to measure school climate as: respect, trust high morale, opportunity for input, continuous academic and social growth, cohesiveness, school renewal and caring (Johnson, Johnson and Zimmerman, 1996; Johnson and Johnson, 1997). According to Cohen, Pickeral, and McCloskey (2009), school climate can also be measured by the following: safety (rules, norms, physical safety, social and emotional security), teaching and learning (support for learning, social and civic learning), interpersonal relationship (respect for diversity, social support-adults, social support – students) and institutional environment (school connectedness/engagement and physical surroundings). Cohen et al. (2009) also reported that virtually all researchers as well as the National School Climate Council (2007) agree that the four major factors that shape school climate are safety, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning, and institutional environment. However, Cohen et al. (2009) report that virtually all researchers as well as the National School Climate Council (2007) agree that the four major factors that shape school climate are safety, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning, and institutional environment.

The Commissions on the Whole Child (2007) noted that there are three basic ways in which educators can use school climate data to support education for the whole child. These are, Guiding school improvement efforts; Supporting shared leadership and learning; and Promoting school-family-community partnerships.

Adelman and Taylor (2005); Devine and Cohen (2007); Greenberg, Weissberg, Brien, Zins, Fredericks, Resnik and Elias (2003), are of the opinion that, by providing a range of formative information about both the academic and the non academic aspects of school life, school climate data gives school leaders scientifically sound information to gauge and direct a coordinated, sustained and intentional efforts to create learning climate that promote students' social emotional ethnical and intellectual abilities. To Cohen (2006), the school leader can achieve this, by ensuring that students and others in the school community work together to understand school climate findings, dig deeper, prioritize goals, and create an action plan. In addition such a process helps students develop the skills and dispositions that provide the foundation for engaged citizenry: for example, learning how to listen to ourselves and others, being responsible, thinking critically and reflectively, solving problems in creative and non violent ways, communicating clearly, participating in discussions and arguing thoughtfully, and collaboratively working toward a common goal.

According to Patrikakon, Weissberg, Redding and Waiberg (2005), when school leaders promote effective school-family-community partnerships they support student learning, achievement and health development, since families and community members see the school's strengths, weaknesses and needs. Cohen et al (2009) added that when we use only academic achievement data to understand learning and school improvement efforts, we are ignoring a fundamental truth: The goals of education go far beyond linguistics and mathematical learning. Cohen et al (2009), said that districts, states and networks of school should use school climate data to help define school success, and that when this is done, it will be a substantive step forward for public education which is one that supports the whole child and whole school community.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is based on the Systems Theory. The Systems Theory, according to Ballantine (1989) is characterized by integration, interaction, interdependence of elements, organization, purposefulness, interrelationships, identifiable boundaries, identifiable attitudes of parts and relationship among them. The school as an organization is a social system which relies on the environment for meeting most of its resource requirements. The organization depicts an open system which experiences interaction with its external environment. This external environment, according to includes other surrounding systems, other countries of the world, other competing or co-operating organizations and the host community within which it operates. The environment can also

be classified as technological, political, and economic environment. The external environment supplies the inputs and consumes the output (Ballantine, 1989). Hence, the school system is composed of people and related inputs which are processed through interdependent and interrelated processes to attain some outputs. The Systems Theory enables the school manager to see issues from the holistic perspective. Thus, the school manager attempts to examine and solve problems taking into consideration feedback on the totality of the situation, ideas and various alternatives available (Ballantine, 1989).

The Systems Theory relates to this study because secondary schools in Delta State are made up of a collection of people (students, teaching and non-teaching staff), facilities (school building, classroom, appropriate learning materials) and procedures (programmes, processes, goals, formal and informal relationships) intended to perform some identifiable functions to achieve educational or school goals. The principal who is the head of the school needs to appreciate the importance of parents, students, teachers, and community with the laid down educational policies and reflects on its implications on students (output). The quality of the expected output is influenced by the quality of the inputs to be employed, since the inputs and the processing capability are determinants of the quality of output. Knowledge of the effects of school climate on learning should be translated into the current accountability systems of schools. The school climate ought to be used as a form of assessment, because it not only measures learning but also supports it. Thus, the principals' ability to be involved, interact and coordinate the input and procedure elements will promote a positive school climate and in effect produce quality output in secondary schools in Delta State.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Over the last three decades as revealed in the review of literature, research has shown that a positive and sustained school climate promotes students' academic achievement and healthy development (NSCC, 2007). Schools with positive school climate have lower levels of crime, less fear among students and fewer behavioural problems. The observed increase in aggression, violent behaviours, unhealthy conflicts, and indiscipline in Nigeria secondary schools coupled with the falling standard in education seem to indicate that all is not well with the school climate. When the school environment is not supportive of teaching/learning process to achieve set educational goals, it is expected that school principals, as administrators and leaders, evaluate the status quo and introduce changes that will improve and maintain positive school climate.

The problem of this study therefore, is to investigate the school climate challenges in terms of school safety, teaching and learning, interpersonal relationships, and the school environment, facing principals in secondary schools in Delta State of Nigeria with the view to highlighting the problem areas and proffering lasting solutions for better school effectiveness and success in accomplishing set educational goals.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were raised to guide this study:

1. Is there any difference in the school climate challenges faced by principals in secondary schools in Delta State as perceived by principals, teachers, and students?
2. What are the possible solutions to the school climate challenges facing principals in secondary schools in Delta State?

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide this study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of principals, teachers and students on the school climate challenges facing principals in Delta State Secondary Schools.
2. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of principals, teachers and students on the possible solutions to the school climate challenges facing principals in secondary schools in Delta State

PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study aimed at investigating the challenges of managing safety, teaching and learning, interpersonal relationships and institutional environment by school principals. Also, to find out ways in which principals can promote a positive school climate. Finally, to use the finding from the analyses to recommend ways of sustaining the positive influence of school climate and to eliminate those factors inhibiting the positive school climate.

METHOD

The ex post facto design of the descriptive survey was adopted for the study. The study population consisted of all principals, teachers and students in public secondary schools in Delta State with a target population of 212,217. Delta State is made up of three Senatorial Districts, namely, Delta North, Delta Central, and Delta South. These Senatorial Districts have a total of twenty-five Local Government Areas (LGA). Delta North has nine LGAs while Delta Central and Delta South have eight each. The multi-stage stratified random sampling technique was adopted to select the study sample, admitting forty

percent from each senatorial. Hence, a total of ten LGAs were selected. These have a total of 195 secondary schools. Twenty percent of schools were then selected from each LGA, making a total of thirty-nine schools as well as their principals. Seven percent of the total population of 6,050 teachers in the thirty-nine schools was selected bringing the sample of teachers to 424. The sample of students was a total of 390 with ten students randomly selected from each of the thirty-nine schools. A grand total sample of 853 was therefore selected and used in this study.

A questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire contained items which were structured on a Likert 4 – point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA=4); Agree (A=3); Disagree (D=2); and strongly Disagree (SD=1). The questionnaire consisted of three sections A, B and C. Section A was on the background information of the respondents; section B contains twenty-three items on the four variables of safety, teaching and learning, interpersonal relationships, and institutional environment. Section C, has eleven items on the possible solutions to the challenges of school climate facing principals in secondary schools in Delta State.

The face and content validity of the instrument was established by adopting in the final draft suggestions made from scrutiny by experts in Educational Administration. The reliability of the instrument was determined using test-re-test method conducted on five principals, fifteen teachers and ten students in Delta State not included in the study sample. A coefficient of 0.85 was obtained using the Pearson’s

Product Moment Correlation to analyze the two sets of data collected within a time period lapse of three weeks. The coefficient indicated that the instrument was reliable. 853 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents by the researcher with the help of well-briefed third parties, but only 650 well-completed copies were retrieved and used for analysis. The data collected were collated and subjected to the One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test the null hypotheses while the research questions were analyzed using the statistical mean at a decision point of 2.50.

RESULTS

The results were analyzed in relation to the research questions and null hypotheses. Significances were established at the 0.05 level and results presented on Tables 1 – 4.

Research Question 1: Is there any difference in the school climate challenges faced by principals in secondary schools in Delta State as perceived by principals, teachers, and students? To answer this question, the relevant data were collated and analyzed using the statistical mean and the result presented in Table 1. The result in Table 1 showed that principals, teachers, and students have the same perception on the eleven positive items of school climate and also on the twelve negative items of school climate out of the twenty-three items of the questionnaire. While school safety was found to pose the greatest challenge to the principals, followed by school environment, and then, interpersonal relationship, teaching and learning posed the least.

Table 1: Mean of the Perceptions of Principals, Teachers, and Students on the School Climate Challenges Facing Principals in Secondary Schools in Delta State

S/N	ITEM	PRINCIPALS			TEACHERS			STUDENTS		
		n	\bar{X}_1	Decision	N	\bar{X}_2	Decision	N	\bar{X}_3	Decision
	SAFETY									
1	There are clearly stated rules against insults, teasing, harassment and other verbal abuse in the school.	35	3.2	Agree	390	3.2	Agree	225	3.0	Agree
2	Adult in the school will stop students if they see them physically hurting each other (for example, pushing, slapping and punching).	35	3.4	Agree	390	2.9	Agree	225	3.0	Agree
3	Students and staff feel physically safe in all areas of the building	35	2.0	Disagree	390	1.9	Disagree	225	1.8	Disagree
4	There are cases of students being physically hurt as school more than once for example, pushed, slapped, punched or beaten up).	35	3.3	Agree	390	3.3	Agree	225	3.0	Agree
5	I have been insulted, teased, harassed or verbally abused more than once in the school.	35	3.3	Agree	390	3.2	Agree	225	2.8	Agree
6	There are groups of students in the school who exclude others and make them feel bad for not being part of the group.	35	3.3	Agree	390	3.2	Agree	225	2.8	Agree
	TEACHING AND LEARNING									
7	Teachers show students how to learn from their mistakes	35	3.4	Agree	390	3.1	Agree	225	2.9	Agree

Table 1b: Mean of the Perceptions of Principals, Teachers, and Students on the School Climate Challenges Facing Principals in Secondary Schools in Delta State continuation										
8	Teachers encourage students to try out new ideas (think independently).	35	3.3	Agree	390	2.9	Agree	225	3.0	Agree
9	Teachers help students to figure out how they can learn best	35	3.4	Agree	390	3.2	Agree	225	3.1	Agree
10	In the school, students have learnt ways to resolve disagreement so that everyone can be satisfied with the outcome.	35	1.9	Disagree	390	1.8	Disagree	225	1.9	Disagree
11	In the school, people talk about the way their actions will affect others.	35	1.9	Disagree	390	1.9	Disagree	225	2.0	Disagree
INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP										
12	Students in the school respect one another's differences (for example, gender, race, culture)	35	2.0	Disagree	390	1.7	Disagree	225	2.0	Disagree
13	Adults in the school respect one another's differences (for example, gender, race, culture).	35	3.1	Agree	390	3.0	Agree	225	2.7	Agree
14	Adults in the school seem to work well with one another	35	1.9	Disagree	390	1.8	Disagree	225	1.8	Disagree
15	If students need to talk to an adult in the school about a problem, there is someone they trust who they could talk to.	35	3.4	Agree	390	2.8	Agree	225	2.9	Agree
16	Students have friends at school they can turn to if they have questions about homework.	35	3.0	Agree	390	2.6	Agree	225	2.7	Agree
17	Student have friends at school they can trust and talk to if they have problem	35	2.3	Disagree	390	1.9	Disagree	225	2.0	Disagree
SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT										
18	Students feel good about what they accomplish in school	35	3.2	Agree	390	2.9	Agree	225	3.1	Agree
19	Parents/guardians feel welcome at school	35	2.7	Agree	390	2.5	Agree	225	2.6	Agree
20	The school encourages students to get involved in other things than school work (for example, sports, music/drama clubs).	35	2.6	Agree	390	2.6	Agree	225	3.0	Agree
21	The school is physically attractive (pleasing architecture, nicely decorated)	35	2.1	Disagree	390	1.8	Disagree	225	2.1	Disagree
22	The school building is kept in good condition	35	1.8	Disagree	390	1.9	Disagree	225	1.9	Disagree
23	The school has up-to-date computer and other electronic equipment available to students	35	1.6	Disagree	390	1.6	Disagree	225	1.4	Disagree
Cumulative Average			2.7			2.5			2.5	

The positive factors of school climate challenges perceived similarly are:

- There are clearly stated rules against insult, teasing, harassment and other verbal abuse in the school
- Adults in the school will stop students if they see them physically hurting each other
- Teachers show students how to learn from their mistakes
- Teachers encourage students to try out new ideas (think independently).
- Teachers help students to figure out how they can learn best and encourage students to try new ideas
- Students have friends at school they can turn to if they have questions about homework
- Students feel good about what they accomplish in school
- Adults in the school respect one another's differences

- If students need to talk to an adult in the school about a problem there is someone they trust who they could talk to
- Parents/guardians feel welcomed at school
- The school encourages students to get involved in other things than school work.

On the other hand, the negative factors of school climate challenges similarly perceived are:

- Students and staff do not feel physically safe in all areas of the building
- There are cases of students being physically hurt as school more than once for example, pushed, slapped, punched or beaten up)
- Principals, teachers and students have been insulted, teased, harassed or verbally abused more than once in the school
- There are groups of students in the school who exclude others and make them feel bad for not being part of the group

- Students have not learnt ways to solve disagreement so that everyone can be satisfied with the outcome
- People do not talk about the way their actions will affect others
- Students in the school do not respect one another's differences
- Adults in the school do not seem to seem to work well with one another
- Students do not have friends at school they can trust and talk to if they have problem
- The school is not physically attractive
- The school building is not kept in good condition
- The school does not have up-to-date computers and other electronic equipment available to students

Research Question Two: What are the possible solutions to the school climate challenges facing principals in secondary schools in Delta State?

The relevant data collected were collated and analyzed using the statistical mean to answer this

question. The result is presented in Table 2. The result in Table 2 is vivid and self-explanatory. It showed that principals, teachers and students agreed that the possible solutions to the challenges of school climate facing school principals in secondary schools in Delta State (since the means were above 2.50) are: Principals in conjunction with the State government should enforce the use of school climate as a central characteristic of school accountability and assessment system (3.13); Principals and teachers treating students fairly, equally and with respect (3.10); The use of violence-prevention and conflict resolution curricula in school (3.10); Prevention of acts of bullying (3.03); Honouring most improved student (3.0); Providing a safe environment for staff and students (2.97); Increased parents/community involvement (2.97); Promotion of fundamental moral values in children (2.93); Peer mediation (2.92); Providing up-to-date learning materials for students (2.90); and Maintaining a manageable student-teacher ratio (2.67).

Table 2: Perceptions of Principals, Teachers, and Students on the Possible Solutions to the School Climate Challenges Facing Principals in Secondary Schools in Delta State

S/N	ITEM	PRINCIPALS			TEACHERS			STUDENTS			Weighted Mean
		N	X ₁	Deci-sion	N	X ₂	Deci-sion	N	X ₃	Deci-sion	
1	Increased parents/community involvement	35	3.2	Agree	390	2.9	Agree	225	2.8	Agree	2.97
2	The promotion of fundamental moral values in children	35	3.0	Agree	390	3.0	Agree	225	2.8	Agree	2.93
3	Use of violence prevention and conflict resolution curricula	35	3.3	Agree	390	3.1	Agree	225	2.9	Agree	3.10
4	Peer mediation	35	3.0	Agree	390	2.9	Agree	225	2.7	Agree	2.92
5	Prevention of acts of bullying	35	3.4	Agree	390	3.0	Agree	225	2.7	Agree	3.03
6	Teachers and principals treat student fairly, equally and with respect	35	3.3	Agree	390	3.1	Agree	225	2.9	Agree	3.10
7	Provide a safe environment for staff and student	35	3.3	Agree	390	2.9	Agree	225	2.7	Agree	2.97
8	Honouring most improved students	35	3.1	Agree	390	2.9	Agree	225	3.0	Agree	3.00
9	Providing up-to-date learning materials for students.	35	2.7	Agree	390	3.2	Agree	225	2.8	Agree	2.90
10	Maintaining a manageable student-teacher ratio in the classroom.	35	2.6	Agree	390	2.8	Agree	225	2.6	Agree	2.67
11	Principal in conjunction with the State government should enforce the use of school climate as a central characteristic of school accountability and assessment system.	35	3.5	Agree	390	3.2	Agree	225	2.7	Agree	3.13
	Mean		3.1			3.0			2.8		2.97

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of principals, teachers, and students on the school climate challenges facing principals in secondary schools in Delta State. This

hypothesis was tested by subjecting the data collected to the One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The result was presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary Table of ANOVA on the Analysis of Principals, Teachers, and Students Perceptions on the School Climate Challenges Facing Principals in Secondary Schools in Delta State

Source of Variation	df	SS	MS	F _{cal}	F _{critical}	Decision p≥0.05
Between Groups	2	-10322.79	-5161.40			
Within Groups	66	31,056,224.14	2077.76	-2.48	3.13	H ₀ Retained
Total	68	31,045,901.35	-			

Result in Table 3 shows that the calculated F value of -2.48 was numerically less than the critical F value of 3.13. Hence, the null hypothesis was retained. This shows that there is no significant difference in principals, teachers and students perceptions on the school climate challenges (school safety, teaching and learning, interpersonal relationships and school environment) facing principals in secondary schools in Delta State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of principals, teachers and students on the possible solutions to the school climate challenges facing principals in secondary schools in Delta State.

Table 4: Summary Table of ANOVA on the Analysis of Principals, Teachers and Students Perceptions on the Possible Solutions to the School Climate Challenges Facing Principals in Secondary Schools in Delta state

Source of Variation	df	SS	MS	F _{cal}	F _{critical}	Decision p≥0.05
Between Groups	2	121.91	60.96			
Within Groups	30	19,594,967.01	2741.71	0.02	3.32	H ₀ Retained
Total	32	19,595,088.92	-			

DISCUSSION

This study answered two research questions and tested two null hypotheses on the perceptions of principals, teachers, and students on the school climate challenges facing principals in secondary schools in Delta State and the possible solutions to these school climate challenges. The results in Tables 1 and 3 revealed that principals, teachers and students agreed that the major issues of school safety, teaching and learning, interpersonal relationship, and the school environment are the school climate challenges facing principals in secondary schools in Delta State. Despite the importance of positive school climate, Table 1 also revealed that students and staff do not feel physically safe in all areas of the school building; there were cases of students being physically hurt at school more than once; principals, teachers and students being insulted, teased, harassed or verbally abused more than once; there were groups of students in the school who excluded others and made them feel bad for not being part of the group. These findings agree with the works of Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Payne and Gottfredson (2005); Olweus and Limber (2000); Forero, Mclellan, Rissel and Bauman (1999); Brockenbrough, Cornell and Loper (2002). Students, also have not learnt ways to resolve disagreements so that everyone can be satisfied with the outcome; people do not talk about the way their actions will affect others; students do not respect one another's differences; adults in the school do not seem to work with one another; students do not have friends at school they can trust and talk to if they have problems; the school is physically unattractive; the building is not kept in good condition, and there is no up-to-date computers and other electronic equipment available to students. These findings corroborate the findings of Cohen et al. (2009) and Duze (2010). Furthermore, the school climate survey

This null hypothesis was tested by subjecting the relevant data collected to the One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the result presented in Table 4. The result in Table 4 showed that the calculated value of 0.02 was less than the F-critical value of 3.32. Hence, the null hypothesis was retained. This shows that there is no significant difference among principals, teachers, and students in their perception on the possible solutions to the school climate challenges faced by principals in secondary schools Delta State.

by Haynes and Corner (1993), which contains seven dimensions of school climate that specifically assess students' perceptions in achievement, motivation, fairness, order and discipline, parent involvement, sharing of resources, student interpersonal relationships, and student-teacher relationships were found to be important not only to the students but also to teachers and principals in this study as revealed by their responses in these aspects. These are challenges that must be controlled effectively by school principals for positive school climate in secondary schools.

The result in Table 2 showed that principals, teachers and students agreed that one of the possible solutions to the challenges of school climate facing principals in secondary schools in Delta State is increasing parents/community involvement. This agrees with Patrikakon et al. (2005) and Duze (2011). Other solutions include promotion of fundamental moral values in children, peer mediation, and prevention of acts of bullying. This agrees with the works of Catalano et al. (2004) and Cornell et al. (2006). Others are: principals and teachers treating students fairly, equally and with respect; providing a safe environment for staff and students; honouring most-improved students; maintaining a manageable student-teacher ratio in the school, providing up-to-date learning materials, and principals in conjunction with the Federal and State governments should enforce the use of school climate as a central characteristic of school accountability and assessment system. This finding is in line with that of Cohen et al. (2009), who opined that Districts, States and schools should use school climate data to help define school success. Also, using violence prevention and conflict resolution curricula in schools

is viable solution to school climate challenges in schools.

Furthermore, the two null hypotheses that were tested were retained. Thus, there were no significant differences among principals, teachers, and students in their perceptions on school safety, teaching and learning in school, interpersonal relationships in the school and the school environment, as well as the possible solutions to the school climate challenges facing principals in secondary schools in Delta State of Nigeria

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings in this study, it was concluded that school climate in relation to school safety, teaching and learning in school, interpersonal relationships in the school, and the school environment, can affect many areas and people in secondary schools in Delta State of Nigeria, and they actually pose considerable challenges to the school administrators (principals). Unlike school disorder which is characterized with teasing, bullying and aggressive attitude, a positive school climate has been found to be associated with fewer behavioural and emotional problems for students. This supplies students with a supportive learning environment yielding healthy development as well as preventing anti-social behavior. Also, this suggests that positive interpersonal relationships and optimal learning opportunities for students in all demographic environments can increase achievement levels and reduce maladaptive behavior and also increase job satisfaction for school personnel. However, much needs to be done by principals in deepening their understanding of school climate and undertaking roles which a positive school climate entails.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Principals should increase school safety by adopting violence-prevention and conflict resolution programmes. Principals should provide counselors in schools to advice and counsel students on the negative effects of violent acts. They should ensure that students are treated with care, fairness, and consistency
- Principals should ensure that teaching/supportive staff and students feel physically safe in all areas of the building and school compound. They should ensure that the school is physically attractive and the school buildings and facilities kept in good condition.
- Principals should increase students and staff acceptance of diversity.
- Principals should honour the improved student.
- Principals should maintain a manageable student-teacher ratio in the school.

- Principals should promote school-family-community partnerships.
- Government and relevant agencies should provide up-to-date learning materials and other electronic equipment such as computers for student use in the school and also sponsor workshops and seminars for principals and teachers on competencies for effective use.
- Federal and State governments and relevant agencies should enforce the use of school climate as a central characteristic of school accountability and assessment system.

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