



Research Article

Influence of School Location on the Academic Performance of Social Studies Students

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Article History

Received: March 18, 2025

Accepted: June 25, 2025

Published: June 30, 2025

Abstract

The study examined the impact of school location on the academic performance of Social Studies students. The research involved the collection of empirical data to determine the effect of the independent variable (school location) on the dependent variable (student performance). One research question and one hypothesis were based on the strategic use of a quasi-experimental factorial research design. The study involved the selection of 115 students using a random sampling technique, including both rural and urban students, from two government-owned schools across the two different regions. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique from the population comprising 1,691 students across 43 junior secondary schools in the Delta Central senatorial district of Delta state. A measurement tool, named "Social Studies Students' Performance Test" (SSSPT), was used to collect data, and it was found to be reliable, with a reliability index of 0.89. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean, pie chart, standard deviation, and bar chart, to answer the research questions. At the same time, Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was utilized to test the hypothesis at a 0.05 significance level. The study found that school location significantly influences academic performance, with urban students outperforming their rural counterparts. As a result, the study recommends that social studies educators in rural areas should enhance their pedagogical skills in light of the impact of school location on students' performance. The study highlights a significant contribution by establishing that school location has a positive effect on academic achievement. It was found that urban students generally achieve better results than their rural counterparts in social studies, primarily due to the better infrastructure and resources available in urban schools, which contribute to more favorable learning environments.

Keywords: Academic performance, influence, social studies, school location, students.



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Introduction

The type of location in which a school is built, whether within a rural region or an urban landscape, has a significant impact on the learning experiences and academic achievements of Social Studies students (Akpomodjere, 2020). This has prompted extensive research by stakeholders in the social studies education sector and scholars alike (Umar & Samuel, 2018). A notable phenomenon arising from this dynamic is the migration of many young Social Studies students, who have been observed to migrate from rural regions to urban centers in pursuit of enhanced educational opportunities and improved access to social resources

(Atubi, 2024; Ekedama et al., 2023). The allure of urban locales lies in the perceived availability of advanced educational resources, including electricity, community resources, government institutions, computers, and internet connectivity. The presumption that urban schools consist of a higher concentration of qualified and proficient Social Studies educators further perpetuates this trend.

The study, which is located in Delta State, comprises both rural and urban settlements. Within this context, the study calls for a comprehensive educational strategy that transcends geographical divisions, advocating for the integration of the influence of school location on the academic performance of Social Studies students. The challenges encountered in the teaching and learning of Social Studies within both rural and urban domains underscore the complexity of the educational landscape. These challenges have contributed to the discernible differentiation in the cognitive performance of students in Social Studies, because it cuts across these contrasting environments. Delineating between urban and rural settlements, the contrast in population and infrastructure becomes apparent, especially with respect to social studies learning. Urban settlements emerge as bustling centers of higher population density, characterized by a tapestry of residential and commercial structures, administrative hubs, well-constructed roads, and essential amenities (Atubi, 2024). These amenities undoubtedly act as boosters to learning, generally, and Social Studies education, particularly. In contrast, rural settlements embody a different paradigm, characterized by smaller population sizes and underdeveloped landscapes. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) delineates rural populations in Nigeria as those that fall below a 20,000-person threshold. These rural communities often grapple with a dearth of infrastructure and limited access to social amenities like schools and healthcare facilities. This shortfall in social amenities affects how teaching and learning of Social Studies is conducted and, by implication, the academic attainment of its learners. Historically, there has been a prevailing perception that urban schools provide superior educational opportunities for Social Studies, positioning urban Social Studies students for greater academic achievements compared to their rural counterparts (Adepoju & Oluchukwu, 2011). This viewpoint is supported by Umar and Samuel (2018), who identified urban students' performance advantages in basic science. Atubi (2024) established the fact that urban Social Studies students performed better when compared with their rural counterparts. However, a contrasting perspective emerges from the works of Obro (2018), Igwebuike & Ikponmwosa (2013), and Borishade (2011), who found no substantial divergence in academic performance between Social Studies students in both regions. The apparent disparity in findings can be attributed to the distinct educational environments in which these settings operate. Urban areas typically are concentrated with both government and private educational institutions, providing additional resources that potentially enrich the academic experience, particularly in subjects like Social Studies. City schools often leverage the advantage of proximity to multiple higher education institutions, well-stocked libraries, consistent electricity supply, and advanced technological tools. Robust social amenities and infrastructures can further contribute to an enriched learning environment for Social Studies students. However, Social Studies possesses an adaptable nature that enables it to thrive across diverse settings (Aina, 2019). Therefore, this research explores the impact of school location on the academic performance of Social Studies students. The intention is to investigate the extent to which school location serves as an intervening factor in determining the academic performance of Social Studies students.

Empirical Review of Literature

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the school location and academic performance of students in the realm of educational dynamics related to Social Studies

education. An empirical literature review to understand the correlation between these variables was diligently carried out below.

Essien (2017) undertook a meticulous exploration to examine the potential link between school location and the academic achievements of Social Studies students in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study examined the intricate relationship between geographical settings and educational achievements, yielding a surprising outcome: the location of schools had no discernible influence on the academic performance of Social Studies students. In a parallel vein, Essien (2017) extended this inquiry to examine the potential impact of location on the learning performance of students in Social Studies, within Colleges of Education in Cross River State, Nigeria. This iteration of the study yielded intriguing insights, indicating that gender differences also failed to exert a significant effect on academic achievements.

Embarking on an extensive investigation spanning from 1990 to 1997, Owoeye & Yara (2011) conducted a meticulous examination to unravel the intricate nexus between school location and scholastic attainment within the educational landscape of Ekiti State, Nigeria. Encompassing a diverse population of 50 secondary schools, thoughtfully distributed across both rural and urban contexts, the researchers wielded the WASCE results as their instrument of inquiry. Inscrutably dissecting the data, their analysis revealed a conspicuous divergence in academic accomplishments between students enrolled in urban and rural schools. Their findings reverberated with a consistent pattern, echoing the observation that urban schools consistently outperformed their rural counterparts in terms of academic achievement. The study's implications resounded clearly—a pressing call for concerted efforts to address this pronounced academic divide. It underscored the imperative of enhancing the educational landscape in rural areas as a means to establish a more nurturing and conducive learning environment.

Undertaking an exploration of the scholastic landscape, Adepoju & Oluchukwu (2010) embarked on an investigation into the academic performance nuances within the educational framework of Oyo State, Nigeria. Their study meticulously dissected the disparities in academic achievements between schools located in urban and rural settings. Within their research, a specific focus was placed on the outcomes of two subjects, meticulously analyzed across five schools from each category. Notably, their findings harmonized with the prevailing trend: scholars in urban schools exhibited superior academic performance compared to their counterparts in rural settings. The researchers attributed this distinct divergence to the augmented educational milieu prevalent in urban locales. This environment, characterized by the presence of an abundance of amenities like internet connectivity, electricity, computers, mass media outlets, and libraries, was deemed instrumental in nurturing the academic progress of urban students.

Delving into the intricate dynamics of scholastic environments, Ntibi & Edoho (2017) determined the impact of school location on students' dispositions and accomplishments in the fields of mathematics and science. Their exploration delved into the contrasting landscapes of urban and rural schools, seeking to untangle the complex web of influences at play. Within their study, a notable revelation emerged: the mean performance of students in mathematics and science showed no significant disparity between those attending rural and urban schools. This remarkable finding defied some earlier presumptions, underscoring the intricate interplay of multifaceted elements that extend beyond mere geographical coordinates in shaping the trajectory of academic attainment.

Venturing into the landscape of Delta State, Nigeria, Akpomudjere (2020) embarked on an exploration to decipher the ramifications of school location on the scholastic accomplishments of students pursuing business studies. Scrutinizing a substantial cohort comprising 2579 students hailing from the Sapele Local Government Area, the study's conclusive assertion was that the geographical setting of the school did not yield a substantial impact on the academic performance of the students. This distinctive revelation contributed a new layer of

understanding to the ongoing dialogue that revolves around the intricate interplay between academic achievements and the spatial context in which learning occurs.

Expanding the scope beyond the confines of Nigeria, Mhiliwa (2015) extended the inquiry to the landscapes of Tanzania. The research embarked upon an exploration delving into the intricate relationship between school location and students' scholastic achievements, specifically within the Makambako town council and Njobabe. Within this scholarly investigation, a sobering reality emerged: the onerous burden of enduring lengthy commutes faced by rural students had a detrimental impact on their academic performance. This geographical barrier casts a shadow over the educational landscape, resulting in a recurring pattern of suboptimal academic outcomes. The recommendations stemming from this study accentuated the urgency of implementing strategic interventions to rectify this situation. These recommendations held the promise of averting the perpetuation of lackluster academic achievements prevalent in rural secondary schools.

In a dedicated inquiry, Bamidele and Adekola (2017) directed their attention towards the intricate interplay between school location and academic performance. Their research, centered within the confines of the Ibarapa region in Oyo State, presented a focused examination. The scope of their investigation extended to 450 students at the junior secondary school level, meticulously chosen through a process of random sampling. In their analytical approach, Bamidele & Adekola (2017) employed the gender of students and their socio-economic status as pivotal criteria for evaluating academic progress. Employing t-test pairwise statistics as their analytical tool, the researchers sifted through the data with precision. The culmination of their efforts yielded a noteworthy revelation: a substantial and meaningful distinction emerged in the academic achievements of rural and urban students. This consequential insight served to contribute significantly to the ongoing discourse surrounding the intricate dynamics of gender and its reverberations on scholastic accomplishments.

The empirical review encompassed an exploration of the extent and scope of contributions from scholars worldwide to the discourse on the place of school location on students' performance. An array of empirical studies has been conducted across the globe, with notable focus in Nigeria and other countries. However, research on the influence of school location on Social Studies students' academic performance is almost nonexistent. There seem to be none in the study's area, which is the Delta central senatorial zone, as it has been neglected; these reasons have created a gap in the literature, which this study can fill. Therefore, the study raised one research question and one hypothesis.

Research Question 1: How does school location affect the academic performance of Social Studies students?

Hypothesis 1: School location does not have any significant influence on the Social Studies students' academic performance.

Methodology

This study employed a quasi-experimental design as its research design, which involved the implementation of pre-test and post-test assessments (Kothari & Garg, 2020). The students' population for the study comprised sixteen thousand, nine hundred and twelve (16,912) students across 43 public upper-basic schools in the central senatorial district of the state. Random sampling technique was used to select 115 rural and urban Social Studies students from two government-owned schools across urban and rural regions, which were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Only two schools, and 115 students were chosen because the study is quasi-experimental and does not require a vast number of subjects, for easy control. At the same time, purposive sampling was used to involve both rural and urban schools. The instrument used for data collection was an academic performance test titled the "Social Studies Students Performance Test" (SSSPT). The reliability of the instrument was

achieved with the test-retest reliability method. Fifty copies of the instrument were administered twice, within a period of 2 weeks, from Okpara Inland Grammar School in Ethiope East Local Government Area, which was different from the area used for the study. The results of both administrations were correlated with PPMC statistics. A coefficient value of 0.89 was realized.

A comprehensive assessment designed to measure participants' academic proficiency. Drawing from the bulk of past questions in Social Studies. Consisting of 50 multiple-choice questions, the SSPT was meticulously selected, with the help of Social Studies teachers in the two schools, from three distinct topics meticulously chosen from the Social Studies Upper Basic syllabus. These topics were carefully aligned with the curriculum prescribed by the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education in Asaba, Delta State. Descriptive statistics, including mean, pie charts, standard deviation, and bar charts, were used to answer research questions, and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was applied for hypothesis testing at a significance level of 0.05. This was done with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) software.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations were carried out by first getting consent from the departmental postgraduate board of studies. Similarly, permission was obtained from the school administrators of the two schools, the two Social Studies teachers used as research assistants, and the 165 Social Studies students. All participants gave their consent before the study began, as no one was coerced or forced to participate. Subsequently, the identity of all students was also kept confidential, as there was no space for names in the answer sheets used by the students in this study.

Results

After the administration of the instrument, the results were collated and analyzed. The findings from the results are presented in the form of tables and figures below:

Research Question 1: How does school location affect the academic performance of Social Studies students?

Table 1. School Location and Social Studies Students' Academic Performance.

Group	Pretest			Post-test		Mean gain
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Urban	65	35.29	9.659	72.46	16.578	37.17
Rural	50	35.96	9.992	73.28	15.997	37.32
Total	115					

Table 1 shows the moderating influence of school location on the academic performance of upper-basic social studies students. The table shows the changes in mean scores of urban and rural students in the two groups. Urban students had a post-test mean score of 79.46 as against their pretest mean score of 35.29, with a mean gain of 44.17; rural students had a post-test mean score of 73.28 as against the pretest mean score of 35.96, with a mean gain of 37.32. Both urban and rural students experienced significant increases in their academic performance. However, the mean gain for urban students is approximately 44.17 points, which is higher than the mean gain for rural students, which is approximately 37.32 points. This suggests that, on average, urban students recorded a greater mean gain score when compared to the rural students after undergoing the same social studies teaching.

Test of hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: School location does not have any significant influence on the Social Studies students' academic performance.

Table 2. ANCOVA on the Influence of School Location on Students' Academic Performance.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Corrected Model	2701.411a	2	1350.706	5.512	.005	
Intercept	65353.086	1	65353.086	266.691	.000	Hypotheses rejected
School location	2701.411	2	1350.706	5.512	.005	
Error	27445.754	112	245.051			
Total	639920.000	115				
Corrected Total	30147.165	114				

a. R Squared = .090 (Adjusted R Squared = .073)

Table 2 shows the interaction effect between school location and students' academic performance. The table reveals a significant effect between the two variables. The $F(2,113) = 5.512$, $p = .005$ at $p < 0.05$. The obtained p-value (0.005) is lower than the 0.05 level of significance. There is a significant interaction effect between school location and academic performance; the null hypothesis is hereby rejected. Figures 1 and 2 show the relationship between the influence of school location and the academic performance of Social Studies students.

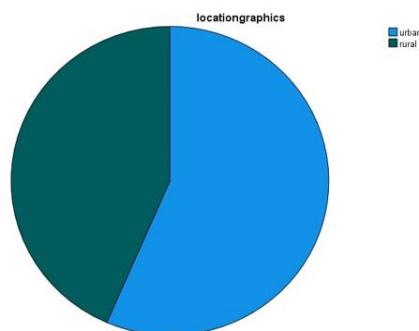


Figure 1. Pie Chart Showing the Influence of School Location on students' performance.

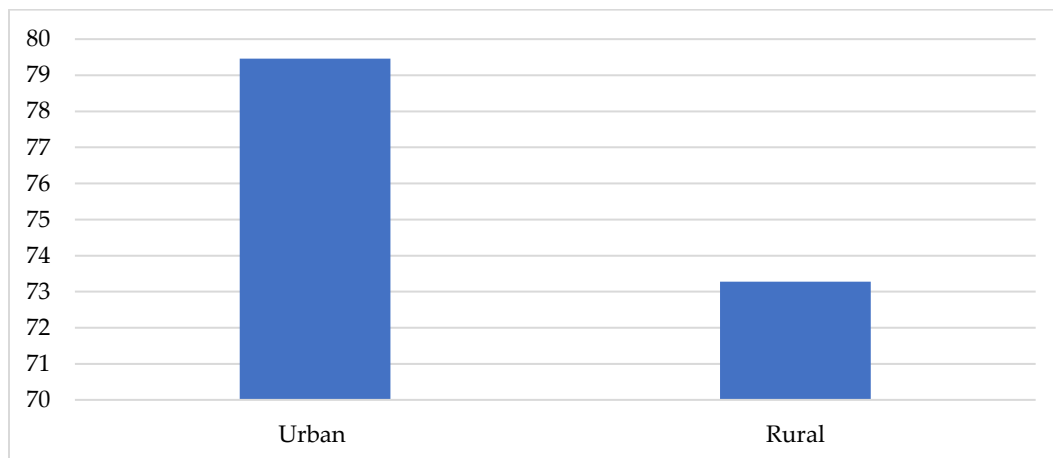


Figure 2. Graph Showing Influence of School Location on Students' Performance.

Discussion

The findings from the study demonstrate that school location has a significant influence on the academic achievement of Social Studies students. This may be linked to the inequalities between urban and rural educational contexts, where urban schools have access to more resources and trained teachers. In contrast, rural schools face numerous obstacles, including inadequate infrastructure and limited financial resources. These differences can impair the effectiveness of teaching tactics, including the use of pedagogical approaches, and impact academic performance. Socio-economic factors, essential basic amenities, qualified teachers, private tutoring, etc., disparities in the schools' location could have also played a role in shaping the intervening effect between school location and the academic success of Social Studies students. Urban locations have diverse populations with people from higher socio-economic status, higher high school attendance rates among students, and higher teacher quality, which can contribute to inequalities in children's exposure to educational opportunities and resources in those locations.

On the other hand, rural communities may suffer from poverty, unemployment, and restricted access to educational enrichment programs, which might impair kids' readiness to engage with visual materials and their academic achievement. Cultural background also affects students' responses to visual stimuli. Urban and rural communities often have diverse cultural norms, beliefs, and traditions that can impact individuals' perceptions of education and learning. Cultural factors, such as attitudes towards technology, societal support for education, and the significance placed on academic achievement, may influence how the relationship between school location and academic performance unfolds.

These findings from this very study align with Mhiliwa (2015), Bamidele and Adekola (2017), Umar & Samuel (2018), and Atubi (2024). On the contrary, it is in contrast with Ntibi & Eloho (2017), Obro (2018), and Akpomudjere (2020). These studies found no significant influence on school location and academic performance. Similarly, Owoye and Yara (2011) did not find any significant relationship between school location and the academic performance of students. These findings suggest that schools in rural areas should be improved, so that every child, regardless of their location, can have access to quality education in terms of facilities, environment, human and material resources, to ensure better academic performance among students.

Conclusion

This study has investigated the influence that school location could have on academic performance, bearing in mind the differences observed in the educational infrastructures that exist in both rural and urban areas. It has become imperative to address the significance that school location exerts on the students' academic performance in Social Studies across Delta State. Therefore, findings from this study is significant. The study thus concluded that there exists a significant influence of school location on students' learning outcomes in Social Studies. The study also provided empirical ground to suggest that social studies students in urban areas can achieve higher academic results than students in rural areas. Therefore, Social Studies teachers in rural areas should always give attention to the location of the school.

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