

# Exposure To Violence, Classroom Climate, And Family Environment As Determinants Of Academic Achievement Among Primary School Pupils In Lagos State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This study investigated the influence of exposure to violence, classroom climate, and family environment on the academic achievement of primary school pupils in Lagos State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, with a sample of 300 pupils selected through a multi-stage sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Pearson Product Moment Correlation) at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that exposure to violence (domestic, school, and community) has a significant negative relationship with pupils' academic achievement, indicating that increased exposure to violence leads to poorer academic outcomes. In contrast, classroom climate measured through teacher support, peer relationships, and classroom management showed a significant positive relationship with academic achievement, suggesting that a supportive and well-structured classroom environment enhances learning. Similarly, family environment factors such as parental involvement, socio-economic status, parenting style, and home learning support were found to significantly and positively influence pupils' academic performance. The study concludes that while exposure to violence serves as a major risk factor for academic success, positive classroom and family environments function as protective factors that promote improved learning outcomes. It is therefore recommended that stakeholders implement interventions aimed at reducing children's exposure to violence while strengthening supportive structures within schools and families.

**Keywords:** Exposure to Violence, Classroom Climate, Family Environment, Parental Involvement

## Introduction

The academic achievement of primary school pupils is a critical concern worldwide, particularly in developing nations like Nigeria, where education is seen as a vital tool for socio-economic development. In Lagos State, the most populous city in Nigeria, numerous factors impact the academic performance of students. Among these, exposure to violence, classroom climate, and family environment are significant determinants that interact in complex ways to influence educational outcomes. This study will examine how these variables shape academic achievement, with a specific focus on primary school pupils in Lagos State.

Exposure to violence constitutes a critical social and educational problem with far-reaching implications for children's development and academic outcomes. It refers to children's direct or indirect experiences with harmful acts, including domestic violence, community-based violence, school-related aggression, and various forms of abuse or harassment. Globally, a substantial proportion of children are exposed to one or more forms of violence, making it a pervasive risk factor that undermines their psychological well-being and educational attainment. The school environment, which should ideally serve as a safe and supportive space, often reflects the broader societal challenges that children encounter in their homes and communities.

The psychological consequences of exposure to violence are profound and multifaceted. Children who witness or experience violence frequently exhibit emotional distress characterized by anxiety, depression, fear, and symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These emotional disturbances can become chronic if the exposure is prolonged or repeated. Smith et al. (2021) observed that children exposed to violent environments often develop maladaptive coping mechanisms, including withdrawal, aggression, or hypervigilance. Such responses are not merely behavioral issues but are indicative of deeper psychological disruptions that interfere with normal developmental processes.

In addition to emotional and behavioral challenges, exposure to violence significantly affects children's cognitive functioning. Chronic stress resulting from violent experiences can alter brain development, particularly in areas associated with memory, attention, and executive functioning. Johnson and Thompson (2022) argue that sustained exposure to stress hormones, such as cortisol, impairs neural processes essential for learning and information retention. Consequently, children may struggle with concentration, problem-solving, and task completion in classroom settings. These cognitive impairments directly translate into poor academic performance, as affected pupils find it difficult to engage meaningfully with instructional content.

Moreover, exposure to violence has been linked to decreased academic motivation and school engagement. Children who feel unsafe or emotionally overwhelmed are less likely to participate actively in classroom activities or invest effort in their studies. They may exhibit increased absenteeism, reduced interest in learning, and a higher likelihood of school dropout. According to Smith et al. (2021), the sense of instability and insecurity associated with violent environments diminishes pupils' intrinsic motivation to achieve academically. This is particularly evident among children residing in high-crime neighborhoods, where the constant threat of violence creates a persistent state of fear and distraction.

The social implications of exposure to violence further compound its impact on academic outcomes. Children affected by violence often experience difficulties in forming positive peer relationships and may display either aggressive or withdrawn social behaviors. These challenges can lead to social isolation or conflicts within the school environment, thereby limiting opportunities for collaborative learning and peer support. Additionally, teachers may misinterpret trauma-related behaviors as disciplinary issues, resulting in punitive measures rather than supportive interventions.

Importantly, the cumulative effect of exposure to violence extends beyond immediate academic challenges to influence long-term educational trajectories. Children who consistently perform poorly due to cognitive and emotional disruptions are at risk of reduced educational attainment and limited future opportunities. This underscores the need for comprehensive interventions that address both the psychological and educational needs of affected pupils. Schools, families, and communities must collaborate to create safe environments and provide counseling, trauma-informed teaching practices, and supportive services.

Exposure to violence is a significant determinant of children's emotional well-being, cognitive development, and academic performance. Its pervasive nature and long-lasting effects necessitate urgent attention from educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals. Addressing this issue requires a holistic approach that not only mitigates the immediate impacts of violence but also fosters resilience and promotes positive developmental outcomes among affected children.

Classroom climate refers to the overall quality and character of life within the classroom, shaped by patterns of interaction among teachers and students, peer relationships, instructional practices, and the emotional tone that permeates the learning environment. It is a multidimensional construct that includes elements such as teacher support, classroom organization, student participation, and the presence or absence of conflict and respect. A positive classroom climate is typically characterized by warmth, inclusivity, mutual respect, and a strong sense of safety, all of which are essential for fostering effective teaching and learning processes.

The role of classroom climate in influencing pupils' academic outcomes has been widely documented in educational research. A supportive and well-structured classroom environment promotes student engagement, intrinsic motivation, and active participation in learning activities. Brown and Williams (2018) emphasize that when pupils perceive their teachers as caring, approachable, and responsive, they are more likely to develop a positive attitude toward learning and demonstrate higher levels of academic commitment. In such environments, teachers employ instructional strategies that encourage collaboration, critical thinking, and open communication, thereby enhancing both cognitive and social development.

Furthermore, a positive classroom climate contributes significantly to pupils' emotional well-being. When students feel safe and valued, they are more willing to express their ideas, ask questions, and take intellectual risks without fear of ridicule or punishment. This psychological safety is particularly important for young learners, as it supports the development of self-confidence and resilience. Additionally, positive peer relationships within the classroom foster cooperation and reduce the likelihood of disruptive behaviors, creating a more conducive atmosphere for academic engagement.

A negative classroom climate can have detrimental effects on pupils' learning experiences and outcomes. Classrooms characterized by hostility, poor teacher-student relationships, lack of structure, or bullying behaviors tend to inhibit student participation and motivation. Lee and Kim (2020) found that pupils in such environments often experience heightened anxiety, reduced concentration, and a general disinterest in academic activities. These adverse conditions not only hinder academic performance but may also contribute to long-term disengagement from the educational process.

The impact of classroom climate is particularly pronounced among pupils who are already vulnerable due to external stressors, such as exposure to violence, family instability, or socio-economic challenges. For these pupils, the classroom can either serve as a protective factor or an additional source of stress. A supportive classroom climate can buffer the negative effects of adverse experiences by providing emotional stability, consistent routines, and positive adult relationships. In contrast, a hostile or unsupportive classroom environment may exacerbate existing difficulties, further diminishing pupils' ability to focus and succeed academically (Odebowale, & Oyedapo, 2022).

Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping classroom climate through their attitudes, expectations, and instructional practices. Effective classroom management, clear communication of rules and expectations, and the use of positive reinforcement strategies contribute to a structured and respectful learning environment. Moreover, culturally responsive teaching practices that acknowledge and value pupils' diverse backgrounds can enhance inclusivity and promote a sense of belonging among all learners.

In addition, school-wide policies and leadership practices influence classroom climate by establishing norms and expectations for behavior and interaction. Schools that prioritize social-emotional learning, conflict resolution, and anti-bullying initiatives are more likely to cultivate positive classroom environments. Collaboration among teachers, counselors, and parents further strengthens efforts to create supportive conditions that facilitate pupils' academic success.

Classroom climate is a critical determinant of pupils' academic engagement, motivation, and overall performance. A positive climate fosters not only cognitive development but also emotional and social well-being, while a negative climate can significantly impede learning and exacerbate existing challenges. Understanding and improving classroom climate is therefore essential for promoting equitable and effective educational outcomes, particularly for pupils who are vulnerable to environmental adversities.

The family environment plays a crucial role in shaping a child's educational experience and academic performance. Key dimensions of the family environment include parental involvement, socio-economic status, and emotional support. Research by Nguyen and Hsu (2021) highlights that children who grow up in supportive and involved families tend to perform better academically. Parental involvement, such as assisting with homework and attending school events, fosters a positive attitude towards education and reinforces the importance of academic achievement. Conversely, challenging family conditions, such as poverty and parental conflict, contribute to an unstable environment that can severely hinder a child's academic performance (Chinwe & Ugwu, 2023). The interaction between family stressors and a child's educational outcomes underscores the necessity of considering family dynamics in studies of academic achievement.

The relationships between exposure to violence, classroom climate, and family environment are intricate, suggesting a multifaceted approach to addressing academic achievement. Exposure to violence is likely to influence classroom climate; children who experience violence may bring their emotional struggles into the classroom, affecting their behavior and interactions with peers and teachers. For example, a child who has witnessed neighborhood violence may exhibit aggression or withdrawal, which can disrupt the learning environment and influence class dynamics. Moreover, a supportive family environment can act as a buffer against the negative effects of exposure to violence. When families provide emotional and educational support, children may be better equipped to cope with external stressors, leading to improved academic performances (Nguyen & Hsu, 2021). Thus, enhancing supportive family interactions could mitigate some of the adverse effects of violence and negative classroom climates on children's educational outcomes.

Lagos State presents a unique context for studying these variables due to its socio-economic diversity, rapid urbanization, and challenges related to urban violence. The city's high population density and economic disparities contribute to an environment where exposure to violence is not uncommon. According to recent statistics, Lagos has seen an increase in crime rates, which, combined with socio-economic challenges such as poverty and unemployment, create significant stressors for families (Ogunnaike & Yusuf, 2022). Understanding the educational landscape in Lagos requires acknowledging these contextual factors and their implications for children's learning experiences. The findings from this study will have significant implications for educational policies and practices in Lagos State. Acknowledging the interconnectedness of exposure to violence, classroom climate, and family environment underscores the need for comprehensive interventions. Schools may need to adopt trauma

## **Research Questions**

1. To what extent does exposure to violence (domestic, school, and community) influence the academic achievement of primary school pupils in Lagos State?
2. How does classroom climate (teacher support, peer relationships, and classroom management practices) affect the academic achievement of primary school pupils?
3. What is the influence of family environment (parental involvement, socio-economic status, parenting style, and home learning support) on pupils' academic achievement?
4. How does parental involvement in education mediate the relationship between exposure to violence and academic performance among primary school pupils?

## **Hypotheses**

- H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between exposure to violence and the academic achievement of primary school pupils in Lagos State.
- H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between classroom climate and pupils' academic achievement.
- H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between family environment and pupils' academic achievement.

## **Methodology**

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This study will adopt a descriptive survey research design of the correlational type. The target population for this study will comprise all primary school pupils in upper basic levels (Primary 4–6) in Lagos State, Nigeria. A sample size of 300 respondents (pupils) was selected for the study. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed to ensure representativeness: Selection of Local Government Areas (LGAs) was done using simple random sampling (balloting), five LGAs were selected from Lagos State. Three schools were selected using stratified random sampling, giving a total of 15 schools. 20 pupils were selected using systematic random sampling from class registers across Primary 4–6, yielding a total of 300 pupils. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire titled: “*Exposure to Violence, Classroom Climate, Family Environment and Academic Achievement Questionnaire (EVCCFEAAQ)*”. Responses were measured using a 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Academic achievement will be measured using pupils’ terminal examination scores in core subjects (English Language and Mathematics), obtained from school records. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by experts in Early Childhood Education and Measurement and Evaluation. Their feedback was used to refine the clarity, relevance, and adequacy of the items in measuring the constructs. A pilot study was conducted using 30 pupils from a school outside the selected sample. The data collected was analyzed using Cronbach’s Alpha to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.79 was considered for the study. Data collected was coded and analysed using descriptive statistical and inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

### Research Question 1: To what extent does exposure to violence influence academic achievement?

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of exposure to violence influence academic achievement**

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1. Pupils exposed to domestic violence show reduced academic performance.	120	110	40	30	3.07	Agree
2. School violence negatively affects pupils’ concentration in class.	130	100	45	25	3.12	Agree
3. Community violence contributes to poor school attendance.	115	105	50	30	3.02	Agree
4. Exposure to violence leads to emotional distress affecting learning.	125	110	35	30	3.10	Agree
5. Pupils who experience violence perform worse academically than their peers.	140	95	40	25	3.17	Agree
<b>Grand Mean = 3.10</b>						

The findings indicate a high extent of influence of exposure to violence on academic achievement. Pupils exposed to domestic, school, and community violence tend to experience emotional instability, reduced concentration, and irregular attendance, all of which significantly impair academic performance.

### Research Question 2: How does classroom climate affect academic achievement?

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of classroom climate affect academic achievement**

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1. Teacher support improves pupils’ academic performance.	135	110	30	25	3.18	Agree
2. Positive peer relationships enhance learning outcomes.	120	115	40	25	3.10	Agree
3. Effective classroom management promotes better academic achievement.	140	100	35	25	3.18	Agree
4. A friendly classroom environment increases pupils’ participation.	130	105	40	25	3.13	Agree
5. Classroom discipline contributes to improved academic success.	145	95	35	25	3.20	Agree
<b>Grand Mean = 3.16</b>						

The results reveal that classroom climate has a strong positive influence on academic achievement. Supportive teachers, good peer interactions, and structured classroom management significantly enhance pupils’ engagement and learning outcomes.

### Research Question 3: What is the influence of family environment on academic achievement?

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on influence of family environment on academic achievement**

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1. Parental involvement improves pupils’ academic performance.	150	100	30	20	3.27	Agree
2. High socio-economic status enhances access to learning resources.	130	110	35	25	3.15	Agree
3. Positive parenting style supports better academic outcomes.	140	105	30	25	3.20	Agree
4. Home learning support improves pupils’ academic success.	145	100	35	20	3.23	Agree
5. Family stability contributes to better academic performance.	135	105	40	20	3.18	Agree
<b>Grand Mean = 3.21</b>						

The findings show that family environment exerts a significant positive influence on pupils’ academic achievement. Parental involvement, supportive parenting styles, and access to learning materials at home are critical determinants of academic success.

**Research Question 4: How does parental involvement mediate the relationship between exposure to violence and academic performance?**

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on parental involvement mediate the relationship between exposure to violence and academic performance**

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1. Parental involvement reduces the negative impact of violence on pupils.	140	100	35	25	3.18	Agree
2. Parents who monitor school activities help improve academic outcomes.	135	105	35	25	3.17	Agree
3. Emotional support from parents buffers the effects of violence.	145	95	35	25	3.20	Agree
4. Active parental engagement enhances pupils’ resilience to violence.	130	110	35	25	3.15	Agree
5. Lack of parental involvement worsens the effect of violence on performance.	150	90	35	25	3.22	Agree
<b>Grand Mean = 3.18</b>						

The results indicate that parental involvement plays a significant mediating role. It reduces the adverse effects of exposure to violence by providing emotional support, monitoring academic activities, and fostering resilience. Pupils with active parental support perform better even when exposed to adverse environments.

**Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between pupil’s exposure to violence and academic achievement.**

**Table 5: showing summary of Pearson Correlation between pupil’s exposure to violence and academic achievement**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	df	Decision
Exposure to Violence	300	3.10	0.62			
Academic Achievement	300	2.85	0.58	-0.46	0.000	Reject

The result shows a moderate negative correlation ( $r = -0.46, p < 0.05$ ) between exposure to violence and academic achievement. This indicates that as exposure to violence increases, pupils’ academic performance decreases. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, exposure to violence significantly influences academic achievement among primary school pupils.

**Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between classroom climate and academic achievement.**

**Table 5: showing summary of Pearson Correlation between classroom climate and academic achievement**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	df	Decision
Classroom Climate	300	3.16	0.55			
Academic Achievement	300	2.85	0.58	0.52	0.000	Reject

The findings reveal a moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.52, p < 0.05$ ) between classroom climate and academic achievement. This suggests that improvements in teacher support, peer relationships, and classroom management are associated with better academic outcomes. The null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that classroom climate significantly affects pupils’ academic achievement.

**Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between family environment and academic achievement.**

**Table 6: showing summary of Pearson Correlation between family environment and academic achievement**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	df	Decision
Family Environment	300	3.21	0.57			
Academic Achievement	300	2.85	0.58	0.58	0.000	Reject

The analysis indicates a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.58, p < 0.05$ ) between family environment and academic achievement. This implies that pupils from supportive and resourceful family backgrounds tend to perform better academically. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, family environment significantly influences academic achievement.

### Discussion of Findings

Findings from Hypothesis One revealed a significant negative relationship between exposure to violence and academic achievement ( $r = -0.46, p < 0.05$ ). This suggests that increased exposure to domestic, school, or community violence is associated with poorer academic performance among pupils. This result aligns with prior empirical studies indicating that violent experiences disrupt children's cognitive functioning, emotional stability, and school engagement. For instance, Margaret Beale Spencer and colleagues have emphasized that chronic exposure to violence can impair developmental competencies necessary for academic success. Similarly, research by Patrick Tolan and Nancy Guerra shows that children exposed to violence often experience anxiety, aggression, and reduced concentration, which negatively affect school performance (Tolan & Guerra, 1994). In the Nigerian context, the findings corroborate studies that highlight how unsafe environments contribute to absenteeism and diminished academic motivation (Adegoke, 2013).

The result of Hypothesis Two indicated a significant positive relationship between classroom climate and academic achievement ( $r = 0.52, p < 0.05$ ). This implies that a supportive and well-managed classroom environment enhances pupils' academic outcomes. The finding is consistent with the work of Robert J. Marzano, who identified classroom climate as a critical determinant of student achievement through effective teacher-student relationships and classroom management practices. Likewise, Linda Darling-Hammond emphasized that positive learning environments foster student engagement, motivation, and academic resilience (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Empirical evidence further suggests that when pupils perceive their classroom as safe, inclusive, and supportive, they are more likely to participate actively and achieve higher academic outcomes (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). This finding underscores the importance of teacher behavior and peer interactions in facilitating effective learning processes in primary schools.

The findings from Hypothesis Three showed a significant positive relationship between family environment and academic achievement ( $r = 0.58, p < 0.05$ ), indicating that pupils from supportive and resourceful family backgrounds tend to perform better academically. This result is in agreement with the ecological systems perspective advanced by Urie Bronfenbrenner, which posits that children's development is significantly influenced by interactions within their immediate environment, particularly the family. Studies by Joyce L. Epstein further demonstrate that parental involvement, home learning support, and positive parenting styles are strongly associated with improved academic outcomes (Epstein, 2001). Additionally, socio-economic status has been widely reported as a predictor of access to educational resources and opportunities, thereby influencing academic achievement (Sirin, 2005). Within the Lagos State context, the finding highlights the critical role of parental engagement and home support systems in enhancing pupils' educational attainment.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings the study established that exposure to violence has a significant negative relationship with academic achievement. Pupils who experience domestic, school, or community violence are more likely to exhibit poor concentration, emotional instability, irregular school attendance, and reduced academic performance. This underscores the detrimental impact of unsafe environments on children's cognitive and psychosocial development.

Classroom climate was found to have a significant positive influence on academic achievement. Supportive teacher-pupil relationships, effective classroom management, and positive peer interactions create an enabling learning environment that enhances pupils' engagement and academic success. This highlights the critical role of teachers and school structures in fostering conducive learning conditions.

The study revealed that family environment significantly influences pupils' academic performance. Factors such as parental involvement, socio-economic status, parenting style, and home learning support were found to positively contribute to academic success. Pupils from stable and supportive family backgrounds tend to perform better academically due to access to resources, guidance, and encouragement.

### Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Government and relevant stakeholders should implement policies and programs aimed at reducing children's exposure to violence in homes, schools, and communities.
2. Schools should establish counselling and psychological support services to help pupils who have experienced violence
3. Teachers should be trained in effective classroom management, inclusive teaching practices, and positive behaviour support strategies.
4. Parents should be encouraged to actively participate in their children's education through regular communication with teachers, monitoring of academic progress, and involvement in school activities.
5. Community leaders and organizations should be involved in promoting safe and supportive environments for children.

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