

# School Environment as Barrier to Effective Academic Performance among Students with Physical Disabilities in Ilorin Metropolis

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## Abstract

Insufficient infrastructural facilities make it difficult for a large number of students with visual and mobility impairment to walk around the campus and attend lectures. Also, fewer than ideal library facilities decrease the amount of study resources that are available to these students. This study investigated the school environment as barrier to effective academic performance among students with physical disabilities in the Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State. The descriptive survey of a correlational type was implemented using purposive sampling for this study. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 98 students in the Ilorin metropolis with physical disabilities, and the whole 98 students participated in this study. The population for the study comprised all secondary school students with physical disabilities in Ilorin metropolis, while 98 students with physical disabilities constituted a sample for the study. A research-designed questionnaire entitled: School Environment Scale was adapted for this study. For academic performance, the academic results of students with physical disabilities in the two core subjects were collected from the school authorities. The data collected were analyzed using percentage for demographic data and research questions, while the null hypothesis formulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance using regression. The findings revealed that most students with physical disabilities had difficulty accessing various areas in the school environment and, as a result, served as a barrier to their effective academic performance. Moreover, an F-value of 4.14 with a p-value of .045 is less than 0.05 significant level. Since the calculated p-value is less than the significant level, the null hypothesis one is rejected. Thus, the school environment significantly hinders effective academic performance among students with physical disabilities in the Ilorin metropolis. Finding also shows that academic performance has a Beta weight ( $\beta$ ) of -0.208, t equal to 2.036, p greater than 0.05. Based on the result, it could be seen that poor academic performance among students with physical disabilities has a significant relationship with the school environment. Based on the findings, it was recommended that school owners should structure their school environment so that students with physical disabilities will have easy access to different facilities. There is a need for School Counsellors to organize group and individual counseling services for students with physical disabilities to expose them to good study habits in order to achieve success academically.

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## 1. Introduction

Education is critical for everyone, regardless of age, gender, color, economic background, or physical ability/impairment. Individuals, particularly students with physical disabilities, are commonly considered disadvantaged groups by cultures. According to Mcleod (2014), students with physical disabilities face personal limits in school contexts that affect their social, psychological, and academic domains, which may impact their academic achievement. The term physical disabilities is broad and covers a range of disabilities and health issues, including both congenital and acquired disabilities (Mifflin, 2003). People with physical disabilities, also known as disabled people or

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physically disabled people, have a physical impairment that substantially affects their ability to carry out day-to-day activities. Someone with moderate physical disabilities would have mobility problems, such as being unable to manage stairs and needing aids or assistance to walk (Morley, 2010). Someone with severe physical disabilities would be unable to walk and dependent on mobility care (Siebers, 2008).

According to Siebers (2008), several causes and disorders might limit mobility and movement. It is common to be unable to utilize one's legs, arms, or body trunk due to paralysis, stiffness, discomfort, or other disabilities. It could be due to birth abnormalities, disease, old age, or an accident. These handicaps can change from day to day, and they may also have a role in other problems such as slurred speech, memory loss, small height, and hearing loss. When faced with social and physical hurdles, people with mobility and movement disabilities may find it is challenging to participate. However, they are frequently courageous and independent individuals that want to contribute to the best of their abilities (Croft, 2010). Some people are entirely self-sufficient, while others may require part-time or full-time assistance (Johnstone, 2012).

Examining the relevant literature reveals that Nigeria has more than its fair share of disabled people, and this trend is only expected to continue. According to the results of the census conducted in Nigeria in 2006, the total number of disabled people in the country was 3,253,169, equivalent to 2.32 percent of the total population (Nze, 2016). According to the World Report on Disabilities, from 2011, 25 million people in Nigeria were living with at least one disabilities-related issue, and of those 25 million people, 3.6 million had extremely significant difficulty in functioning (Umeh & Adeola, 2016). It is estimated that about 27 million individuals in Nigeria will have some form of disability by the year 2020 (Lang & Upah, 2016). Students who have a physical disability should be provided with adequate school facilities and a school environment that is conducive to learning to assist those students in overcoming the effects of their physical impairments and the associated challenges they face and to promote the student's academic success (Addo, 2014). Equal opportunities, including educational opportunities, are guaranteed for both physically fit individuals and those with disabilities according to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (passed in 2006 and is a signatory of the United Nations). Nigeria is one of the countries that ratified the convention.

Specialized facilities catering to the needs of students afflicted with disabilities are required to accomplish this goal. There are many facilities used for disabled students, including: (1) Assistive infrastructural designs, such as special hostel accommodation and lecture halls with ramps and railings (making the movement easier for individuals using wheelchairs, crutches, and braces). (2) Assistive technologies, such as hearing aids for students with hearing impairment and low vision aids (for those who are visually impaired). (3) Specialised library facilities, including braille textbooks, etc.; and other variety of accommodations. Students with unique requirements will find it easier to get an education in industrialised countries because of the greater availability of several amenities mentioned above. On the other hand, in several developing nations, such as Nigeria, a significant number of these facilities are either insufficient or nonexistent, which hinders efforts to fully satisfy the requirements for postsecondary education posed by these students (Ahmed, Mahmoud Awad, & Adam, 2014).

Insufficient infrastructural facilities make it difficult for many students with visual and mobility impairments to walk around the campus and attend lectures. Also, fewer than ideal library facilities decrease the study resources available to these students. Furthermore, inadequate support staff for students with disabilities, such as sign language interpreters for individuals with hearing impairment and guides for those with visual impairment, makes it difficult for these students to study, which can harm the academic performance of the students concerned (Momodu, 2013). For instance, Lawal-Solarin (2012) investigated the availability of accessible library facilities at four Nigerian universities and found that only two universities possessed facilities that improved accessibility for students who use wheelchairs. In addition, the research that Eskay and Chima (2013) performed on the library at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, revealed that there were no braille books, computer screen reading software, or other assistive devices. This was discovered during their investigation of the library's accessibility. The only resources that could be used were audiobooks, which, according to the

librarians, had not been obtained to assist students with visual impairments; instead, they were included in the packages of textbooks and encyclopedias that the library had purchased.

According to Ndirangu (2016), the lack of adequate physical facilities in schools negatively influences the health, behavior, engagement, learning, and progress of students with physical disabilities. Moreover, this affects teaching and learning. Students with impairments are frequently confronted with physical challenges in postsecondary institutions (Gelbar, Madaus, Lombardi, Faggella-Luby, & Dukes, 2015). Some school environment barriers include: doors (too narrow for wheelchairs to go through), steps leading up to buildings and impassable pathways (too slippery and narrow), showers and toilets (non-grab-bars, non-slip-surfaces and seats), and vehicles (either too high or too steep) (Becht, Blades, Agarwal, & Burke, 2020; Kiat & Kwong, 2014). In addition, there are light switches that are either too high or too low, as well as places of worship, stores, and other public areas that are not accessible. These physical hurdles caused the students with physical disabilities to become frustrated, which led to a negative attitude toward learning and a decline in the student's academic performance.

Wasielowski (2017) found that physically impaired students also face the challenge of classrooms that are too packed, do not have enough seats, do not have enough space for standing, and have lousy audibility. The lecture rooms are designed to accommodate a large number of students. It was emphasized that many students are in a classroom, particularly in education classes and theatre rooms. So, when a disabled student comes late, he or she decided to stay at the back of the class where it is very difficult to hear well from the teacher or the lecturer. It is a challenging circumstance, and it has a detrimental effect on the academic achievement of pupils with disabilities. An excellent illustration of this was found in the research conducted by Firmer (2005), who found that more than sixty percent (60%) of students with physical disabilities who were educated in an environment that was not conducive to learning had a poor academic performance. It is a result of the challenges they were required to overcome. The challenges they faced included, among other things, large distances to walk, restricted availability of educational resources, and the ascent and descent of multiple flights of stairs.

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

Students who have physical disabilities are expected to be able to operate easily within the learning environment of the school, complete a variety of tasks, collaborate effectively with their classmates, take an active role in the educational process, and achieve academic success by excelling in all of their subjects. To succeed academically and socially throughout the school day, they are expected to fulfill various physical requirements. Schools provide a conducive environment for students to support their learning and have exemplary academic achievements. This includes a well-equipped laboratory, library, sports facilities, building, professional teachers, and so on. However, many students with physical disabilities still have poor academic performance. Hence, this study investigated the school environment as a barrier to effective academic performance among students with physical disabilities in the Ilorin metropolis.

### 1.2. Research Question

The following research questions are raised and answered in this study:

1. How easy do you have access to your school's environmental facilities?
2. What is the level of academic performance of students with physical disabilities in the Ilorin metropolis?

### 1.3. Research Hypothesis

A null hypothesis was formulated and tested in this study: The school environment will not significantly hinder effective academic performance among students with physical disabilities in the Ilorin metropolis.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Research Design

The descriptive survey of a correlational type was adopted for this study.

### 2.2. Sample and Sampling Procedures

The population for the study comprised all students with physical disabilities in the Ilorin metropolis. In contrast, the sample comprised selected students with physical disabilities drawn from various schools in the Ilorin metropolis. The sample for this study were randomly selected from the School for Special Needs and 30 secondary schools in the Ilorin. A purposive sampling technique was adopted for this study. It was used to determine 98 students with physical disabilities, and the whole 98 students (Male: 77; Female: 21) participated in this study.

### 2.3. Instrumentation

The researcher-designed questionnaire entitled "School Environment Questionnaire" (SEQ) was used to collect data. The validity of the instrument was established by giving copies of the instrument to three experts in the field of special education. In contrast, the instrument's reliability was ascertained using the test re-test method. The instrument has a reliability coefficient of 0.86. SEQ was used to collect the respondents' demographic data (Section A) and the school environment facilities available (Section B). For this study, the scale was restructured and patterned after a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 4 (Very Easy) to 1 (Difficult). For the academic performance scale, participants' academic performance grades were collected from the selected two core subjects (Mathematics and English language) for the academic sessions of 2021 and 2022. These grades were transformed and used to determine the student's academic performance. The grades (A, C, P, and F) were recoded. The A grade was regarded as high academic performance (score between 60 -100), C as average performance (score between 50-59), meanwhile P and F were regarded as low academic performance (0-49 score).

### 2.4. Method of Data Analysis

Frequency and percentage distribution statistics were used to compute the demographic data of the respondents as well as the main research questions, while a regression statistical test tool was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

## 3. Results

The result of data obtained from the respondents' personal information was presented in frequency counts and percentages (Table 1).

**Table 1. Frequency Distribution of the Respondents**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	77	78.6
Female	21	21.4
<b>Total</b>	98	100
<b>Age</b>		
11-14 years	17	17.3
15-18 years	58	59.2
19 years and above	23	23.5
<b>Total</b>	98	100

Table 1 showed that 98 students with physical disabilities participated in the study, out of which 77 (78.6%) were male and 21 (21.4%) of the respondents were female. Also, 17 (17.3%) of the respondents were between 11-14 years, 58 (59.2%) were between 15 – 18 years, and 23 (23.5%) were 19 years and above.

### Research question 1: How easy do you have access to your school's environmental facilities?

Table 2 indicated more than 30% of the respondents found it difficult to use library materials; get to the bathroom; walk around the school premises; get to the games fields; get to the classrooms; get to the toilet; get to the library; enter different offices; go to school shops; and go to cafeteria.

**Table 2. Frequency Distribution of the Respondents' Access to School Environment Facilities**

How easy is it to:	Very Easy	Easy	Fairly Easy	Difficult
Use library materials	17 (17.3%)	18 (18.4%)	19 (19.4%)	44 (44.9%)
Get to the bathroom	12 (12.3%)	17 (17.3%)	24 (24.5%)	45 (45.9%)
Walk around the school premises	7 (7.1%)	12 (12.3%)	23 (23.5%)	56 (57.1%)
Get to the games fields	4 (4.1%)	14 (14.3%)	25 (25.5%)	55 (56.1%)
Get to the classrooms	15 (15.3%)	19 (19.4%)	17 (17.3%)	47 (48.0%)
Get to the toilet	8 (8.1%)	16 (16.3%)	32 (32.7%)	42 (42.7%)
Get to the library	6 (6.1%)	16 (16.3%)	25 (25.5%)	51 (52.0%)
Enter different offices	9 (9.1%)	18 (18.4%)	25 (25.5%)	46 (46.9%)
Go to school shops	16 (16.3%)	20 (20.4%)	23 (23.5%)	39 (39.8%)
Go to cafeteria	14 (14.3%)	18 (18.4%)	20 (20.4%)	46 (46.9%)

### Research question 2: What is the level of academic performance of students with physical disabilities in the Ilorin metropolis?

Table 3 revealed that 2 (1.0%) of the respondents had high performance, 25 (25.5%) of the respondents fell within the average and 71 (72.5%) of the respondents had low academic performance. This indicates that the majority of the respondents (72.5%) have poor academic performance.

**Table 3. Level of Academic Performance of Students with Physical Disabilities**

Level	Performance Grades	Frequency	Percentage
High	Distinction (60 and above)	2	1.0
Average	Credit (50-59)	25	25.5
Low	Pass and Fail (0-49)	71	72.5
<b>Total</b>		98	100

## 3.1. Hypothesis Testing

A null hypothesis was formulated and tested for this study. The hypothesis was tested using regression statistical method at 0.05 level of significance.

### 3.2. Hypothesis One: The school environment will not significantly serve as a barrier to effective academic performance among students with physical disabilities in the Ilorin Metropolis

Table 4 indicates the contribution of independent variables (school environment) to the dependent variable (academic performance). The R-square shows .224 (22.4%), which indicates that the school environment has a 22.4% rate of serving as a barrier to academic performance.

In Table 5, an F- value of 4.14 with p-value of .045 is less than 0.05 significant level. Since the calculated p-value is less than the significant level, consequently, the null hypothesis one is rejected. Thus, the school environment significantly hinders effective academic performance among students with physical disabilities in the Ilorin Metropolis.

Table 6 shows that academic performance has a Beta weight ( $\beta$ ) of -0.208,  $t=2.036$ ,  $p>0.05$ . Based on the result, it could be seen that poor academic performance among students with physical disabilities has a significant relationship with the school environment

**Table 4. Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.415 <sup>a</sup>	.224	.091	7.141

a. Predictor: (Constant), School Environment

**Table 5. Multiple Regression**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Regression	214.499	1	214.499	4.14*	.045 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	4968.031	96	51.750		
Total	5182.531	97			

a. Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

b. Predictor: (Constant), School Environment

**Table 6. Regression Coefficient Showing the Contribution of an Independent Variable through Beta Weight**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	44.523	3.825			11.640	.000
Academic Perf.	-.208	.102		-.203	-2.036	.045

a. Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

#### 4. Discussion

The finding of this study revealed that more than 30% of the respondents found it difficult to use library materials, get to the bathroom, walk around the school premises, get to the games fields, get to the classrooms, get to the toilet, get to the library, enter different offices, go to school shops, and go to the cafeteria. The finding supports the study of Ijadunola, Ojo, Akintan, Adeyemo, Afolayan and Akanji (2019) who found that the common problematic tasks for students with disabilities in the university are using library materials, accessing university buildings and lecture theatres, following lectures and getting lecture materials, fetching water, and accessing toilets and bathrooms. Oladipo, Owei, Obinna, and Weje (2020) reported that the inaccessible nature of most students with physical disabilities to buildings in the institutions subjects them to lots of stress in their quest for education. It could be seen that the school owners did not consider the mobility of students with physical disabilities when choosing the architectural design of school buildings.

The finding showed that the majority of the respondents have low levels of academic performance. The finding aligns with the study of Wasielewski (2017), who found a high-poor academic performance rate of students with disabilities in higher education. In the same vein, Sachs and Schreuer (2011) found low GPAs among students with disabilities compared to those without disabilities. The reason could be a result of psychological issues they experienced due to their disabilities.

The finding of the hypothesis revealed that the school environment significantly serves as a barrier to effective academic performance among students with physical disabilities in the Ilorin metropolis. It implies that the school environment significantly contributed to the poor academic performance of students with physical disabilities. The finding supports the study of Kiat (2014) who asserted that some school environment, such as narrow door for wheelchairs to go through, steps leading to buildings, impassable pathways, and so on. The schools are physical barriers that frustrate students with physical disabilities, develop poor attitudes to learning, and affect their academic performance. Ndirangu (2016) also reported that the lack of effective school's physical facilities affects learners with physical disabilities' health, behavior, engagement in learning, and academic achievement. The reason could be the inability to move freely to get easy access to some of the schools, which could influence psychosocial problems and lead to poor academic performance.

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## 4.1. Implications for Counselling

The current study showed that students with physical disabilities had poor academic performance. The School Counsellor can expose them to effective study habits, which will assist them in having good academic performance. Counselors can also enlighten school management on the negative effect of some of the school environmental facilities on students' academic performance, especially students with physical disabilities.

## 5. Conclusion

It was concluded that most of the students with physical disabilities had difficulty in access various areas in the school environment and, as a result, served as a barrier to their effective academic performance.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that: (1) There is a need for school owners to structure their school environment in such a way that students with physical disabilities will have easy access to different facilities, (2) There is a need for School Counsellors to organize group and individual counseling services for students with physical disabilities to expose them to good study habits in order to achieve success academically, (3) The government should embark on a rehabilitation program targeting all facilities in schools in the country to make them compliant with physically challenged students in the country.

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All authors have equal contributions to the paper. All the authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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# Lingkungan Sekolah sebagai Penghalang Prestasi Akademik yang Efektif di Antara Siswa Penyandang Disabilitas Fisik di Metropolis Ilorin

## Kata kunci

Lingkungan sekolah  
Performa akademik  
Siswa disabilitas

## Abstrak

Fasilitas infrastruktur yang kurang memadai mengakibatkan banyak siswa dengan gangguan penglihatan dan gangguan mobilitas mengalami kesulitan dalam berjalan di sekitar area kampus dan menghadiri perkuliahan. Selain itu, kurang idealnya fasilitas perpustakaan juga mengurangi sumber belajar bagi siswa-siswa tersebut. Penelitian ini menelusuri penghalang prestasi akademik untuk siswa dengan disabilitas dari faktor lingkungan sekolah di Kota Metropolis Ilorin, Kwara. Penelitian survei deskriptif ini menggunakan korelasi analisis dan teknik pengambilan sampel non-probabilitas. Teknik pengambilan sampel non-probabilitas digunakan untuk memilih 98 siswa dengan disabilitas fisik yang berasal dari Kota Metropolis Ilorin sebagai subjek pada penelitian ini. Sedangkan, populasi untuk penelitian ini adalah semua siswa sekolah menengah yang memiliki disabilitas fisik di Kota Metropolis Ilorin. Penelitian ini mengadaptasi kuesioner penelitian dari *School Environment Scale*. Sementara, prestasi akademik siswa dinilai dari data hasil belajar siswa pada dua mata pelajaran inti yang didapat dari pihak sekolah. Data demografi yang telah dikumpulkan selanjutnya dianalisis menggunakan analisis persentase bersama dengan data yang berhubungan dengan pertanyaan penelitian. Pengujian hipotesis nol dilakukan dengan tes regresi pada 0.05 signifikansi. Dari proses data analisis, kami mengetahui bahwa mayoritas dari siswa yang memiliki disabilitas menghadapi kesulitan dalam mengakses beberapa area sekolah, sehingga hal tersebut menjadi penghalang untuk menggapai prestasi akademik bagi mereka. Lebih lanjut, hasil analisa kami juga menunjukkan nilai F 4.14 dan nilai p .045 yang lebih rendah dari 0.05 signifikansi. Sehingga, hipotesis nol ditolak karena hasil nilai p yang lebih rendah dari tingkat signifikansi. Oleh karena itu, lingkungan sekolah secara signifikan menghambat pencapaian prestasi akademik para siswa dengan disabilitas fisik di Kota Metropolis Ilorin. Hasil analisa kami juga menunjukkan bahwa prestasi akademik memiliki Beta ( $\beta$ ) 0.208, t setara dengan 2.036, dan p lebih besar dari 0.05. Hasil tersebut mengindikasikan bahwa lemahnya prestasi akademik dari siswa dengan disabilitas fisik mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan lingkungan sekolah. Berdasarkan hasil yang telah diperoleh, pihak sekolah disarankan untuk mengubah struktur lingkungan sekolah mereka agar para siswa dengan disabilitas fisik dapat memiliki akses yang mudah di lingkungan sekolah. Selain itu, konselor sekolah juga disarankan untuk mengadakan konseling grup dan individu untuk para siswa dengan disabilitas fisik. Program konseling tersebut diharapkan dapat membantu pada siswa dengan disabilitas membangun kebiasaan belajar untuk menggapai kesuksesan akademik.