Correlates on Academic Performance of International Students

Marifel Q. Acena
Lourdes P. Llanes
University of Northern Philippines

ABSTRACT

This research determined the relationships between school climate, attitude towards school, and academic performance of international students. The descriptive-correlational method of research was used. Eighty-seven Indian students enrolled in BS Psychology at the University of Northern Philippines were the respondents. Questionnaire checklist and documentary analysis were the instruments to gather the needed data. Ethical Considerations were observed in the study. Results revealed that there were a fair level of school climate, a favorable attitude towards school, and a fair level of academic performance. There was a significant relationship between respondents' attitude towards school and school climate, but it was not related to academic performance. Further, there were a good physical structure and healthy interactions between students and school personnel. In addition, the students were doing well in their academics. Furthermore, the students' assessment of school could be associated with the quality and character of school life. It is highly recommended that: school climate may be enhanced through a shared recognition and commitment to their concern by the school community members. Periodic consultation with stakeholders may be held. Academic Survival Skills may be introduced to the students to equip them with the needed competency to perform well in their academics and Positive Attitudinal Change (PAC) may be conducted to develop a better disposition towards school.

***Keywords**: academic achievement, adolescents, attitudes, school climate, school culture*

INTRODUCTION

Success is measured by academic achievement, or how well a student meets the standards set out by an educational institution. As career competition grows in the world of work, the importance of students doing well in school has caught the attention of parents, educators, legislators, and administrators. Although education is not the only road to success in the world of works, much effort is exerted to identify, evaluate, track, and encourage the progress of students in schools. Parents care about their children's academic performance because they believe good academic results will provide more career choices and job security. Schools invest in fostering good academic habits to ensure the provision of excellent service to its clientele, the students. Good grades may reflect an outstanding performance of the students as well as a positive evaluation of the educational institution where they are enrolled in.

Kpolovie, Joe, and Okoto (2014) defined academic achievement of student as the ability of the student to study and remember facts and being able to communicate his knowledge orally or in written form even in an examination condition. Similarly, researches have established a link between the academic achievement of students and their attitude towards school. In their study, Veresova and Mala (2016) found out that there is a significant relationship between attitude of the adolescents towards school and learning and their grade point average. They further discussed that the more positive their attitude towards school and learning, the more positive is their academic achievement at the end of the school year. Hence, attitude toward school and learning is a significant predictor of academic performance.

Bodjie (2011) also asserted that satisfied eleventh graders with their school out-performed academically the dissatisfied one at a statistically significant level. Further, he mentioned that the students satisfied with their school tended to be better on tests where academic skills were involved than on tests of general background information. It could be attributed that said skill development was more pronounced in students with positive attitude toward school because of its association with typical classroom objectives and drill routine.

In contrast, Das, Halder, Mishra and Debnath (2014) found out that there was a very low negative relation between attitude towards education and academic achievement in secondary level minority students. The attitude of students towards school and their capabilities as learners have been broken down into several distinct factors. These are feeling about school, attitude to teachers, attitude to attendance, confidence with challenging tasks, self-regard as learners, response to curriculum demands, general work ethics and preparation for learning. Further, in an attitudinal survey, the result revealed that there is a decline in positive attitudes toward schools. The proportion of children who feel good about school declines from 94 percent in year three to 84 percent in Year nine (Pupil Attitudes to Self and School Report 2016).

In addition, Cherry (2019) defined attitude as a set of emotions, beliefs, and behaviors toward a particular object, person, thing, or event. It is often a product of experience or upbringing, and they can have a powerful influence on the behavior of any individual. Further, it is a learned tendency to evaluate things in a certain way. It includes evaluations of people, issues, objects, or events. Such assessments are either positive or negative. She stated that attitude constitutes three components and sometimes referred to as CAB or the ABC's of attitude. First, the cognitive component refers to one's thoughts and beliefs about the subject. Affective is the second component. It includes how the object, person, issue, or event makes one feel. The last component is behavioral. It pertains to how the attitude influences the behavior of the individual.

The attitude towards the institution and learning, reflecting the ABC model of attitudes, is perceived as thoughts, opinions and beliefs about the institution and learning in it, feelings and a relationship towards school and learning built upon emotions, and a tendency to behave in accordance with favourable and unfavourable experiences with the institution and learning (Veresova and Mala, 2016).

Another factor that has an impact on individual experience is the school climate. Two aspects of school climate, commitment to the school and positive feedback from teachers, have been shown to affect students' self-esteem as presented in the study of Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, and Higgins-D'Alessandro (2013). The relationship between school climate and student self-concept is seen in the survey undertaken by Nava Delgado (2014). The research of Olsen, Preston, Algozzine and Cusumano (2015), explains that when activities are presented in a supportive, collaborative environment, students are encouraged to build upon one another's ideas on projects. Together, the experience realistically represents the social situation that they may find themselves part of in the higher civil society.

Moreover, positive school climate has beneficial effects on a wide range of adjustment variables in youth, including academic achievement, mental health, school attendance and graduation, and school-based behavior. When such activities are presented in a supportive, collaborative environment, they encourage students to build upon one another's ideas on projects (Kearney, Sanmartin, and Gonzalvez, 2020).

Foreign students prefer to study in the Philippines for several reasons. One of which is affordable but high-quality education (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 2011). Affordability is a big factor that has encouraged many foreign students to choose the Philippines to pursue dream course. The accessibility of every need within the campus makes it very convenient for them to study in the country, such as the University of Northern Philippines. Though there are advantages, studying in a foreign land is not that easy. They may be hard-up in adjusting to the new environment. If this is the case, there is tendency for them to experience difficulty in managing their life, especially their academics.

Foreigners experience a wide range of emotions once they leave their country to study abroad. It is important for everyone to understand what these students are going through in adjusting to the new culture. Foreign students, just like any visitors to a foreign country, must deal with cultural differences and make adjustments [1]. Adjustment is an on-going process demanded by one situation and then another. It does not happen overnight [2]. At first, it was characterized by fascination, elation, and optimism [3]. After this stage, the foreign student will be struggling with the huge challenges presented by an unfamiliar situation and environment (Sicat, 2011).

The researchers observed that foreign students do not interact so much with Filipinos, be it university personnel or students due to the language barrier. They prefer to socialize with their fellow Indian nationals. However, some of them said that Filipinos are hospitable and accommodating. They further claimed that they can cope up with their studies due to the welcoming atmosphere of the school. For them, they feel safe and secure when they are in the university. More observations prompted the researchers to conduct a study about the correlates of academic achievement of the foreign students especially school climate and attitude towards school. The quality of foreign students' performance is a priority to the educators, and researchers who have long been interested in exploring variables contributing effectively for quality of performance of the foreign learners.

It is hoped that this research may be beneficial to the university administrators, personnel, students, and other stakeholders. Through the results of the study, university administrators may craft policies and programs for the welfare and development of foreign students. Personnel, students, and other stakeholders may display a more favorable attitude towards foreign students so that they will not hesitate to raise their concerns or issues. The Office of Student Affairs and Services may initiate activities to help students adjust in the university and ultimately excel in their academics.

The primary aim of this research was to determine the correlates of academic performance of international students of UNP enrolled during the Calendar Year 2016. Specifically, it sought to determine the following: a.) level of school climate of UNP; b.) level of attitude towards the school of the respondents; c.) level of academic achievement of the respondents; d.) significant relationships between attitude towards the school and school climate and academic achievement.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive-correlational type of research was used in this study. The respondents of the research were 87 international students enrolled in the BS Psychology Program during the Calendar Year 2016. They were determined through Slovin's formula, proportional allocation, and random sampling.

Questionnaire and documentary analysis were the instruments to gather the needed data. There were three parts of the questionnaire. Part I gathered the profile of the students. Part II measured the level of school climate, and it was adopted from the study of Acena (2015) entitled, "Resiliency among Students in Higher Education in Ilocos Sur". Part III determined the level of attitude of students towards school. The researchers constructed the part. Items based on readings about attitude towards school. The questionnaire was content validated by knowledgeable persons in the field. Mean scores given by the experts yielded a 4.25 rating which corresponds to Very High, indicating that the instrument is valid. All the

grades obtained by the respondents for the midterm from January to March of the Calendar Year 2016 were analyzed. Their grade-point average was computed to measure their academic performance on the said term.

The researchers asked permission from the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences to conduct the research work. Upon approval by the Dean, the researchers gave also a letter of request to the teacher in-charge to conduct research. Respondents were given prior notice and informed consent regarding the study. The researchers personally administered the questionnaire to the students. Further, the grades of the students were obtained from the Coordinator for BS Psychology Special Program. The collected data were analyzed using frequency count, percentage, mean, and simple linear correlation analysis.

The researcher employed the following ethical considerations:

There was no conflict of interest in the conduct of the research. Privacy of the respondents was respected by keeping their personal information private and not mentioning their names. In the research report all gathered information from the respondents were treated with the utmost confidentiality. Data were stored with a password. Only the researchers have access to the file. After two years, the data were deleted from the laptop. Before the start of the data-gathering, consent was secured from the respondents. The researchers explained the nature and objectives of the study, methodology, and expected participation from the respondents. The participation of the respondent was voluntary. The respondents were informed that they may withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before the data-gathering or while the data-gathering was on-going. The respondents are adults. In the general population (persons of diverse SOGIE), these respondents included students and women. Respondents were selected through Slovin's formula and stratified random sampling. They were contacted through text messages and referrals. Voluntary participation was solicited from them. Social and psychological risks were controlled by providing the respondents with essential information on the conduct of the study. Debriefing was conducted after the interview. With the result of the study, administrators would be reminded of the importance of school climate on the formation of favorable attitude towards school of the students, consequently improving their academic performance

The norms used in this study are as follows:

A.   On Level of School Climate

Scale	Item Descriptive Rating	Range of Scores	Overall Descriptive Rating
5	Strongly Agree	4.21 – 5.0	Very Good
4	Moderately Agree	3.41 – 4.20	Good
3	Agree	2.61 – 3.40	Fair
2	Disagree	1.81 – 2.60	Poor
1	Strongly Disagree	1.0 – 1.80	Very Poor

B. On Level of Attitude towards School

Scale	Item Descriptive Rating	Range of Scores	Overall Descriptive Rating
5	Strongly Agree	4.21 – 5.0	Very Favorable
4	Moderately Agree	3.41 – 4.20	Favorable
3	Agree	2.61 – 3.40	Neutral
2	Disagree	1.81 – 2.60	Unfavorable
1	Strongly Disagree	1.0 – 1.80	Very Unfavorable

C. Level of Academic Achievement of Students

Grade Point Average	Descriptive Rating
1.0 – 1.25	Excellent
1.5 – 1.75	Very Good
2.0 – 2.25	Good
2.5 – 2.75	Fair
3.0	Passing

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the Level of School Climate of UNP as perceived by the respondents.

Table 1
Level of school climate of UNP

Items	Mean	DR
1. Our school tries to get students to join in school activities.	4.10	A
2. Our school personnel treat students with little respect.	3.39	MA
3. We talk about ways to help us manage our emotional reactions.	3.57	A
4. Our school personnel work well with one another.	3.98	A
5. Our teachers discourage us to think independently.	2.39	D
6. We learn ways to resolve disagreements so that everyone can be satisfied with the outcome.	3.84	A
7. Students in our school do not care about or respect for each other's differences (for example, gender, culture, etc.).	2.89	MA
8. Our school does not involve families in school activities.	3.69	A
9. Our teachers encourage us to try out new ideas.	4.21	SA
10. We have friends at school whom we can turn to if we have questions about homework.	3.79	A
11. We do not talk about the way our actions will affect others.	3.68	A
12. There are no written rules against hurting (i.e. physical, emotional, sexual) other people.	2.86	MA
13. School personnel expect little for students' success.	3.14	MA
14. We discuss issues that help us think about how to be a good person.	4.15	A
15. We have friends at school we can trust and talk to if we have problems.	4.15	A
Overall	**3.59**	**G**

Norms:

Range of Scores	Item Descriptive Rating	Overall Descriptive Rating
4.21 – 5.0	Strongly Agree (SA)	Very Good (VG)
3.41 – 4.20	Agree (A)	Good (G)
2.61 – 3.40	Moderately Agree (MA)	Fair (F)
1.81 – 2.60	Disagree (D)	Poor (P)
1.0 – 1.80	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Very Poor (VP)

Table 1 shows the mean ratings on the level of *School Climate.* The overall mean rating of 3.59 explains that the level of *School Climate* of the university is Good. It implies that the university has a good social atmosphere of a learning environment. This means that for the students, their school has a good physical structure as well as healthy interactions between students and school personnel, which may have a good impact on their holistic development. A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributive, and satisfying life in a democratic society. This finding is similar to that of Acena (2015) who found out that students enrolled in higher education institutions of Ilocos Sur assessed that they have a fair school climate in their area.

Table 2
Level of attitude towards school of the respondents

Items	Mean	DR
1. School has been a pleasant experience for me.	4.39	SA
2. I feel that my teachers care about me as a person.	4.23	SA
3. I observe that my teachers demand too much work from me.	3.15	MA
4. I know that getting a good education is important.	4.53	SA
5. I understand that the main purpose of education is to help me find a job.	4.61	SA
6. I work harder in school than most students do.	3.80	A
7. I see to it that I pass all my school requirements on time.	4.21	SA
8. I am encouraged to think for myself in school.	4.06	A
9. I look forward in going to most of my classes.	4.14	A
10. I spend most of my time studying my lessons.	3.69	A
11. I work harder if my teachers demand more from me.	4.0	A
12. I feel that I could discuss personal problems with most of my teachers.	3.66	A
13. I am reluctant to participate in most class discussions.	3.67	A
14. I cheat during examinations.	2.18	D
15. I appreciate my teachers because they enjoy teaching.	4.37	SA
16. I consider teaching as a career.	3.66	A
17. I am apathetic (or indifferent) towards school.	3.29	MA
18. I feel that school is boring.	2.71	MA
19. I am more concerned with getting good grades than with how much I learn.	3.69	A
20. I try to please my teachers.	3.72	A
21. I am convinced that my school is a safe place.	4.01	A
22. I hope that compulsory school attendance be abolished.	3.01	MA
23. I wish discipline in our school should be tighter.	3.69	A
Overall	3.76	F

Norms:

Range of Scores	Item Descriptive Rating	Overall Descriptive Rating
4.21 – 5.0	Strongly Agree (SA)	Very Favorable (VF)
3.41 – 4.20	Agree (A)	Favorable (F)
2.61 – 3.40	Moderately Agree (MA)	Neutral (N)
1.81 – 2.60	Disagree (D)	Unfavorable (U)
1.0 – 1.80	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Very Favorable (VU)

In addition, school climate perception comes to affect student outcomes and many theories have been conceptualized (Wang and Degol, 2015). Further, in the study of Maxwell et al. (2017) in their investigation on school climate, they provided empirical support demonstrating that school climate and social identification are important variables that have the power to improve student achievement.

As gleaned on the table, students gave the highest mean rating of 4.21 to Item 9 "Our teachers encourage us to try out new ideas". To which they Strongly Agree while Item 5 "Our teachers discourage us to think independently" got the lowest mean rating of 2.39 to which they Disagree. The level of attitude towards school of the respondents is presented in Table 3.

Table 2 shows that the students have a Favorable level of attitude towards school as manifested in the mean rating of 3.76. It is an indication that the students have a good organization of thoughts, feelings and behavioral tendencies towards their school. Further, Item 5, "I understand that the main purpose of education is to help me find a job" received the highest mean rating of 4.61 to which the students Strongly Agree. On the other hand, the lowest item mean rating of 2.18 is given to Item 14 "I cheat during examinations" to which they Disagree.

The level of academic achievement of international students is seen in Table 3.

Table 3
Level of academic achievement of the respondents

Section	Mean Academic Performance	DR
A	2.09	Fair
B	2.27	Fair
C	1.92	Very Good
D	2.28	Fair
As a whole	2.16	Fair

Norms:

Grade Point Average		Descriptive Rating
1.0 - 1.25	=	Excellent
1.5 - 1.75	=	Very Good
2.0 - 2.75	=	Fair
3.0	=	Passing
5.0	=	Failed

As manifested in the table, the international students have a mean achievement of 2.16 which is interpreted as Fair. It shows that international students are doing good in their academics. Same finding is seen in the study conducted by Acena (2015) where students in higher education institutions in Ilocos Sur have a fair level of academic achievement. In addition, Wang and Degol (2015) mentioned that interventions could modify and improve respondents' perceptions of school climate in order to impact student achievement.

The relationship between attitude of international students towards school and school climate is seen in Table 4.

Table 4
Correlations between attitude towards school, school climate and academic achievement

	Attitude towards School
School Climate	0.62*
Academic Achievement	-0.03

*Significant at 0.05 level

The table shows that there exists a significant relationship between attitude towards school of international students and school climate. Maxwell et al. (2017) mentioned that school climate is a leading variable in elaborating student learning and performance. Less work has explored the impact of the student perceptions of school climate raising interesting questions about whether school climate experiences can add "value" to students' performance.

On the other hand, attitude towards school of international students does not have a significant relationship with their academic development. It implies that there are other variables that may be related with academic achievement like attitude towards coursework. Said result is in contrast with the study of Veresova and Mala (2016). They found out that the more favorable the attitude of adolescents towards school and learning is, their academic achievement expressed by grade point average is higher. Further, according to Brodie, Jr. (2011), students who are satisfied with school tend to be greater on tests where academic skills were involved. He concluded that said skill development was more pronounced in students who have positive attitude towards school because of its association with typical classroom objectives and drill routine. Moreover, Espelage et al. (2014); Turner et al. (2014) mentioned that school climate influences students' behavior.

CONCLUSIONS

The status of school climate of the university was fair. The level of attitude towards school was favorable. The academic achievement of the respondents was fair. There was no significant relationship between attitude towards school of the respondents and their profile. There was a significant relationship between attitude towards school of international students and school climate, however there was no significant relationship between the academic achievement of the respondents and their attitude towards school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The enhancement of the school climate is of great concern. This can be done through shared recognition of and commitment to this concern by the school community members. Periodic consultation with all its stakeholders may be conducted. Academic Survival Skills may be introduced to the students by their mother organization to equip themselves with said skills to be retained in their field of specialization. The Psychology Department, in collaboration with Psychology Students Organization Seminar-Workshops on positive attitudinal change, may be conducted to develop a better disposition towards school.

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