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**Effects of School Climate on Pupils' Academic Performance in Government Primary Schools in Busime Sub-County Busia District Uganda**

By

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**Abstract**

School climate is a multi-dimensional aspect that develops concerns in Government primary schools. The study was conducted to establish effects of school climate on pupils' academic performance in government schools in Busime sub county Busia district. The study was guided by systems theory proposed by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy (1968). Ex-Post Facto Research design was employed and it targeted 12 government primary schools, 6393 pupils, 144 members of school management, 132 members of Parents Teachers Association, and 111 teachers in the sub county. Stratified sampling was used to get the sample schools. Questionnaires, observation schedule and interview schedule were used to collect data. Descriptive data was analyzed using frequencies, percentages, standard deviation and mean, and hypotheses were tested using simple analysis of variance. The findings showed that school climate affected academic performance of the pupils in primary schools; the schools that had high school climate performed better academically than those with moderate and low school climate. There was significant effect of physical infrastructure on pupils' academic performance in Busime sub County; the schools that had poorly constructed classrooms and playgrounds, insufficient sanitation facilities, gender insensitive location of toilets, and inadequate and inappropriate desks and other furniture demonstrated poor academic performance than the schools that had moderate and good facilities. The results also revealed that there was significant effect of leadership styles on pupils' academic performance in Busime sub County. The type leadership styles in the course of administering schools determined the learners' performance. There was significant effect of effective instruction and teaching and interpersonal relationship on pupils' academic performance in Busime sub County. The schools with low levels of effective instruction and teaching and interpersonal relationship performed low, those with moderate levels performed averagely and those with high levels of effective instruction and teaching and interpersonal relations performed well in examinations. The study concluded that schools in Busime Sub County were characterized by high, moderate and low school climate resulting into good, average and low academic performance respectively. And among others, the study recommended that school level stake holders, district level and national level stakeholders need to support schools to ensure conducive school climate.

**Key Words:** Effects, School Climate Pupils' Academic Performance, Government Primary Schools, Busime, Uganda

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**Introduction**

Many educational reforms are developed to enhance student performance through improving school environment and testing that resulted from the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002. The school climate research findings have contributed to the U.S. Department of Justice (2014), the U.S. Department of Education's Safe and Drug-Free Schools network, and a growing number of state departments of education emphasizing the importance of safe and caring schools. The U.S. Department of Education (2007) invested in the Safe and Supportive Schools (S3) grant program to support statewide school climate measurement and the study of school climate improvement efforts. A growing number of State Departments of Education are focusing on school climate reform as an essential component of school improvement.

In Spain, Feli e tal. (2017) found that academic climate referred to students as feeling good at school in relation to their learning process. The main aim in this sense is all-round education, which involves planning preventive programmes focused on areas such as emotion management, social skills and values, among others. Informants also believe that academic climate encompasses discipline and the enforcement of rules that aim to correct behavior not conducive to positive and harmonious coexistence. Socially, school climate involved protection and support for teachers, and steps to aid initial adaptation. It should be noted that none of the participating schools reported cases of serious conflict within the school environment, and only one case of peer bullying was mentioned. In this case, an attempt was made not to view and deal with the problem as an issue affecting the entire school, but rather to resolve it with the teachers, family and corresponding member of the inspectorate.

In Sub Saharan Africa Ogamba e.tal. (2017) revealed that schools' climate was not conducive and it negatively influenced pupils' academic performance. Jagero (2011) evaluated school environmental factors affecting performance of boarding secondary students in Kenya. The findings of the study revealed that insufficient lighting system, inadequate teaching-learning materials and facilities, students' indiscipline, lack of proper diet, inadequate dormitories accommodation and sanitary facilities as factors affecting boarding secondary students in the country. Jagero concluded that the main problems facing boarding students was lack of discipline during prep time, lack of adequate reading facilities, and inadequate boarding facilities such as bathrooms, toilets, and water. Parents Teachers Associations and other school related bodies should be strengthened so that they could contribute to the provision of physical facilities of the secondary schools. The provision of more physical facilities especially boarding facilities may improve the performance of the boarding students.

Dagnew (2014) examined impact of school climate on students' academic achievement in Bahir Dar secondary schools in Ethiopia. The study focused on teacher-student relationship,

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student-peer relationship, administration, security and maintenance of the school and academic orientation of school climate aspects. The result revealed that apart from security and maintenance of the school aspect, the rest of the aspects had an effect on students' academic achievement. The focus of this study was on selected school climate aspects and their influence on students' academic achievement in a secondary school set up, however, the current study focused on school climate as a determinant of pupils academic performance in primary schools set up. In East Africa particularly Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya, Uwezo (2012) Report also shows that in actual literacy and numeracy outcomes remain significantly low. The Report further reveals that some schools are faced with a challenge of inadequate basic facilities such as toilets, clean drinking water and sanitary towels. The shortage of such facilities affected schools' daily operations. In Marani Sub-County average mean score for pupils' academic performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examination for the last five years (2011-2015) was 225.76 out of 500 marks (County Director of Education Office, Kisii County, 2016). These results indicated that the Sub-County performance was below average thus concluding that there was dismal performance of pupils in KCPE examination. Studies reviewed concerning low pupils' academic performance in Marani Sub-County had found out that teachers' work load, and motivation affected their job performance and pupils' academic achievement (Ogamba, 2011; Getange & Onsombi 2016; and Momanyi et al 2015).

In Uganda, school climate characterized with violence, and ineffective instruction, over populated classes as a result of UPE, deplorable structures, humiliation and punishment remain in school throughout the primary cycle. In Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity (LARA), (2017) USAID funded baseline study 95.6% of students reported being bullied and 88.3% said they were subjected to corporal punishment within this time frame. While 41.2 % of P3 students said they had experienced sexual harassment in the past term, this number was higher among P5 students of which 50.1 % reported this experience. Munene (2009) however argues that the climate in some public primary schools is characterized by lack of discipline by the head teacher and pupils, late coming by pupils and reduced involvement of stakeholder in the affairs of the school.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In Uganda, ensuring that education is affordable by the majority of Ugandans, progressive provision of minimum and optimal necessary facilities and resources, effective teachers and administrators were among the objectives to be addressed by Universal Primary Education program aiming to better the academic performance of the pupils. It's a point of dismay to the community as schools in the sub-County have always been ranked among last sub counties in PLE for the last four years in Busia district. Parents have always complained of their children's failure to progress to secondary, pupils failing to realize first division and it seems no convincing attempts have been done. In spite of the fact that the government tried to respond to school grants, teacher employment, sensitization of managers and administrators, still pupil's average academic performance is as low as 67.5% pass with 3.5% pass in first grade which deny 96.5% of the pupils to get sponsorship from the government and 32.5% fail to join secondary schools. The stake holders seem not aware of performance improvement through positive school climate. Post

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UPE implementation studies have however cited that pupil's academic achievements still remain low (Mikiko, et al., 2005; Mukisa, et al., 2009), Akombo.C.N, (2006) similarly stated that pupils' performance has been persistently and alarmingly low in Paidha Town Council schools over the years and on the same scenario Nyamosi (2013) stressed that pupils academic performance remained low in Kenyan schools where school climate constructs were perceived low. The government and world vision from 2000 update have endeavored further to donate grants and sensitize school stake holders in school but little has been implemented and achieved. This needs intervention and if not, pupils' scholarly skills and knowledge achievement in PLE will worsen. Uwezo (2012) report also shows that in actual literacy and numeracy outcomes remain significantly low. The Report further reveals that some schools are faced with a challenge of inadequate basic facilities such as toilets, clean drinking water and sanitary towels, a program which is not the case with Busime Sub County in Busia district, Uganda. Therefore, this study investigated effect of school climate on pupils' academic performance in government primary schools Busime Sub County Busia district.

### **Materials and Methods**

The study adopted an ex- post facto design. A target population of 6792 school stake holders in 12 schools was considered. These comprised of 6393 pupils and 111 teachers, 132 Parent Teachers Association members and 144 School Management Committee members. The sample schools were determined using 70%. Random sampling was applied to obtain at least 2 schools in each category. Teachers were selected using simple random sampling. The 45% of teachers in eight sample schools was selected to participate in the research. The head teachers of the sampled schools were automatically selected. The 30% of Parents Teachers Association members were selected in eight sample schools to participate in the study. Simple random sampling was employed on the selection of the PTA so that each member has equal chance to be selected in the sample were sampled. A simple random sampling technique was applied for each to have equal probability of being selected in the sample. The Stratified random sampling based on gender (female and male) was used to select pupils of primary six and seven to be included in the sample. The 10% of pupils in eight sample schools was selected to participate in the research. The instruments for data collection were questionnaire, interviews, and document analysis and observation schedule. The field data was edited, validated for omission, completeness, clarity and accuracy with consistency in preparation for coding process. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to analyze the data collected to answer the research questions. Descriptive statistics used included frequencies, percentages, standard deviation and inferential statistics used was analysis of variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance to test the four hypotheses.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Type of School Climate in Primary Schools**

The research established the type of school climate. The teachers rate four school climate constructs on each given items in their schools to determine their levels, these are physical infrastructure, leadership style, effective instruction and teaching and interpersonal relationship. The likert scale was used to rate the dimensions of school climate. And thud school climate is an average character of a school based on its teachers' experiences of its individual constructs like physical infrastructure, leadership, effective instruction and teaching and interpersonal

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relationship. It was measured on teachers’ perceptions of school climate scale.

**Table 10: School Climate Sub Variables Summary**

School Climate	School Climate	
	Mean	SD
Physical infrastructure	2.83	0.849
Leadership style	2.68	1.192
Effective instruction and teaching	2.92	1.146
Interpersonal relationship	3.19	1.306
	<b>2.89</b>	<b>1.123</b>

Source: Field Data 2020

The physical infrastructure, head teachers’ leadership style, effective instruction and teaching and interpersonal relationship school climate sub variables scored rating mean of 2.83, 2.68, 2.91, 3.19 and standard deviation of 0.849, 1.192, 1.146, and 1.306 respectively. The study disclosed teachers’ perceptions with overall rating mean score of 2.89 and standard deviation 1.123. The type of school climate was generally moderate. However, some teachers rated their school climate as low, moderate and high. The low level had a mean rating of 2.16 with a standard deviation of 0.813, moderate level resulted a mean of 2.59 with a standard deviation of 0.827 and high level produced a mean of 4.01 with a standard deviation of 0.712. The number of respondents in each level were 8, 15 and 9 respectively.

### **Academic Performance of Primary Schools in Busime Sub County**

Academic performance refers to the observable and measurable behavior of pupils in terms of Grade Point Average score in Primary Leaving Examination (PLE).

**Table 12: The Rating Mean Score for Pupils’ Academic Performance in primary Schools in Busime Sub County in Busia District**

Groups	Mean Score
Low Level	2.62
Moderate Level	2.93
High Level	3.28

Source: Field Data 2020

The above scores were obtained using the following representative scale; Division 1 = 5 points, Division 2 = 4 points, Division 3 = 3 points, Division 4 = 2 points, U (Fail) = 1 point, X (ungraded) = 0 point

From the rating mean scores values, level 1(low) had score of 2.62 reflecting low pupils’ academic performance, level 2 (moderate) with a mean score of 2.93 reflecting average

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academic performance, and level 3 (high) had a mean score 3.28 revealing relatively higher academic performance. The PLE performance in Busime Sub County slightly differ as analyzed from academic records of the sampled in the district. This is due to prevailing school climate teachers’ experience in the teaching learning process. The school climate constructs are not convincingly attractive, accommodative to the desired expectations of the teachers hence affecting pupils’ scores in Primary Leaving Examinations. The findings are in line with Ogamba et al. (2017) who revealed that schools whose climate was not conducive negatively influenced pupils’ academic performance. And the reverse was true.

**The relationship Between Physical Infrastructure and Pupils’ Academic Performance.**

**Table 13: The Means Scores for Physical Infrastructure Sub Variable**

Physical Infrastructure Levels	Low Level	Moderate Level	High Level
Mean Scores	23.5	31.3	39

Source: Field Data 2020

From the observation schedule, the researcher found that two schools had scored 26 and 21 giving a mean score of 23.5. The low level of physical infrastructure is the cause of low academic performance in schools E and J as indicated in table 11. The two schools had academic mean score of 2.57 and 2.66 yielding a low mean of 2.62. The results under moderate level indicated three schools whose scores were 31, 33 and 30 giving a mean of 31.3. These moderate results in the table 13 above are contributing to average academic performance in schools C, D and G as indicated in table 11. The schools had average scores of 2.89, 2.86 and 3.03 resulting into a mean score 2.93 in academics. The scores of other three schools were 42, 37 and 38 which resulted into a mean score of 39 as shown in the table 13 above. All the three schools had higher scores compared to other schools hence grouping them under high level. This could be a factor contributing to high performances revealed in these schools. In the span of four years, from table 11 on PLE results schools K, B and H had higher grading scores of 3.32, 3.27 and 3.28 respectively. The findings are in line with Nyamosi (2013) who found that category A school respondents perceived their school infrastructure adequate and they equally performed well. Likewise, category B school respondents (moderate perception) performed averagely, most of the category C school (low perception) respondents performed low which needed much too urgent improvement.

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**The Relationship between Head Teachers' Leadership Styles and Pupils' Academic Performance in Busime Sub County Busia District.**

**Table 14: The Mean Scores for Types of Leadership Styles**

Head teachers' leadership Styles	Laissez-faire (Low Level)	Autocratic (Moderate Level)	Democratic (High Level)
Mean Score	16.28	11.03	28.78

Source: Field Data 2020

The researcher scored the data obtained from head teachers and teachers in eight schools on types of leadership styles. According to the table 14, democratic leadership style was highly rated with a mean score of 28.78. It was categorized high due to 63.9% score obtained from 1151 out of 1800 scores. This was perceived in schools K, B, and H. The high academic rating mean scores 3.32, 3.27 and 3.28 in schools are predicted to be results of democratic leaderships in these schools. Every individual's views are considered in the existence and progress of the school(s). The moderate level was autocratic leadership style with a mean score of 11.03. It was realized that three schools perceived leadership style as being exercised in their schools. The percentage scores were 55.13 obtained from 441 out of 800 scores. These were C, D, and G as indicated in the table 11. The autocratic seem determined the moderate scores of 2.89, 2.86 and 3.03 respectively giving a mean score 2.93 in academics. The teachers operated on the head teachers' strategic plan without interventions. The least level laissez-faire leadership style scored a mean of 16.28. The schools that had low academic performance scores in the sub county perceived the leadership in their schools to be laissez-faire. The percentage scores were 54.25 obtained from 651 out of 1200 scores. The leadership style in these schools (B and E) perceived to be contributing towards the low academic scores of 26 and 21 respectively that resulted into a mean score of 23.5. Active participation indicate goal oriented, less active constantly result any score within the low continuum.

**Relationship between Effective Instruction and Teaching on Pupils' Academic Performance in Busime Sub County Busia District**

**Table 15: Relationship between Effective Instruction and Pupil's Achievement**

Effective Instruction and Teaching	Low Level	Moderate Level	High Level
Mean Score	25	30	35.7

Source: Field Data 2020

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The researcher rated and scored the level of effective teaching and instruction in eight schools. From the observation schedule, the researcher found that two schools had scored 23 and 27 giving a mean score of 25. The two schools produced low scores hence grouping them under low level. The low level of effective teaching and instruction could be the cause of low academic performance in schools E and J as indicated in table 11. The two schools had academic mean score of 2.57 and 2.66 yielding a low mean of 2.62. The results from the observation schedule revealed that at moderate level there were three schools whose score was 24, 30 and 36 giving a mean of 30. These moderate results in the table 15 above are believed to be contributing to average academic performance in schools C, D and G as indicated in table 11. The schools had an average score of 2.89, 2.86 and 3.03 respectively giving a mean score 2.93 in academics. The scores of other three schools were 32, 37 and 38 which resulted into a mean score of 35.7 as shown in the table 15 above. In this category, there were only three schools with higher scores compared to other schools however they were grouped in high category since their mean was relatively high. This could be a factor contributing to high academic performances experienced in these schools. In the span of four years, from table 11 on PLE results schools K, B and H had higher grading mean score of 3.32, 3.27 and 3.28 respectively. The findings are in relation to Ofoegbu (2004) findings in Nigeria who linked poor academic performance of students in Nigeria has been linked to poor teachers' performance in terms of accomplishing the teaching task, negative attitude to work and poor teaching habits which have been attributed to poor motivation. An inspiring teacher can affect students profoundly by stimulating their interest in learning. It is equally true that most students have encountered teachers who were uninspiring and for whom they performed poorly.

### **Effects of Interpersonal Relationship on Pupils' Academic Performance**

**Table 16: The Mean Score for Interpersonal Relationship**

Interpersonal Relationship	Low Level	Moderate Level	High Level
Mean Score	21.5	28.9	32.9

Source: Field Data 2020

The mean scores in the table 16 above was as a result of the data obtained from head teachers, teachers and pupils in eight schools on interpersonal relationship. The results shows that low interpersonal relationship had a mean score of 21.5. This low perception is believed to have led to low academic performance in schools with a mean score of 25. These results were obtained from schools J and E that was characterized with poor relationship among teachers and pupils. The moderate level of interpersonal relationship had a mean score of 28.9. The study found three schools whose teachers, pupils and head teachers perceived the existing relationship as being moderate. The prevailing level of relationship determined the moderate scores of 2.89, 2.86 and 3.03 in schools respectively giving a mean score 2.93 in academics in the schools as displayed in table 11. The results in the table 16 above reveal high interpersonal relationship level with a mean score of 32.9. These high scores perception contributed to high academic performance in schools B, H, and K as indicated in table 11. The schools had an average score

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of 3.27, 3.25 and 3.27 respectively giving a mean score 3.28 in academics. A related study to these finding is that of Martin and colleagues (2007) which examined the same sample of 3,450 high school students and their relationship with teachers and parents. Findings indicated that relationships with teachers and parents significantly predicted motivation, engagement, self-concept, and general self-esteem. These results thus further demonstrated the distinct role that different relationship sources play in student outcomes.

### **Test of Hypotheses**

H<sub>01</sub> There is no significant relationship between the physical infrastructure and pupils' academic performance.

**Table 17: Adequacy of Physical Infrastructure**

Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.781	16	.111	4.567	.034
Within Groups	.366	15	.024		
Total	2.146	31			

Source: Field Data 2020

The p-value was 0.034, which was less than 0.05. This implied that there was significant relationship between physical infrastructure and pupils' academic performance in Busime Sub County and hence the null hypothesis is rejected. The schools that had poor state of physical infrastructure registered poor academic performance, moderate perceived physical infrastructure yielded average academic among pupils while those with good physical infrastructure performed well. This is supported by the findings of Nyamosi (2013) which revealed that the state of the school infrastructure positively influenced academic performance and finally KCPE performance in Kenya; thus low, moderate school infrastructure negatively, neutrally influence academic performance

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**Relationship between Leadership Styles and Pupils' Academic Performance**

H<sub>02</sub> There is no significant relationship between the leadership style and pupils' academic performance.

**Table 18: Head Teachers' Leadership Styles**

Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.687	17	0.099	3.022	.021
Within Groups	.460	14	0.033		
Total	2.146	31			

Source: Field Data 2020

The p-value was 0.021, which was less than 0.05. This implied that there was significant relationship between leadership styles and pupils' academic performance in Busime Sub County and hence the null hypothesis is rejected. A head teacher needs to adapt appropriate leadership styles with the creation of collaborative working environments with higher-levels of commitment, motivation, ownership, developing, trusting and healthier school cultures, facilitating higher productivity and increased student achievements. This concurs with the findings of Virginia, Crum and Sherma (2008), who interviewed principals to gain insight into their practice discovered that principals recognized that they could not physically be in each class to guide instruction, but facilitated and built rapport, and that the staff members held the responsibility of student success which influenced academic achievement of students.

**Relationship between Effective Instruction and Pupils' Academic Performance**

H<sub>01</sub> There is no significant relationship between the effective instruction and teaching, and pupils' academic performance.

**Table 19: Effective Instruction and Teaching**

Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.960	21	.093	5.002	.006
Within Groups	.187	10	.019		
Total	2.146	31			

Source: Field Data 2020

The p-value was 0.006, which was less than 0.05. This showed that there was significant relationship between effective instruction and pupils' academic performance in Busime Sub County and hence the null hypothesis is rejected. The schools that had well organized instruction

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and teaching environment resulted into good academic performance while those with low level of instruction and teaching environment performed relatively low. This is supported by a study in Nigeria by (Ofoegbu 2004), who demonstrated that poor academic performance of students in Nigeria has been linked to poor teachers' performance in terms of accomplishing the teaching task, negative attitude to work and poor teaching habits which have been attributed to poor motivation.

### **Relationship between Interpersonal Relationship and Pupils' Academic Performance**

H<sub>01</sub> There is no significant relationship between the interpersonal relationship and pupils' academic performance.

**Table 20: Interpersonal Relationship**

Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.006	24	0.84	4.182	.029
Within Groups	.140	7	0.020		
Total	2.146	31			

Source: Field Data 2020

The p-value was 0.029, which was less than 0.05. This showed that there was significant relationship between interpersonal relationship and pupils' academic performance in Busime Sub County and hence the null hypothesis is rejected. The schools that had bad interpersonal relationship performed poorly while those with good interpersonal relations performed well in examinations. It is the responsibility of school head teacher to bring social cohesion and positive relationship among the respective school stakeholder. When this is ineffectively done, negative atmosphere would result into poor academic performance in the schools. From the study findings, the schools that had poor interpersonal relationship had low while those with good interpersonal relations performed well in examinations. According to (Maele & Houtte, 2011), student well-being, engagement, relationships, and trust are based upon the perception the student has of the teacher's interpersonal behaviors; social integration leads to positive educational outcomes, student attachment to school increases and positive student outcomes are associated with perceived teacher support by students.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

From the findings the study concludes that schools in Busime Sub County are characterized by high, moderate and low school climate i.e. three schools were in high, three schools were in moderate and two schools were in low category. The pupils' academic performance in most schools was generally low in spite of the fact that the schools' academic performance records were categorized as high, moderate and low scores. There was insufficient library services and classroom conditions as dominant factors that critically affected learning and academic outcomes in the schools. The heads of schools did not apply divergent styles of leadership satisfactorily. The teaching and learning resources like text books,

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test items and materials for making learning aids were key factor perceived low and negatively affected pupils' academic performance. The teacher-teacher and teacher-pupil relationship, discrimination of pupils and indiscipline among pupils was perceived low and hence greatly affected pupils' academic performance. Based on the findings of the study, Primary school head teachers should ensure conducive school environment by providing adequate physical, human and financial resources and exhibit diversified and appropriate mode of leadership styles with the creation of collaborative working environments to realize higher-levels of commitment, motivation, ownership, developing, trusting and healthier school cultures, facilitating higher productivity and increased learners' academic achievement.

The ministry of Education should regularly supply teaching and learning resources to schools to ensure supportive instruction and teaching in primary schools and also built libraries from where children can carry out self-study. By centering "pupil's academic performance", school managers need to develop a school climate improvement model which calls for holistic approach. An approach that involves all school level stake holders to actively participate in creating climate that everyone is proud of. School climate is a dynamic entity whose integral constructs are mirrored and measured from diversified views of managers, teachers, parents and pupils to realize a welcoming environment of learning that is likely to improve the academic performance of pupils.

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