Classroom Environment Factors as Predictors of School Dropout Process among Adolescents in Rural Areas in Mezam Division of the North West Region of Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

This study looked at classroom environment factors that influenced the dropout process of secondary school students in Mezam Division of the North West Region of Cameroon. The study focused specifically on how classroom disciplinary actions/measures influenced the school dropout process as well as how classroom climate kept students out of class and eventual school dropout. A self-constructed questionnaire was used to collect data from students. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis with the aid of the Statistical Package for social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Pearson Product moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings from the study showed that there is a significant relationship between the application harsh disciplinary measures and the dropout process of students, and that there is a relationship between classroom climate and the dropout process of students. It was therefore concluded that classroom environment factors influenced the school dropout process. Based on these findings, it was recommended that student should be oriented to understand how to relate with teachers in order to avoid discipline measures that could push them out of school. Teachers should also create an enabling classroom environment to eliminate tension/anxiety among students It was also recommended that school counsellors, social workers as well as the administrators should monitor the relationship characteristics of teachers and students in order to help them relate properly so as to avoid tension and eventual school dropout.

KEYWORDS: *Classroom Environment Factors, Adolescents, school dropout process, classroom disciplinary measures, classroom climate*

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INTRODUCTION

Providing an enduring school/classroom environment for students means providing positive factors that will favour students' wellbeing and consequently minimize the occurrence of school dropout (Samuel, 2017). Such environments therefore, are to be free from harsh disciplinary measures which could negatively affect the students, create tension in the classroom and eventually send students running away from school. Discipline policies and measures are intended to help solve problems of misbehavior but could sometimes serve as risk factors which can send students out of the classroom. According to Oosthuizen (2010) discipline is important for the maintenance of order and harmony in the school and classroom; and Donnely (2002) holds that, discipline should be reasonable and cooperative rather than autocratic and must not be seen by learners as a display of power by teachers. This implies that students may become scared of measures like corporal punishment, embarrassment from teachers and peers, humiliation and sarcasm. Due to implementation of harsh discipline measures on students for misbehaviours; students who commit what seem to be extremely undesirable actions in the schools/classroom are often looking to get out of the educational environment to begin with. They have no desire to be there and view school as a waste of their time.

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) assumed that risk factors in more proximal social systems exert more influence on the child's development and behavior than risk factors in more distal social systems. He goes on to say that primary studies aimed at determining risk factors for school absenteeism and school dropout are mainly focused on child-related factors and factors present in the microsystems directly surrounding the child, such as family, peer, and school-related factors. Such factors could be as a result of the policies for discipline which could also create a classroom climate that could be conducive or not. Early studies focused on individual characteristics and conditions that might be used to predict which students would drop out of school (Shannon & Blysma, 2003), but research has expanded to investigate additional home, community, and school- based factors that frequently influence graduation rates. Low academic achievement, being retained, and poor attendance are significantly linked to dropping out across elementary, middle, and high school levels (Hammond et al., 2007). Schools factors/classroom environment factors therefore are paramount in the life of a student as he/she goes through school (Samuel, 2017).

According to De Witte et al. (2013) school dropout is defined as leaving education without obtaining a minimal credential, most often a higher secondary education diploma. Despite knowledge on the importance of education, students still enroll into school and do not graduate. School dropout is a problem of importance in the educational community as a whole, due in large part to the considerable percentage of young people who do not complete compulsory school studies (Márquez-Vera et al. 2013). Dropping out is actually a serious problem because it denies the students their fundamental human rights to education. Many factors emanating from the school environment have been advanced for being responsible for school dropout. These factors range from distance from home to school (World Bank, 2004), the quality of friendships (Bidell &Deacon, 2010; Powell &Newgent, 2008). That is why (Hammond et al. (2007) are of the view that students' experiences in school impact whether they will graduate from high school. They go on to say that academic performance and engagement in school are major indicators of potential dropouts. From their point of view, we can see that factors within the school environment such as classroom disciplinary actions/measures as well as classroom climate can also influence school dropout. Lambert et al. (2006) is of the view that the nature through which discipline is administered influences school dropout. To add to these factors, there are factors which also emanate

from the teachers as well as the students that can also influence the rate of school dropout, especially in the crisis-stricken Regions of Cameroon where student have been out of school for a while.

BACKGROUND

Classroom environment factors are those features that occur within the classroom that affect students both directly and indirectly (Turner &Persaud, 2008). Several of these factors which occur within the classroom environment have been found to be responsible for school dropout. Alexander (2008), is of the view that teachers' absenteeism, school location and poor-quality educational provision lead to dropout. For Fornwalt (1947) teachers who subject their students to shame, sarcasm, humiliation, contribute to their dropping out of school. Teachers at times subject their students to the above, do so as a form of discipline and could serve as a push out factor to the students who may feel unwanted in the classroom. This means that teacher's attitude towards students can create situations that could actually send student out of school. This can be the case with students who come rural areas and students who go back to school after a "very long break" due to environmental factors triggered by social/political crisis. Such students may not be able to tolerate some discipline measures and may prefer to leave school before graduation. The discipline approach employed in the teaching/learning process, like the authoritarian approach could result to students absenting themselves from school (Miles, 2000). When students absent from school; they miss out on lessons and this may lead to failure and eventual dropout. Juneja (2001) points that in areas where schools are further away from home, the distance may be considered too far for students to cover which easily leads to withdrawal. Corporal punishment in school is also responsible for high dropout rate in the world, standing at 50% during the first years of education (United Nations, 2008; Hussain, 2011).

School dropout as we can see from research findings occurs both in the developed and the less developed world. Bacolod and Ranjan (2012) indicated that the annual number of high school dropouts in the USA alone in 2005 was estimated to be about 3,030,000 translating into 8,300 dropouts per day. UNESCO (2012) revealed that Africa has the world's highest drop-out rate. 42% of African school children will leave school early, with about one in six leaving before Grade 2. This means that more than two in five children who start school will not reach the last grade of primary education. Africa has been relatively good at getting children into primary school, but poor at inducing them to complete their primary education. In

a study by Oxfam (Watkins, 2000), for example, it was discovered that fewer than one third of the boys and one tenth of the girls aged between 6 and 11 start school and one quarter of those who do start drop out during the first two grades. Girls are more likely to drop out in early stages than the boys are.

Numerous studies have pointed to the factors at school level which can be significant for the dropout phenomenon. Although there is no single factor (or event) leading to dropping out, the risk increases if several factors coexist for a longer period of time (Charmaraman & Hall, 2011). Reference works list various characteristics of schools that can be decisive for the occurrence of dropping out: school size and type, school equipment and resources (De Witte, Cabus, Thyssen, Groot, &Van-Den-Brink (2013)). Equally, there is an agreement in a vast number of studies on the significance of social and academic climate, teachers' practices and the quality of teaching on students' dropout decision (Blue & Cook, 2004) De Witte et al., 2013; Rumberger, (2004) is of the view that student/teacher relationship has a considerable impact on students being satisfied with school, on their wellbeing, and even academic achievement; it is therefore clear that unsatisfactory relationships with teachers and classroom discipline could be amongst the main causes of early school dropout (Fortin, Marcotte, Diallo, Potvin, & Royer, 2013). Lessard, Butler-Kisber, Fortin, Marcotte, Potvin & Egide (2004) indicated that students (particularly boys) who perceive relationships with teachers as negative are at a significantly greater risk of dropping out.

Most researchers agree that school dropout is a complex process which is not determined by a single factor, but rather by a combination of factors (Janosz, Le Blanc, Boulerice & Tremblay., 2000; Lyche, 2010; Rumberger, 2011). This implies that both internal factors coming within the individual and external environmental factors like teachers' attitude as well as classroom disciplinary measures can trigger school dropout among students. In discussing the reasons why students drop out of school, Stearns and Glennie (2006) draw a distinction between pull-out and push-out theories. As per the former, the student is the one who, having assessed gains and losses, decides to leave school early since other important activities await outside, for example, job opportunities or familial duties. This may occur in cases where such students work and go to school. The economic benefits they derieve from working can motivate them to drop out of school. When it comes to the latter, these authors believe it is school that, due to its structure and practices, rejects students, that is,

has a negative impact on their experience of it and the state of wellbeing in school (Stearns & Glennie, 2006). According to Lessard, Poirier and Fortin (2010) most theoretical models lay more emphasis on school related factors as compared to family related ones, demonstrating their crucial importance for early school leaving.

Furthermore, it has been shown that strict measures for punishing students with disciplinary problems or poor attendance represent a significant factor connected to dropping out. According to the European Commission, (2013), schools with higher dropout rates do not focus on the needs of individual students and thus do not provide adequate learning support for students with additional support needs. Still, schools which successfully retain their students have fair disciplinary procedures, attentive teachers, high expectations and numerous opportunities for meaningful participation. Successful schools do not focus on deficits but on their students' strength, and continually carry out student support programs, which involve parents and local community representatives (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004).

The social learning theory of Albert Bandura (1977)

This study was informed by social learning theory of Bandura with great focus on his concept of reciprocal determinism; which explains how the environment, personal factor and behaviour functions to influence behavior.

Bandura (1977) social learning theory stresses the importance of observational learning, imitation and modeling. "Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do". His theory integrates a continuous interaction between behaviors, cognitions and the environment to explain behavior. While in school, the entire environment including teachers, parents, administrators and student function together to determine one another's behavior.

Bandura's theory states that a person's behavior is influenced by the environment and vice versa. In simpler terms, it means that the environment tends to make changes in the behavior of the individual, and in return, the behavior of the individual is also responsible for a change in the environment. So, it means that not only does the environment influence the person's thinking, but the person's subsequent behavior also influences the environment. Thus, there are three main factors that are dealt with in this theory. They are known as **triadic reciprocal causation**.

- ➢ Personal factors (thoughts, feelings, etc.)
- ➢ Behavior
- ➢ External environment

According to Badura (1969),
An example of reciprocal determinism can be seen in the classroom: a child talking loudly in class because he/she is bored **(personal factor)**. When the teacher reprimands the child **(environment)**, he/she may either stop talking or become rebellious by talking even louder **(behavior)**, in which case, the teacher may send the child to detention or to the principal's office.

Reciprocal determinism is the theory that portrays that a person's actions, behavior, or decisions are just an outcome of the events that have happened in the past (Bandura (1969). This means that our actions are just reactions to what has already happened. The way we behave today is just a reaction to past events. We can therefore see that students who do not feel comfortable with teachers behaviour, kept of class often, experience tension in the classroom, are bullied or given constant corporal punishment can begin to nurture plans to leave school.

Classroom Disciplinary Measures and School Dropout
Disciplinary actions/measures may be positive or negative. Negative discipline entails inflicting punishment, while positive discipline aims at influencing the person to behave differently and could determine the discipline climate in a classroom. Cheema and Kitsantas (2014) conceptualise disciplinary climate as the perceptions that students hold on the consistency of classroom rules and how teachers address behavioural problems during class. Students who exhibit disruptive classroom behaviors experience both academic and psychosocial difficulties and may strain limited school resources and services (Bidell& Deacon, 2010). Such inappropriate behaviors are occurring in school classrooms with increasing frequency, resulting in increased disciplinary referrals and lowered academic achievement. Disciplinary infractions in elementary, middle, and high school have also been linked to dropping out, as have antisocial behaviors including getting in trouble with the police, acts of violence, and substance abuse (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986). Disciplinary infractions are most often handled with sanctions which range from corporal punishment, withdrawal, suspension or dismissal. Corporal punishment is a type of punishment dreaded by students, but most often used by teachers to curb misbehaviours immediately they occur (Oosthuizen 2021). The United Nations Children's Fund (2001) states that corporal punishment decreases a child's

motivation and increases his or her anxiety. As a consequence, the ability to concentrate is inhibited, and learning is poor; this can therefore send the child out of school before graduation. Corporal punishment like other kinds of sanctions have been shown to contribute to truancy and high dropout rates in schools (Kimani et al. 2012).

Nesse (2010) explained dropping out as the termination of compulsory education as well as leaving school before completing it. The cause of a student dropping out is often termed as the antecedent of dropout because it refers to the pivotal event which leads to dropout. This event, however, is the culmination of a much longer process of leaving school that began long before the date that a student actually discontinues attendance. Dropping out as defined by Eric (1987) is a process that takes place over time rather than a status at one point in time. This means that before a student actually drops out of school, a lot of issues come to play as triggers and may be the unfolding of many such issues or factors. Literature has also suggested that school dropout might be regarded as the last stage of a dynamic, cumulative and multidimensional process of school disengagement (Andrei et al., 2012) in which multiple causes at different levels (individual, family, school, and neighborhood) might be explaining this phenomenon. Such causes could be within the classroom setting.

Existing dropping out models like Fin (1989), suggest that the process of dropping out is influenced by several factors as well as general attitudes. Dropping out according to Newmann (1992) is but a final stage in a dynamic and cumulative process of disengagement or withdrawal from school. This disengagement or withdrawal come be influenced by the classroom climate of misbehavior on the part of students. From the above arguments, this process could be triggered by different factors ranging from personal to external. Disciplinary factors which are internal factors could serve as measures which could influence students drop out.

Generally, dropout is understood by many researchers as a developmental process, starting in earliest grades (Finn, 1989; Evans, Chiccchelli, Cohen & Shapiro, 1995). Similarly, these researchers noted that dropout is the inability of the learner to continue with school, usually due to learner's own capability (performance and behaviour) or socioeconomic conditions. There are also circumstances where the system is responsible for not enabling the learner to continue in school, what some researchers call pushout as opposed to dropout (Reddy &Sinha, 2010; Ananga, 2011). While there may sometimes be a significant

singular social or economic event that influences a student to leave school before completion, the decision to drop out is the culmination of a long-term process of academic, psychological, and behavioral disengagement from school (Christensen & Stout, 2009; Christle, Jolivette& Nelson, 2007). As Bradshaw, O'Brennan& McNeely (2008) posit that there is an increasing awareness that school failure and early school leaving are processes, rather than discrete events. Students frequently experience several causes at the same time until they become so overwhelmed that dropping out of school seems like a better decision than staying in (McNeil, Coppola, Radigan, & Vazquez Heiling, 2008).

Reasons Why Students Drop Out of School
In looking at some possible reasons why students drop out of school, the researcher used the model of Jordan et al.(1994); Watt &Roessingh, (1994) which focused on the "Push, Pull, and Falling Out" The push, pull and falling out model framework was developed by two groups of authors to explain reasons why students drop out such that they can be "pushed, pulled, or fall out" of school (Jordan et al., 1994; Watt &Roessingh, 1994). These accounts can be integrated to explain the overall dropout experience of students.

Jordan et al. (1994) began by explaining pressures on students of push and pull dropout factors. A student according to them is pushed out when adverse situations within the school environment lead to consequences, ultimately resulting in dropout. These they say include tests, attendance and discipline policies, and even consequences of poor behavior. Classroom disciplinary measures used by teachers could as well serve as push out factors which could possibly send out students from school. They however, continue in the model to say that students can be pulled out when factors inside the student divert them from completing school. These occur when factors, such as financial worries, out-of-school employment, family needs, or even family changes, such as marriage or childbirth, pull students away from school. They can even include illnesses, as these cause students to put a greater value on something outside of school, and therefore they do not complete school.

Watt and Roessingh (1994) added a third factor called "falling out" of school, which occurs when a student does not show significant academic progress in schoolwork and becomes apathetic or even disillusioned with school completion. It is not necessarily an active decision, but rather a "side-effect of insufficient personal and educational support". Also, more than push or pull factors, falling out factors highlight a process in school dropout whereby the student gradually increases in behaviours or desires of academic disengagement, yet without being forced out by the school (by push factors) or lured out by things they need or want (by pull factors; Finn, 1989; Finn &Pannozzo, 1995). As a result, these students eventually disappear or fall outfrom the system. Whatever be the case, disciplinary measures used by teachers to curb disruptive/maladaptive behaviours which could also determine the classroom climate could actually serve as push out factors that may eventually materialized to actual dropping out.

Of the three indicators of drop out mentioned above, that is pull out, push-out and fall-out, this study focused on push-out which is a drop out indicator emanating from the school environment. As explained, Push-out factors are those factors from within the school that encourage some students to leave school, such as policies and procedures, school structure, school climate, and environmental issues that alienate students. For example, some school personnel may find it more practical and/or convenient to remove challenging students from school even if they are still officially enrolled (Ross Epp&Epp, 2001). These students are commonly considered dropouts. Students are aware of the push-out process and more frequently cite push-out factors such as not liking school, failing academically, excessive absenteeism, or having difficult relationships with teachers as their primary reasons for leaving school (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Ekstrom et al., 1986).

Classroom Climate and School Dropout Process
School and classroom climate play a prominent role in the academic and psychological development of students (Wang and Degol, 2016; Grewe, 2017). They go on to state that School climate has an important influence on the psychological development of children and young people; and can actually determine students stay in school or drop out of school. Whilst sharing some characteristics, school and classroom climate are two distinct, yet interdependent, multidimensional constructs. School climate refers to the shared patterns of experience of all people in school life and thus reflects the norms, values, objectives, and the general shaping of interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organisational structures (Thapa et al., 2013). Meanwhile, across the varying definitions and aspects of classroom climate there is a consensus that it refers to the socially shared subjective representation of important characteristics of the school class as a learning environment (Eder, 2002).

An important aspect of classroom climate involves the relationships between individuals: both among students and between students and their teachers. Based on social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), the social climate of the classroom can significantly impact the development of student behavior as well as how teachers interact with students. The classroom climate is a compilation of factors including social interactions between students and teachers, behavioral and academic expectations, as well as the physical environment of the classroom (Freiberg, 1999).

School climate which translates into the classroom is a multidimensional construct that denotes the character and quality of school as well as classroom life. Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, &Pickeral (2009) hold that dimensions of school climate include the sense of physical and emotional safety, the quality of teaching and learning, the quality of relationships in the school, and structural characteristics of the school. The school climate we can imagine translates into the classroom climate and could be explain as we see from the views of Cohen et al. form the quality of classroom management factors. A positive school climate refers to an environment that nurtures the best qualities of individuals and promotes academic achievement (Orpinas& Horne, 2006).

Teachers have the main responsibility of ensuring that the classroom environment is conducive to learning (Matsumura, Slater and Crosson, 2008). Students may feel that the school climate is negative, and may double down on deviant exploits, if they perceive that their teachers are unfair or biased in their interpretations of students' behaviour (Pena-Shaff et al., 2019). Teachers usually come out with classroom rules and regulations to manage the class so as to have a positive climate that will promote effective teaching and learning. Such rules which are usually intended for appropriate organization and management of the class might be implemented in ways which may rather create tension among the students thus pushing them out of class.

Statement of the Problem

The right to education has been reiterated by many international conventions. Despite such rights and availability of schools which provide access for all, some children gain admission but do not complete school. Though some students do not work hard in school to complete; some may be pushed out of school by classroom environment factors. Such factors many come from students experiences with disciplinary measures which may be harsh; and may be detrimental to students staying in school; thus, dropping out. Some teachers exhibit a luke warm attitude toward students while placing high expectations on them that could lead to a tense classroom climate and make the classroom unfriendly thus pushing out the students. When students do not meet up with expectations, and are subjected disciplinary measures for not meeting up; they may become demotivated and eventually dropout of school.

OBJECTIVES
Main objective

To find out how school environment factors serve as predictors of school dropout process among adolescents in rural areas in the North West Region of Cameroon

Specific Objectives

➢ Investigate how classroom disciplinary measures predict school dropout process among adolescents in rural areas in Mezam Division.

➢ Find out the nature of the relationship between classroom climate and the dropout process of adolescents in rural areas in Mezam Division.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

➢ How do classroom environment factors serve as predictors of school dropout process among adolescents in rural areas in Mezam Division?

Specific Research Questions

➢ How do classroom disciplinary measures influence school dropout process among adolescents in rural areas in Mezam Division?

➢ What is the nature of the relationship between classroom climate and the school dropout process among adolescents in rural areas in Mezam Division?

Research hypotheses

Classroom environment factors serve as predictors of school dropout process among adolescent in rural areas in Mezam Division.

Specific research hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between classroom disciplinary measures and school dropout process among adolescents in rural areas in Mezam Division.

Ha1: There is a significant relationship classroom disciplinary measures and school dropout process among adolescents in rural areas in Mezam Division.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between classroom climate and school dropout process among adolescents in rural areas in Mezam Division.

Ha2: There is a significant relationship between classroom climate and school dropout process among adolescents in rural areas in Mezam Division.

METHODOLOGY

The survey and correlation design methods were used in this study. This was done to associate classroom environment factors and student dropout process in rural areas in Mezam Division.

A questionnaire (Likert scale) instrument was used to collect data from secondary school students. Classroom disciplinary measures and classroom climate indicators were examined to see how they influenced school dropout process. Purposive sampling was used to select form 2 and 3 students who showed a sign of dropping out, that is they had a record of absenteeism, out of class punishment, lateness and skipping classes.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data collected. Frequency counts and percentages were used to answer the research questions while Pearson product moment correlation and the p-value statistic were used to test the hypotheses at the 5% significance level. The analysis was aided by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study are presented based on research questions under investigation

Research Question 1: How does classroom disciplinary measure relate to school dropout process among adolescent in rural areas in Mezam Division?

Table 1 Showing responses to classroom disciplinary measures

Items	Positive response			Negative Response		
	SA	**A**	**Subtotal**	**D**	**SD**	**Subtotal**
The teachers ask us to determine the type of sanction for misbehaviour	41 (16.4%)	56 (22.4%)	97 (38.8%)	116 (46.4%)	37 (14.8%)	153 (61.2%)
I am usually beaten by the teacher when I break any rule	146 (58.4%)	101 (40.4%)	247 (98.8%)	1 (0.4%)	2 (0.8%)	3 (1.2%)
My teachers ask me to kneel when I disturb in class	168 (67.2%)	66 (26.4%)	234 (93.6%)	12 (4.8%)	4 (1.6%)	16 (6.4%)
I am beaten most times when I come late for class	29 (11.6%)	156 (62.4%)	185 (74.0%)	56 (22.4%)	9 (3.6%)	65 (26.0%)
I miss some lessons because of out of class punishments	241 (96.4%)	9 (3.6%)	250 (100%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
The teachers send me out of class when I make noise	68 (27.2%)	75 (30.0%)	143 (57.2%)	61 (24.4%)	46 (18.4%)	107 (42.8%)
I skip class when I know that I will be punished	249 (99.6%)	1 (0.4%)	250 (100%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)

The responses on Table 1 shows that teachers unilaterally determine the punishment to administer to students for any misbehaviour without seeking the students' opinions. The table further indicates that these punishments include beatings, asking students to kneel down, expulsion from classes and other out of class punishments. These punishments appear to make students stay away from school as 100% of the respondents indicated that they miss some lessons because of out of class punishments and that they skip class when they know that they will be punished.

Research Hypothesis 1:

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between classroom disciplinary measures and dropout process of students.
Ha₁: There is a significant relationship between classroom disciplinary measures and dropout process of students.

Table 2 Showing Correlation Between Classroom Discipline and School Dropout Process

				classroom disciplinary measures	School dropout process
Classroom Disciplinary measures	Pearson Correlation			1	. 690**
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000
	N			250	250
	Bootstrap[b]	Bias		0	.000
		Std. Error		0	.003
		95% Confidence Interval	Lower	1	.593
			Upper	1	. 696
School dropout process	Pearson Correlation			. 690**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	
	N			250	250
	Bootstrap[b]	Bias		.000	0
		Std. Error		.003	0
		95% Confidence Interval	Lower	. 593	1
			Upper	. 696	1
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).					

A two tailed correlation matrix using Pearson Product moment Correlation was computed to inter-match the correlation indices of the predictor and criterion variables. The results revealed a high positive correlation index of 0.690 between classroom disciplinary measure and school dropout process. This value (r = 0.690, df = 249, p<0.05) is significant at 5% level of significance. Cognizant of the fact that p-value (level of significance) of the hypothesis is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and uphold the alternative hypothesis.

The correlation is strong and positive. From the index we inferred that an increase in harsh classroom disciplinary measures leads to an increase in school dropout process.

Research question 2: What is the nature of the relationship between classroom climate and the school dropout process among adolescent boys in rural areas in Mezam Division?

Table 3 Showing responses for classroom climate

Items	Positive response			Negative Response		
	SA	A	Subtotal	D	SD	Subtotal
I feel safe when I am in class	12 (4.8%)	80 (32.0%)	92 (36.8%)	100 (40.0%)	58 (23.2%)	158 (63.2%)
I feel tense when my teacher enters the class	85 (34.0%)	57 (22.8%)	142 (56.8%)	108 (43.2%)	0 (0.0%)	108 (43.2%)
There is no bullying from fellow students in class	11 (4.4%)	30 (12.0%)	41 (16.4%)	204 (81.6%)	5 (2.0%)	209 (83.6%)
I feel good being in class	14 (5.6%)	95 (38.0%)	109 (43.6%)	116 (46.4%)	25 (10.0%)	141 (56.4%)
There is no victimization in my class	3 (1.2%)	15 (6.0%)	18 (7.2%)	155 (62.0%)	77 (30.8%)	232 (92.8%)
The teachers are concerned about our welfare	9 (3.6%)	65 (26.0%)	74 (29.6%)	86 (34.4%)	90 (36.0%)	176 (70.4%)
Students are involved in the decision process in school	0 (0.0%)	11 (4.4%)	11 (4.4%)	201 (80.4%)	38 (15.2%)	239 (95.6%)
My classroom environment does not pose any harm to us	9 (3.6%)	86 (34.4%)	95 (38.0%)	115 (46.0%)	40 (16.0%)	155 (62.0%)
I feel connected to my class	24 (9.6%)	65 (26.0%)	89 (35.6%)	125 (50.0%)	36 (14.4%)	161 (64.4%)
I have a strong sense of belongingness to my school	23 (9.2%)	86 (34.4%)	109 (43.6%)	126 (50.4%)	15 (6.0%)	141 (56.4%)

Table 3 shows that most students are not comfortable with their classroom climates as their responses suggest that most (63.2%) of them do not feel safe when they are in class. Majority (56.8%) of them even feel tense when their teachers enter the classroom. The responses further suggest that the classroom environment is characterized by bullying and victimization, with teachers not concerned with students' welfare as there are not even included in classroom decision making processes. The aforementioned and more as indicated on Table 3, can justify why most students (56.4%) do not have a strong sense of belongingness to their schools. Thus, when the classroom climate is unfavourable to students, they do not feel like belonging to the school. A logical consequence to this is that they drop out of the school.

Research hypothesis 2:
$H0_2$: There is no significant relationship between classroom climate and dropout process of students.
Ha_2: There is a significant relationship between classroom climate and dropout process of students.

Table 4 Showing correlation between classroom climate and school dropout process

Correlations			Classroom climate	School dropout process
Classroom climate	Pearson Correlation		1	. 599[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000
	N		250	250
	Bootstrap[b]	Bias	0	.000
		Std. Error	0	.004
		95% Confidence Interval	Lower	1	. 592
			Upper	1	. 696
School dropout process	Pearson Correlation		. 599[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N		250	250
	Bootstrap[b]	Bias	.000	0
		Std. Error	.004	0
		95% Confidence Interval	Lower	. 592	1
			Upper	. 696	1
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).				

A two tailed correlation matrix using Pearson Product moment Correlation was computed to inter-match the correlation indices of the predictor and criterion variables. The results revealed significant relationship between classroom climate and school dropout process, (r =0.599, df=249, p<0.05). Cognizant of the fact that p-value (level of significance) of the hypothesis is less than 0.05; we reject the null hypothesis and uphold the alternative hypothesis.

This means that when classroom climate becomes increasingly unfavourable, school dropout rate also increases significantly.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
The findings of this study discussed according the results obtained from the analysis of the research questions and hypotheses. From the verification of the hypotheses, it was revealed that classroom environment factors had an influence on the school dropout process among adolescents in secondary schools in Mezam division in the North West Region of Cameroon.

Classroom Disciplinary Measures and School Dropout Process:
The first research hypothesis was retained as it indicated that harsh classroom disciplinary measures predicts school dropout process among adolescent students. This could be seen with the correlation value of 0.690 which show a positive correlation between classroom disciplinary measures and school dropout process. The p-value as shown table 1 above is less than 0.05; therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis was retained indicating that the disciplinary measures used in the classroom actually predict school dropout process. From the responses given to the research questions, it was realized that most students indicated that they will prefer to stay out of class to avoid punishment. Some also indicated that they are usually asked to kneel down or beaten when they misbehave in class. Following the results, we can see that some disciplinary measures actually serve as push out factors for students. This result is supported by the

other research studies as will be seen below. Using data from a national longitudinal study, Carpenter and Ramirez (2007) found that even when considering a range of individual, family and school factors, the number of suspensions a student received was directly linked to the likelihood a student would drop out. This is true as was observed in the present study. Tambo (2003) also holds that, punishment can promote motivation and good behavior in some cases but the result of the use of punishments have been found to be quite undesirable and usually produce side effects such as fear, dislike, hatred, a desire to revenge by those who are punished. This therefore means that students who are punished for breaking of rules can actually change but some may give up on schooling in a long run.

The Nature of the Relationship between Classroom Climate and the School Dropout

The second research hypothesis was retained as it indicated that classroom climate predicts school dropout process among adolescent students. This could be seen with the correlation value of 0.599 which indicated a positive relationship between classroom climate and the school dropout process. The p-value as shown table 4 above is less than 0.05; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is retained indicating that the nature of classroom climate predicts school dropout process. The indicators of classroom climate in this study actually revealed that some students feel victimized/bullied in the class, not connected, lack a sense of belonging in class, as well as feel tense when the teacher enters the class. Their responses showed that they lacked the sense of belonging which could eventually push them out of school. Such indicators denote a negative classroom climate which could easily push out the students from school. That is why McNeely and Falci (2004) opine that an important aspect of a positive school climate is having a strong, caring relationship with teachers or, at least, with one adult in the school. But as indicated in this study, most of the study lacks the sense of belonging and connectedness with the members of the classroom.

Fox and Boulton (2006) also hold that lack of social skills and not having good friends are associated with school victimization and lower rates of school completion.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Following the results of this study, it was therefore concluded that classroom environment factors influenced the school dropout process. Based on these findings, it was recommended that student should negotiate classroom rules, regulations as well as sanctions with the teachers. They should be oriented

to understand how to relate with teachers in order to avoid discipline measures that could push them out of school. Teachers should also create an enabling classroom environment to build on the sense of connectedness/belonging and avoid victimization, bullying, harassment, humiliation and tension/anxiety among students. It was also recommended that school counsellors, social workers as well as the administrators should monitor the relationship characteristics of teachers and students in order to help them relate properly so as to avoid tension and eventual school dropout.

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