

THE IMPACT OF CLASSROOM DECORS ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES IN CENTRAL VISAYAS, PHILIPPINES



JOURNAL OF ONGOING EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

2024

Volume: 2

Issue: 2

Pages: 138-143

Document ID: 2024JOER33

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.14272776

Manuscript Accepted: 2024-12-04 10:56:42

The Impact of Classroom Decors on Academic Performance: a Qualitative Exploration of Senior High School Students' Experiences in Central Visayas, Philippines

Mary Jane D. Aniñon*, Aira C. Bitoon, Kia Kim Chi E. Baldoza, Hilary C. Relon, Angel M. Bentula, Melyn B. Flora, Char-Mae D. Bentula, Rujonel F. Cariaga

For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

Abstract

The impact of classroom environment on academic performance and involvement of senior high school students in Central Visayas, Philippines, is investigated in this qualitative research. This study looks at how teens see and adjust to various learning settings in 2023, which requires bare-walled classrooms. Fifty students were chosen using a phenomenological method from purposive sampling; data were gathered via open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The results show that while bare-walled classrooms help to increase attention and concentration, they could also lower involvement and creativity. On the other hand, ornamented classrooms improve emotional well-being and motivation but could divert attention from academic work. The research concludes that a balanced strategy combining minimum distractions with functional aesthetics may maximize learning surroundings, therefore improving both concentration and involvement. This study offers practical suggestions for teachers, managers, and legislators on designing appropriate learning environments that support academic performance.

Keywords: Academic Performance, Student Perspectives, Student Engagement, Emotional Well-being, Educational Policy, Classroom Aesthetics, Classroom Design

INTRODUCTION

Scholars stressing the importance of physical surroundings in forming students' cognitive, emotional, and social development have long been researching and debating the design of educational settings worldwide (Barrett et al., 2015; Uddin, 2023). School architecture and classroom aesthetics are painstakingly created in industrialized countries to improve student involvement, focus, and general academic success (Loveland, 2018). However, as educational institutions prioritize simplicity and functionality, discussions concerning possible trade-offs between involvement and concentration have surfaced. Although they help with creativity, too much visual stimulation has been connected to cognitive overload and shorter attention spans (Stern-Ellran et al., 2016).

Recently, in 2023, the Department of Education (DepEd) required classroom decorations to be removed if not absolutely essential. This change in policy shows a more general attempt to standardize classroom settings and raise student concentration. But among teachers, parents, and students—especially in rural places like Central Visayas, where classroom aesthetics typically inspire pride and community identity—the mandate has generated debate (Cruz, 2023). Many kids in these areas find decorated classrooms motivating and a source of belonging. Hence, the change to bare-walled environments may

be emotionally taxing.

Although the link between classroom design and student achievement in industrialized nations is well-researched, few studies have looked at this question in the Philippine context—especially in rural areas. Few studies have also looked at students' impressions and experiences moving from decorated to bare-walled classrooms. This study aims to close this discrepancy using a qualitative investigation of senior high school students' impressions and adaptation to various classroom environments.

This research should be relevant to policymakers, managers, and teachers in the Philippines and beyond. Understanding children's experiences and preferences helps stakeholders decide on a classroom design that strikes a balance between appearance and utility. The results may also direct DepEd policies' execution so that learning settings encourage students' emotional well-being and academic performance.

Research Objectives

To find how senior high school students see decorated vs bare-walled classrooms.

To investigate how classroom design affects students' academic performance, attention, and drive.

To find ideas for designing balanced learning settings that improve attentiveness and involvement.

Problem Statement

The current trend toward simple classroom designs begs issues concerning how they affect students' learning environment. The purpose of this research is to find how senior high school students in Central Visayas see and adjust to various classroom aesthetics as well as how these surroundings affect their academic performance.

Research Questions

How do seniors in high school see the effects of decorated vs bare-walled classrooms on their academic performance?

How have kids found it to go from decorated to bare-walled classrooms?

What suggestions do students offer for the design of ideal learning environments?

Literature Review

Studies show that classroom appearance greatly influences student enthusiasm and involvement. Educational posters, student artwork, and vibrant decorations—visual components—create an exciting setting that stimulates imagination and passion for learning (Barrett et al., 2015). Bare walls and an emphasis on utility define minimalist classrooms, which have been demonstrated to improve attention and reduce distractions. The best classroom layout combines practical aesthetics that support learning goals with space constraints without overwhelming them. While keeping an orderly surroundings, educational charts, idea maps, and student work displays may provide visual support for academic information. How students learn, how well they do in school, and how healthy they are can all be changed by their classroom. Finding out about the school's people, culture, and building is essential if you want it to be a good place to learn. The classroom and its setup can affect how well students know and follow the lessons. Barrett et al. (2015) say that natural light, clean air, and well-designed furniture help students think and participate more in class. If the classroom is clean, everyone can learn and pay attention better. It lets everyone work together and follow the rules. Makaremi et al. (2024) also said that well-lit, quiet classes with comfy chairs will help students do better in school and stay healthy. In 2020, Ahmed et al. found that students did better in school when the classrooms were clean and it was easy for them to see what they needed to learn. Going to better schools will

be very helpful for students who live in poor places. Many people have also considered how schools might be different because of race. Yet, Seftianingsih and Rifai (2024) found that Students are busier and more creative when they use colorful things. They don't make these sounds as loud so that they can help them sleep and wake up. A study by Abdullah Habib et al. (2023) looked at the colors of classroom walls. Dark colors attracted fewer people.

On the other hand, people were more interested and excited by warm, bright colors. The school would be a better place to learn if the colors were chosen well. They could change how students feel and think. Franklin and Pleis also pushed for learning spaces that are open enough to support different learning styles and encourage both one-on-one and group work in 2022. People who want to become teachers have learned that changing the school environment can help students learn and be more active. Students are more motivated to do their work and interested in it when they are with other people rather than when the classroom is set up. Hanaysha et al.'s 2023 study found that students are busier and do better in school when they can talk to each other, accept each other, and work together. Students are more likely to enjoy school and do well if they learn how to listen and value. When many other students were around, there was less boredom and more desire to learn. This backs up what Hepburn et al. (2021) said about how keeping things fair and regular in the classroom helps students behave and pay attention, which makes it a better place to learn.

Martin and Wilkins (2022) said that better and more pleasant places can help students with ASD feel safe and encouraged as they learn and grow. In 2022, Crane looked at how essential things to the students' societies helped them remember the past. After reading this, they felt better about their state of mind and school. It's easy to see why putting Students in groups with people like them is essential. This will help them feel like they belong and bring people together. A study by Hanaysha et al. in 2023 found that students do better in school when technology makes learning more fun and engaging. According to Ahmed et al. (2020), everyone should use technology similarly.

Lopez (2020) said that how students use computers in elementary schools is affected by how happy their teachers are with their jobs, what their students like, and what they need in the pictures they use. Students will find it more fun and interesting to learn this way, which will make more students happy and interested. Zhou said in 2023 that classroom plans should be

changed to better meet the needs of students now that the pandemic is over. This was especially true in places where people learned trades.

So, how well the school's physical, social, and cultural parts work together significantly impacts the students' health and grades. Every teacher can plan and teach lessons that help their students grow as people, thinkers, and social beings. Students who attend a good school feel safe, wanted, and ready to do their best. This can be done with the help of lights, color schemes, the school setup, the students' chatter, and the tech they use.

Methodology

Research Design

This study investigated students' experiences with various classroom aesthetics using a phenomenological research methodology.

Research Participants

Selected using selective sampling, the participants were fifty senior high school students from different Negros Oriental institutions.

Data Collection

Open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews allow data to be gathered, allowing students to explore their opinions and experiences thoroughly.

Data Analysis

Theme analysis found recurrent themes of involvement, attention, and academic success. Responses were arranged, classified, and analyzed to provide important new perspectives.

Ethical Considerations

Every participant gave informed permission, and maintaining anonymity would help to guarantee secrecy.

Limitations

The research was confined to a particular geographical and cultural setting, so the generalizability of the results could suffer.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Three primary themes—engagement and motivation, focus and concentration, and balancing aesthetics and utility—form the framework of the study. Every issue is supported within the larger educational conversation and shown with accurate student quotations.

Theme 1: Involvement and Inspiration

"The colors keep us alive".

Many students felt that entering a decorated classroom was like entering a world of possibilities. The vivid colors, instructional posters, and artwork produced surroundings that were visually pleasing but also emotionally inspiring. Many students detailed how the decorations turned the classroom from a sterile learning atmosphere into a dynamic, interesting setting.

"I love seeing our works on the walls; it makes me proud. It is like a reminder that my efforts count."

This pride and responsibility are noteworthy. Decorated classrooms let students feel like they belonged and that they actively participated in their learning environment rather than being as passive consumers of information. Particularly for those showing student work, the visual components continually complement their skills and accomplishments.

Beyond the emotional link, students discovered that decorations piqued their interest and made studying more fun.

"I find the lesson more interesting when the walls feature charts and diagrams since it helps me to grasp it visually."

This captures the cognitive gains from visually enhanced surroundings. Visual aids were cognitive anchors for many students, allowing them to connect complex ideas with visuals or diagrams so they may understand them. This is consistent with the results of Barrett et al. (2015), who underlined the need for visual cues to improve student involvement and comprehension.

Theme 2: Focus and Concentration

"Less Is More When It Comes to Focus"

Although colorful classroom decorations were appreciated, some students—especially those battling attention control—found them problematic. The change to bare-walled classrooms ordered by DepEd Order No. 21, s 2023 arrived with conflicting feelings.

"At first, the bare walls felt empty and boring, but I noticed I could focus better. There were fewer things to divert me."

This comment sums up the minimalist philosophy. The lack of visual clutter lets students focus better on their classes. The simplicity of the surroundings helps students lower their cognitive load so they can focus their mental resources on the current work. This finding is consistent with what Stern-Ellran et al. (2016) claimed—that too strong visual cues can interfere with students' capacity for concentration.

For other learners, the bare-walled classroom provided mental clarity and quiet.

"My mind clears, and I can listen to the teacher without my eyes straying when nothing is on the walls."

This emphasizes how psychologically simple surroundings affect. Students' mental clarity, derived from the physical clarity of the environment, helped them participate in thorough, concentrated learning more easily.

Still, this change had some drawbacks. Many kids said they yearned for the coziness and inventiveness the classroom decorations offered.

"I miss the colors and the energy; it is easier to concentrate now, but sometimes it feels too plain."

This feeling emphasizes the importance of moderation. Although bare walls could improve concentration, they can also lead to sterile and uninspired surroundings, reducing students' emotional involvement with their education.

Theme 3: Juggling Design with Function

"Can we have both?"

The students' most notable realization was the need for a balanced approach to classroom architecture. They wanted a medium ground combining utility with aesthetic appeal as they understood the advantages of both embellished and straightforward settings.

"Why cannot we have both? Maybe just a few decorations that help with the lessons but do not divert us."

This recommendation captures a sophisticated knowledge of the classroom. Students argued for deliberate decorations—visual components meant for instructional use without overpowering the room—and often cited instructional charts, inspirational statements, and exhibits of student work as desired components.

"I believe that some color and visual aids would help the classroom seem alive, but they should be connected to what we are learning."

This is consistent with the Environmental Load Theory, which holds that people operate best in settings with a reasonable stimulus (Gilivand, 2016). The students' need for balance emphasizes their awareness of how physical environments affect their emotional and cognitive state.

Moreover, students underlined the need to include them in choices about the classroom layout.

"We spend much time in the classroom; thus, it would be great if we could suggest improvements to its appearance."

This shows how important student agency is for establishing classroom settings. By including students in the process, teachers may develop environments that not only serve their purposes but also reflect the students' wants and preferences.

Discussion

The change in physical space from decorated to bare-walled classrooms was just one aspect; it also changed how students felt about their classrooms. The results expose a complex picture: Whereas bare-walled classrooms improve concentration, they can also eliminate the emotional and creative components that make learning fun. On the other hand, however attractive, ornamented classrooms often impede focus.

In the end, the students' voices demand a balanced strategy that acknowledges the need for cognitive and emotional participation in education. Teachers may design settings that help student's academic performance and general well-being by combining practical aesthetics with low distractions.

As Cruz (2023) pointed out, educational policies have

to be adaptable to student demands. The universal approach of DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2023 should be reevaluated to meet the diverse demands of students in various environments. Understanding students' experiences and listening to them will help us get closer to designing inspirational and efficient learning surroundings.

CONCLUSION

Students' experiences with classroom aesthetics indicate a complicated interaction among involvement, attention, and emotional well-being via theme analysis. Although simple settings improve focus, they could also lower interest and creativity. Conversely, decorated classrooms may provide difficulties for concentration but help to inspire drive and a feeling of connection.

The road ahead is balanced—building appealing, functioning classrooms where children may flourish emotionally and intellectually. Teachers, managers, and legislators must pay attention to student opinions so that our classrooms represent their human experience and are favorable for academic performance.

References

- Abdullah Habib, A. H., Mohd Zaki, M. Z., & Yuhaniz, M. (2023, October). Comparative study of colour usage on classroom wall: a case study of SMK Tendong Pasir Mas, Kelantan. In *E-Proceeding 6th Undergraduate Seminar on Built Environment and Technology (USBET) 2023* (pp. 1912-1930).
- Ahmed, G., Tayyub, M., & Ismail, R. (2020). Effects of classroom environment for improving students' learning at secondary level in Punjab Province, Pakistan. *Science Academique*, 1(1), 1-14.
- Barrett, P., Davies, F., Zhang, Y., & Barrett, L. (2015). The impact of classroom design on pupils' learning: Final results of a holistic, multi-level analysis. *Building and environment*, 89, 118-133.
- Crane, L. S. (2022). Role Fulfilment and Self-Expression: Culturally Meaningful Messages Conveyed Implicitly in Indian and US High School Classrooms. In *Understanding Psychology in the Context of Relationship, Community, Workplace and Culture* (pp. 225-243). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.
- Derakhshan, A., Fathi, J., Pawlak, M., & Kruk, M. (2024). Classroom social climate, growth language mindset, and student engagement: The mediating role of boredom in learning English as a foreign language. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 45(8), 3415-3433.
- Franklin, R., & Pleis, J. (2022). Creating an innovative college classroom learning space for preservice teachers. *Teacher Education Journal of South Carolina*, 13(2), 66-72.
- Hanaysha, J. R., Shriedeh, F. B., & In'airat, M. (2023). Impact of classroom environment, teacher competency, information and communication technology resources, and university facilities on student engagement and academic performance. *International Journal of Information Management Data Insights*, 3(2), 100188.
- Hepburn, L., Beamish, W., & Alston-Knox, C. L. (2021). Classroom management practices commonly used by secondary school teachers: results from a Queensland survey. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 48(3), 485-505.
- Lopez, R. T. (2020). *Creating Meaningful Classroom Environments: How Do Teachers' Pedagogical Beliefs Affect the Implementation of Their Visual Displays in Elementary Classrooms?*. University of California, Los Angeles.
- Makaremi, N., Yildirim, S., Morgan, G. T., Touchie, M. F., Jakubiec, A., & Robinson, J. (2024). Impact of classroom environment on student wellbeing in higher education: Review and future directions. *Building and Environment*, 111958.
- Martin, R., & Wilkins, J. (2022). Creating visually appropriate classroom environments for students with autism spectrum disorder. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 57(3), 176-181.
- Seftianingsih, D. K., & Rifai, D. M. (2024). The Influence of Interior Element Color on The Activities of Classroom Users in Sps Mutiara Bunda. *Pendhapa*, 15(1), 49-56.
- Woodcock, S., & Reupert, A. (2024). First-year primary teachers' classroom management strategies: Perceptions of use, confidence, and effectiveness. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 50(1), 90-106.
- Zhou, R. (2023). Exploration on the classroom reform of residential decoration space design in higher vocational colleges in the post epidemic era. *Advances in Vocational and Technical Education*, 5(3), 89-93.

Affiliations and Corresponding Informations

Corresponding: Mary Jane D. Aniñon
Email: maryjaneaninon276@gmail.com
Phone:



Mary Jane D. Aniñon:
Negros Oriental State University – Main Campus 1



Aira C. Bitoon:
Negros Oriental State University – Bais Campus



Kia Kim Chi E. Baldoza:
Negros Oriental State University – Main Campus 1



Hilary C. Relon:
Benedicto P. Tirambulo Memorial National High School – Senior High Department



Angel M. Bentula:
Negros Oriental State University – Mabinay Campus



Melyn B. Flora:
Benedicto P. Tirambulo Memorial National High School – Senior High Department



Char-mae D. Bentula:
Benedicto P. Tirambulo Memorial National High School – Senior High Department



Rujonel F. Cariaga: