



BOITEKANELO: JOURNAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH IN AFRICA

Examining School Climate and Academic Motivation Among Adolescents: A Systematic ReviewDOI: <https://doi.org/10.69778/3135-2944/2026/1.1/a3>**Oloko Timothy Oluwarotimi, Kasali Mariam Abisola, Bhadrudeen Haneefah Abimbola, Olagunju Timilehin Abraham and Yousuph Kauthar Olatokunbo***

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Abstract

School climate plays a critical role in shaping adolescents' academic motivation and overall developmental outcomes. This study presents a systematic review of 18 peer-reviewed articles to examine the relationship between school climate and academic motivation among adolescents. Guided by established systematic review procedures, relevant studies published across diverse contexts were identified, screened, and synthesised. The findings consistently indicate that a positive school climate, characterised by supportive teacher-student relationships, peer connectedness, safety, and inclusive practices, significantly enhances students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation toward learning. Conversely, negative school environments marked by bullying, discrimination, and lack of support were associated with decreased motivation, disengagement, and poor academic outcomes. The review further highlights the mediating role of psychosocial factors such as self-esteem, sense of belonging, and emotional well-being in strengthening the climate–motivation link. Variations across gender and socio-cultural contexts were also evident, suggesting the need for context-specific interventions. Overall, the study underscores the importance of fostering positive school climates as both an educational and public health priority to improve adolescent motivation, engagement, and long-term outcomes.

Keywords: School Climate, Academic Motivation, Adolescents, Systematic Review.

1. Introduction

School climate and academic motivation among adolescents are critical determinants of overall well-being and educational outcomes, making them a significant public health concern. A positive school climate characterised by safety, inclusiveness, supportive teacher-student relationships, and respect promotes mental health, reduces psychological challenges, and enhances

motivation to learn. Conversely, a negative or hostile school environment can contribute to anxiety, depression, disengagement, and poor academic performance, all of which have long-term implications for health and social outcomes. From a public health perspective, schools are key social environments that shape health behaviours, psychosocial development, and life trajectories during adolescence. Poor school climate can

increase vulnerability to risk behaviors, mental health disorders, and school dropout, thereby perpetuating cycles of inequality and limiting future opportunities.

This issue is closely aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), which emphasizes that supportive school environments can significantly improve adolescents' mental health and emotional well-being; SDG 4 (Quality Education), as a positive school climate fosters student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement, ensuring inclusive and equitable education; and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), by addressing disparities in school environments to reduce both educational and health inequalities among diverse social groups. Bada and Akinwale (2024) established how girl child are disproportionately affected in school enrollment due to physical facilities. Overall, enhancing school climate extends beyond an educational priority to become a vital public health strategy that promotes adolescent development, advances equity, and contributes to the achievement of global development goals.

The levels of academic motivation predefine the levels of engagement, persistence, and achievement among the students. Specifically, in terms of secondary school adolescents, one of the more specific factors that contributes to this kind of motivation is the school climate that can be described as the multidimensional quality and character of school life, which includes

interpersonal relationships, emotional and physical safety and psychological safety, teaching practises, and institutional structures (Aroyewun et al., 2019). According to Oloko et al. (2024), it was posited that the presence of root rage in adolescents can significantly impact academic motivation among students.

The Current Study

The teens spend a lot of time in such environments. Positive, encouraging school climate creates the feeling of belonging and psychological security, and a negative setting may destroy the state of emotion, which contributes to the academic drive and results in academic detachment (Akinwale & Ojakorotu, 2025; Akinwale et al., 2025). The period of adolescence is a delicate phase of development, which is accompanied by an intensive identity formation, social and emotional shifts, at which research shows that both school satisfaction and academic achievement decline (Green et al., 2023). Previous studies have indicated that factors that could make the school environment hostile to learners, such as issues of gambling and gangsterism, are more likely to make the school climate difficult for the other learners (Atiri et al., 2025). Also, the school climate becomes important because of overcoming the usual stressors of academic activities in this stage, when supporting emotional conditions in favour of academic motivation (Podiya et al., 2025). More so, positive school climate has been established to serve as a crucial support system to struggling

students, which in effect leads to educational equity (Ullah et al., 2025). It is, therefore, important to research and practise in education to understand the relationship between school climate and academic motivation. Despite the already established correlations between school climate and different academic and psychological outcomes, the results are still contradictory in various aspects of school climate (Fan and Williams, 2018). Limited integrative data is available that has determined which aspects (e.g., teacher support, peer relations, safety) have the strongest predictive power of academic motivation in adolescents. Thus, this systematic review will be focused on the purpose of conducting a systematic identification, evaluation, and synthesis of the empirical studies that were published during 2015–2025. The question in this review is as follows: What is the effect of school climate on the academic motivation of adolescents?

2. Methodology

This study adopted a systematic review design guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework to ensure a transparent, organized, and replicable process of identifying, selecting, and analyzing relevant studies on school climate and academic motivation among adolescents.

Databases Used

A systematic search for relevant literature was conducted across multiple electronic databases to ensure comprehensive coverage of existing studies. These databases included Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and ResearchGate, which were selected for their extensive repositories of peer-reviewed articles and scholarly materials relevant to the study. The databases have been chosen because they have a wider scope of peer-reviewed studies in the fields of psychology, education, and social sciences.

Search Terms and Strategy

The search in the literature was performed using a mixture of keywords and Boolean operators (AND, OR) to narrow down and expand the search results. The primary search terms used in this study included school climate, academic motivation, adolescents, student engagement, learning environment, and teacher motivation and encouragement. These keywords were carefully selected to capture the breadth of literature relevant to the research focus. A typical search strategy combined these terms using Boolean operators, as illustrated in the sample search: “school climate AND academic motivation AND adolescents”, to ensure a focused and comprehensive retrieval of relevant studies.

Inclusion Criteria

The studies included in this review were required to meet specific eligibility criteria to ensure relevance and quality. Specifically, selected studies focused on adolescents aged

approximately 10 to 19 years, were published between 2015 and 2025, and employed empirical research designs, including quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods approaches, and rationally connected school climate to academic motivation or nearly identical constructs, such as student engagement, academic self-efficacy, or academic achievement. Articles had to be in peer-reviewed publications and written in the English language.

Exclusion Criteria

Studies were excluded from the review if they involved participants who were university students or adults, as the focus was strictly on adolescents. Additionally, review articles, theoretical papers, and opinion-based studies were not considered, as the study prioritized empirical evidence. Articles that were not directly related to school climate or academic motivation were also excluded to maintain relevance. Furthermore, studies without full-text access and those published in languages other than English were omitted to ensure accessibility and consistency in analysis.

Study Selection Process

The first search of the chosen databases resulted in a list of sufficient articles. The screening criteria used in these articles were their title and abstracts to determine if they were relevant to the study topic. Articles that were not unique were eliminated, and the rest were further analysed with the inclusion and exclusion criteria. After

this screening and eligibility, a total of 18 studies were chosen and incorporated in the final review. The selection process is summarised in the PRISMA flowchart below:

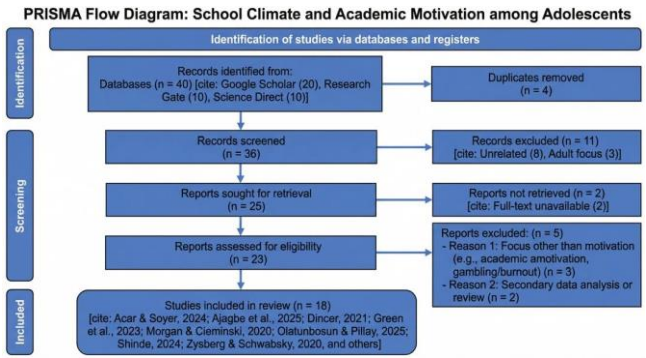


Fig 1: PRISMA Flowchart

The Process of Data Extraction and Organisation

The appropriate information was extracted systematically from each one of the selected studies and tabulated under a summary table. Relevant data were systematically extracted from each included study, including the name of the author(s) and year of publication, as well as key sample characteristics such as sample size, age group, and study location. In addition, important dimensions of school climate examined in each study were identified, alongside the main findings related to academic motivation, to enable a comprehensive synthesis of the evidence. The process enabled researchers to compare the findings of the studies easily and help locate recurrent patterns and themes.

Data Analysis

The synthesis of the obtained findings using a thematic analysis methodology was conducted. Data that was extracted were reviewed and a

careful analysis was made to group them into common themes in accordance with the similarities of the findings. Several key themes emerged from the analysis of the reviewed studies. These included the role of student motivation in relation to teacher support, as well as the importance of school connectedness and a strong sense of belonging. Additionally, the presence of a safe and conducive school environment was identified as a critical factor, alongside the influence of peer relationships. Psychological factors, particularly academic self-efficacy, also featured prominently as important determinants of adolescents' academic motivation. By doing so, it was possible to establish regular observations in the studies, and this gave a systematic way the findings could be presented.

Group Work/Collaboration Process

A systematic review was carried out based on group work. Two members of the group completed the first phase of the study, that was the identification, selection, and review of the relevant journal articles. Such members were to procure articles in the chosen databases, filter them according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria, and derive major findings concerning the study. The rest of the systematic review was then allocated to the remaining four members of the group, who were given specific sections of the paper: the introduction, methodology, results and discussion, and the conclusion and recommendations. This systematic separation of

duties was effective in accomplishing the task, and the work remained coherent and consistent throughout the research, with all members participating in the integration and final review of the document.

3. Results

The following table outlines the demographic characteristics and primary findings of the 18 included studies, which serve as the foundation for thematic synthesis.

Table 1: Summary of Included Studies on School Climate and Academic Motivation

S/N	Author(s) & Year	Country	N	Core Aspect of Climate	Main Finding
1	Acar & Soyer, 2024	Türkiye	519	Overall school climate	Explains 24% of variance in school climate
2	Ajagbe et al., 2025	Nigeria	300	Teacher, school & family support	Significant positive correlations with motivation
3	Azpiazu et al., 2023	Spain	1,397	Overall school climate	Climate & life satisfaction predict academic performance
4	Bauer & El-Sayed, 2025	Egypt	360	Safety, teaching, relationships	Teacher-student quality mediates academic resilience
5	Bosacki et al., 2023	Global (review)	N/A	Emotional tone, inclusivity, safety	Compassionate climate fosters social-emotional health
6	Caay & Valle, 2025	Philippines	202	Physical, social, academic dimensions	Academic dimension strongly impacts engagement
7	Dimitropoulou et al., 2025	Greece	296	Caring community, learning climate	Positive climate links to academic emotions & motivation
8	Dincer, 2021	Turkey	674	Justice, discipline, relationships	Predicted 18% of variance in school motivation
9	Fan & Williams, 2018	USA	14,639	Teacher relationship, safety, fairness	Motivation & self-efficacy mediate climate-achievement link
10	Green et al., 2023	USA	288	School support	Support reduces amotivation via self-efficacy
11	Morgan & Cieminski, 2020	USA	4,846	Adult support/respect, safety	Adult respect and support drive student motivation
12	Nie et al., 2024	China	5,669	Perceptions of school climate	Positive climate protects against gaming disorder
13	Olatunbosun & Pillay, 2025	Global (TIMSS)	22,490	Safety, interaction, class size	Predicts students' academic mindedness
14	Podiya et al., 2025	India	3,711	Safety, support, belongingness	Improves emotional health & academic achievement
15	Puspita Sari et al., 2025	Global (review)	17 studies	Teacher/parent support, climate	Fosters academic buoyancy and

					engagement
16	Shinde, 2024	Nigeria	~500	Support, discipline, inclusivity	Improves wellbeing, performance, reduces behavioral issues
17	Ullah et al., 2025	Pakistan	200	Teacher/peer support, safety, fairness	Significantly predicted academic motivation
18	Zysberg & Schwabsky, 2020	Israel	1,641	Interpersonal relations, violence, belonging	Self-efficacy mediates climate–achievement link

Based on the data obtained in Table 1, thematic literature synthesis can be presented in the following section. By extracting findings, four different themes are discovered on the ways that dimensions of the school climate relate to adolescent academic motivations.

Theme 1: The Role of Teacher and Adult Support

Data always show that academic motivation is closely connected with the quality of relationships that students have with school adults, especially teachers. Respect, emotional support, and responsiveness of the adults in the climate gives the students a sense of importance and encouragement to participate in academic activities. As an example, teacher support and adult respect were found to be among the key reasons that elaborate variances in student academic commitment and engagement (Morgan and Cieminski, 2020). On the same note, teacher support had the highest correlation with academic motivation relative to other structural school variables (Ullah et al., 2025). The same trend is reflected in international instances, in which student-teacher relations were identified as having a strong correlation with student motivation to attend school (Dincer, 2021), as well as being strongly correlated with academic

mindedness (Olatunbosun and Pillay, 2025). In addition, teacher-student relationships are also an important emotional support system, which is associated with academic resilience and intrinsic motivation, connecting the overall school environment to the direct correlation of psychological engagement with students (Bauer and El-Sayed, 2025; Fan and Williams, 2018; Ajagbe et al., 2025).

Theme 2: The Importance of Peer Relationships and School Belongingness

In addition to social interaction with adults, a peer-related social environment is strongly related to the academic motivation of an adolescent. The general findings in the studies indicate that a school environment which cultivates a positive relationship between peers and a sense of inclusivity and school belonging is directly associated with educational engagement. Collaborative peer networks and a sense of connectedness contribute to the development of social competence by adolescents and guard them against emotional agony, which further can be linked to their eagerness to engage in academic activities (Bosacki et al., 2023). Positive peer relationships have a significant relationship with academic motivation because adolescents extensively depend on peer networks to gain a sense of belonging (Ullah et al., 2025). Also, high school belongingness and peer support are associated with less stressful levels and elevated self-esteem, which is a correlate of better academic results and motivation (Podiya et al.,

2025). Moreover, academic self-efficacy correlates positively with interpersonal relations among peers, and it has a strong correlation with academic achievement (Zysberg and Schwabsky, 2020).

Theme 3: Mediating Psychological Assets (Self-Efficacy, Emotions, and Buoyancy)

Compelling evidence has continued to show that psychological variables, namely self-efficacy, academic buoyancy, and positive academic emotions, play the primary role of mediating between school climate and academic motivation. A positive school climate is indirectly related to motivation through the establishment of these internal psychological resources instead of working in isolation. It is theorised that a supportive school climate is associated with academic buoyancy (the capacity to recover from everyday academic setbacks), self-efficacy, and positive academic emotions. As an illustration, support in schools is indicated to be linked with amplified academic skillfulness and self-efficacy, and is linked to diminished academic amotivation (Green et al., 2023). Positive academic emotions (hope and enjoyment) and negative emotions (anxiety), which in turn relate to increased intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to learn, are related to a caring school community and positive learning climate (Dimitropoulou et al., 2025). Systematic reviews also establish that external social support from the school climate is positively related to academic buoyancy, which mediates the association between the learning

environment and student engagement (Puspita Sari et al., 2025). Finally, intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy are the most important mediating variables that connect students' perceptions of school climate to their actual academic performance (Fan and Williams, 2018; Zysberg and Schwabsky, 2020).

Theme 4: Safety, Order, and the Physical/Institutional Environment

Academic motivation is also underpinned by the structural aspects of school climate, including physical and emotional safety, explicit disciplinary policies, and a well-organised environment. There are indications that violence- and bullying-free schools are associated with students who are less distracted by distress and more focused on learning. Academic mindedness and willingness to engage among students are highly related to a supportive learning environment characterised by high levels of school safety (Olatunbosun and Pillay, 2025). Environments where disciplinary practises are fair and decisions are made in ways that reduce feelings of isolation and behavioural issues are connected to improved emotional well-being and academic achievement (Shinde, 2024). Interestingly, research usually finds a more subtle picture on safety: although it is a mandatory base-level factor in a favourable learning climate, variables such as safety and fairness of regulations do not necessarily relate directly to motivation, and may yield to relational aspects such as teacher and peer support in directly

explaining variation in motivation (Ullah et al., 2025). However, order and safety remain part of the multidimensional construct of climate that is related to engagement (Morgan and Cieminski, 2020; Caay and Valle, 2025).

Although the overall results are mostly similar, most studies are based on cross-sectional design, and others have shown less or non-significant correlations, depending on the situation. This implies that structural and physical conditions relate differently to relational and psychological levels. Across themes, it has been demonstrated that relational aspects of school climate (teacher and peer support) exhibit the strongest consistency in their relationship with academic motivation, with structural considerations providing the precondition and psychological variables acting as mediating processes.

4. Discussion

Academic motivation in adolescents has close ties with school climate. School climate, which includes relational dimensions, especially teacher support and peer connectedness, demonstrates the greatest consistency in relation to academic motivation and student engagement. Moreover, supportive school environments are related to academic motivation due to the connection between the supportive school environment and internal psychological assets, including self-efficacy and buoyancy.

It has been shown that schools can adopt the following practises:

1. Increased Teacher and Adult Support:

Teachers can foster positive relationships with students by paying attention to their issues and concerns, providing constructive feedback, and expressing interest in their general motivation (Ajagbe et al., 2025). It is suggested that school administrators should offer in-service courses to teachers to enhance their relational teaching and emotional intelligence, as well as autonomy-supportive feedback delivery, to facilitate the establishment of psychologically safe classrooms (Ullah et al., 2025; Puspita Sari et al., 2025; Olatunbosun and Pillay, 2025). Moreover, praise helps teachers to identify the strengths of students, develop individual mentorship programmes, and apply culturally competent teaching practises that relate academic lessons to real life (Green et al., 2023).

2. Development of Peer Relationships and School Belongingness:

Schools can support the development of a sense of inclusiveness and belonging by using strategies to support cooperative learning, group activities, and peer mentoring programmes that foster helpful peer networks instead of pure competition (Ullah et al., 2025; Puspita Sari et al., 2025). To enhance informal socialisation and build up peer support systems outside the classroom, administrators can commit separate resources to extracurricular

activities like sports and student clubs (Podiya et al., 2025). Also, feelings of belonging to the learning community can be improved by engaging adolescents in school decision-making procedures and organising orientation programmes for new students (Ajagbe et al., 2025; Podiya et al., 2025).

3. **Developing Psychological Assets (Self-Efficacy, Emotions, and Buoyancy):** It is possible to introduce a programme of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) to the daily school curriculum to help adolescents learn to be empathetic, exercise self-control, resolve conflicts, and manage their feelings (Morgan & Cieminski, 2020; Shinde, 2024). Educators and school counsellors may cooperate to develop specific workshops that foster mastery-focused goal setting, self-compassion interventions, and growth mindset interventions to help students recover from typical academic setbacks (Puspita Sari et al., 2025; Green et al., 2023). Amotivation and frustration can be reduced by offering students with particular learning barriers reasonable academic accommodations, such as extended time or chunked assignments, which can positively affect their academic self-efficacy (Green et al., 2023).

4. **Enhancing Safety, Order, and the Institutional Environment:** School administrators can be advised to focus on

both physical and psychological safety by implementing clear and fair disciplinary policies that deter bullying, discrimination, and incivility (Ajagbe et al., 2025; Shinde, 2024). Physical infrastructure can be enhanced to provide a safe and well-maintained learning environment. Structural concerns such as class size can also be addressed, since smaller classes are easier to differentiate, teach individually, and manage (Olatunbosun and Pillay, 2025). Lastly, schools are also advised to involve parents and the wider community by holding regular parent-teacher interactive sessions and family workshops in order to create a supportive multi-level system that strengthens academic expectations within the home (Ullah et al., 2025; Ajagbe et al., 2025; Podiya et al., 2025).

5. Conclusions

The results of this systematic review give good evidence that school climate is an important predictor of academic motivation in adolescence. Specifically, interpersonal aspects (e.g., teacher support and peer connectedness) were consistently found to be major contributors to engagement and readiness to learn among students. Positive school climate not only encourages academic engagement but also enhances internal psychological resources, such as academic self-efficacy and emotional

resilience (buoyancy), which are important processes through which motivation is boosted.

On the other hand, negative school climates characterised by poor relationships, lack of support, and unsafe conditions are related to lower motivation and higher disengagement. These results also emphasise the need to perceive school climate as a multidimensional construct that includes interpersonal, emotional, and institutional variables. All in all, improving school climate is crucial not only for supporting academic motivation but also for the holistic development and long-term academic performance of adolescents.

Recommendations

According to the results of the review, the following practical recommendations can be offered to educators, school administrators, and policymakers:

5. 1. Optimising Teacher and Adult

Support: Schools must ensure that teacher-student relationships are built well through supportive interactions. Teachers are also asked to listen to students' issues and give them constructive, autonomy-supportive feedback, and to show interest in their academic and personal development. School administrators ought to support in-service professional development initiatives based on relational teaching practises, emotional intelligence, and culturally responsive pedagogy, alongside mentorship

programmes and individualised learning approaches.

6. 2. Developing Relationships with Peers

and School Belongingness: Schools should provide space for positive peer interaction through cooperative learning strategies, group-based activities, and peer mentoring programmes. Investment in extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs, and social events can help build peer relationships outside the classroom, while orientation programmes and student involvement in decision-making can strengthen belonging and connectedness.

7. 3. Developing Psychological Resources

(Self-Efficacy, Emotions, and Buoyancy): Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programmes ought to be incorporated into the curriculum to enhance emotional regulation, resilience, and interpersonal skills. Teachers and school counsellors should collaborate on interventions that support mastery-oriented objectives, growth mindset, and self-compassion, alongside flexible academic support such as extended deadlines and differentiated instruction.

8. 4. Enhancing Safety, Order, and

Institutional Environment: School leaders must manage physical and psychological safety through clear and fair disciplinary measures that address bullying, discrimination, and misbehaviour. Infrastructure should be

improved to provide a favourable learning environment, and where feasible, class sizes should be reduced to enable individualised instruction and better classroom management. Schools are also encouraged to intensify collaboration with parents and the community through regular communication, parent-teacher conferences, and family engagement activities.

9. 5. Future Research Recommendations:

Longitudinal designs should be pursued in future studies to identify the long-term outcomes of school climate on academic motivation. More studies are also required across diverse cultural and socioeconomic settings to increase the external validity of the results.

Author Contributions

All authors contributed jointly to the conceptualization, literature search, screening, data extraction, and thematic synthesis reported in this review, following a coordinated division of labour across the introduction, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion sections. All authors contributed to drafting and revising the manuscript and have read and approved the final version submitted for publication.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable. This study is a systematic review of previously published literature and did not involve the collection of new data from human or animal subjects.

Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge the support of the Department of Psychology, University of Lagos.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Abbreviations

SDG: Sustainable Development Goal; PRISMA: Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses; SEL: Social-Emotional Learning; TIMSS: Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study.

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