

Assessment of School Location Differences in Student Attendance and Punctuality in Secondary Schools in Yenagoa Metropolis

Nwosu Francis Ifeanyi

Department of Educational Foundation
National Open University Yenagoa Study Center

08063319496 ifeanyinwosu09@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study assessed school location differences in student attendance and punctuality in secondary schools in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State. The study was guided by two objectives: to compare the attendance rate of students in urban and semi-urban secondary schools and to examine the difference in punctuality between students in urban and semi-urban secondary schools. A descriptive comparative research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised secondary school students in Yenagoa Metropolis, while a sample of 300 students was selected using a multistage sampling procedure. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and a records extraction sheet titled School Location, Student Attendance and Punctuality Questionnaire and Record Sheet. The data were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, mean, standard deviation and independent samples t-test at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that students in urban secondary schools had a higher attendance rate than students in semi-urban secondary schools, with mean scores of 86.91% and 84.64% respectively. The findings also showed that students in urban secondary schools were more punctual than students in semi-urban secondary schools, with mean punctuality rates of 85.75% and 82.38% respectively. The t-test results showed significant differences in both attendance and punctuality based on school location. The study concluded that school location is an important factor influencing students' attendance and punctuality in secondary schools in Yenagoa Metropolis. It recommended that school administrators, parents and education authorities should adopt location-sensitive strategies to improve attendance and punctuality, especially among students in semi-urban schools.

Keywords: School location, student attendance, punctuality, urban schools, semi-urban schools, secondary schools, Yenagoa Metropolis

Introduction

Student attendance and punctuality are not minor administrative issues; they are central indicators of students' access to learning time. A student may be officially enrolled in school, yet still lose meaningful instruction through irregular attendance or repeated late arrival. The OECD (2026) argues that absenteeism reduces students' access to instruction, feedback, assessment and peer learning, thereby weakening academic performance and broader school engagement. This means that attendance and punctuality should be treated as learning conditions, not merely as disciplinary concerns.

In Nigeria, the problem is particularly important because access to education does not always translate into regular school participation or actual learning. UNICEF reported that 10.2 million children of primary school age and 8.1 million children of secondary school age are out of school, while many children who attend school still lack basic reading and numeracy skills (UNICEF Nigeria, 2024/2026). This situation shows that education research must move beyond enrolment figures to examine the everyday factors that determine whether students are physically present, arrive on time and remain available for classroom learning.

School location is one of such factors. Location is not simply a description of where a school is situated; it often reflects differences in transport access, road condition, distance from home, parental supervision, school facilities, neighbourhood safety and exposure to environmental disruption. Recent UNICEF MICS Plus evidence for Nigeria shows a clear urban advantage in school attendance, with more children and young people attending school in cities than in rural areas (UNICEF, 2025). Although this study focuses on urban and semi-urban schools in Yenagoa Metropolis, the same issue remains relevant because semi-urban schools may still experience weaker transport links, poorer road networks, longer commuting time and less consistent school monitoring than schools located in more central urban areas.

Punctuality is especially important in this discussion because lateness is often less visible than absenteeism but can still reduce learning opportunity. Students who arrive late may miss assembly instructions, early lesson explanations, class organisation, tests or teacher feedback. Nwobodo, Ogben, Onu and Ebebulam (2023) found that lateness among secondary school students was linked to factors such as distance from home, walking to school, early morning family activities, late sleeping habits and traffic problems. These causes are closely connected to school location because students' ability to arrive on time is partly shaped by the physical and social environment between home and school. Recent Nigerian evidence also supports the argument that distance and location influence school participation. A 2025 study on home-school distance in public secondary schools in Cross River State reported that long distance to school negatively affected students' academic performance, punctuality, attendance and participation, although the reported p-value suggests that the effect should be interpreted cautiously rather than exaggerated (Akpan et al., 2025). This critical point is important because school location should not be treated as a fixed cause of poor attendance by itself; rather, it interacts with transport cost, family income, weather, safety and school leadership. The Yenagoa context gives the issue greater urgency. Bayelsa State is a largely riverine environment where flooding and transport disruption can affect school access. In 2024, Vanguard reported that primary and secondary schools in Bayelsa had to delay resumption because several schools were still under water or occupied by flood-affected persons. Such disruptions can affect students differently depending on where their schools are located. Urban schools may be closer to transport routes and administrative support, while semi-urban schools may face more difficult access conditions during rain, flooding or road deterioration.

Existing Bayelsa-based research has examined attendance management strategies and academic performance, showing that monitoring, record keeping, parental meetings, counselling and school-community collaboration are considered important for improving attendance in public secondary schools (Nwosu & Okuru, 2025). However, limited attention has been given to whether students in urban and semi-urban schools differ in their attendance and punctuality patterns within Yenagoa Metropolis. This gap is important because interventions may fail if they treat attendance and lateness as the same problem across all school locations.

Therefore, this study assesses school location differences in student attendance and punctuality in secondary schools in Yenagoa Metropolis. Specifically, it compares the attendance rate of students

in urban and semi-urban secondary schools and examines the difference in punctuality between students in these locations. The study is expected to provide evidence that can help school administrators, parents and education policymakers design location-sensitive strategies for improving students' regular and timely participation in schooling.

Aim and objectives of the Study

This study assesses school location differences in student attendance and punctuality in secondary schools in Yenagoa Metropolis. Specifically, the study achieved the following objectives:

1. To compare the attendance rate of students in urban and semi-urban secondary schools in Yenagoa Metropolis.
2. To examine the difference in punctuality between students in urban and semi-urban secondary schools in Yenagoa Metropolis.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the difference in attendance rate between students in urban and semi-urban secondary schools in Yenagoa Metropolis?
2. What is the difference in punctuality between students in urban and semi-urban secondary schools in Yenagoa Metropolis?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the attendance rate of students in urban and semi-urban secondary schools in Yenagoa Metropolis.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the punctuality of students in urban and semi-urban secondary schools in Yenagoa Metropolis.

Research Methods

This study employed a descriptive comparative research design. The design was considered appropriate because the study sought to compare students' attendance and punctuality patterns in urban and semi-urban secondary schools as they naturally occur, without manipulating school location or interfering with normal school activities. Descriptive comparative design is useful in educational research when the purpose is to examine whether two or more groups differ on selected variables within a real school setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). As noted by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018), non-experimental designs are suitable for school-based studies where the researcher cannot ethically or practically control the characteristics of schools or learners, but can observe and compare existing patterns. In this study, school location served as the grouping variable, while student attendance rate and punctuality were the main variables examined.

The population of the study comprised students in public secondary schools in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State. The target population focused on students in junior and senior secondary classes because they are already exposed to regular school timetables, attendance registers, class monitoring, and punctuality records. A sample of 300 students was selected for the study using a multistage sampling procedure. First, public secondary schools within Yenagoa Metropolis were identified. Second, the schools were stratified into urban and semi-urban locations to ensure fair representation. Third, ten secondary schools were randomly selected from the identified schools, with five schools drawn from urban locations and five schools drawn from

semi-urban locations. Fourth, proportionate sampling was used to determine the number of students selected from each school, while simple random sampling was used to select the final respondents from class registers. This procedure ensured that students from both urban and semi-urban secondary schools were fairly represented in the study.

The instruments for data collection were a structured questionnaire and a records extraction sheet titled School Location, Student Attendance and Punctuality Questionnaire and Record Sheet (SLSAPQRS). The instrument was divided into two sections. Section A collected demographic information such as school location, gender, age, class level, and school type. Section B collected information on students' attendance and punctuality patterns, including frequency of school attendance, lateness to school, missed classes, regularity in morning assembly, and arrival before or after the official school resumption time. The records extraction sheet was used to obtain official data from school attendance registers and late-coming records. Attendance rate was measured by the number of days students were present in school during the selected period, while punctuality was measured by the number of times students arrived late during the same period.

To ensure validity, the instrument underwent face and content validation by three experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation. The experts examined the items to ensure that they were clear, relevant, and appropriate for measuring school location differences in student attendance and punctuality among secondary school students. Their corrections and suggestions were used to improve the wording, structure, and coverage of the instrument. A pilot study was conducted using 30 students from a secondary school outside the main study area but with similar characteristics to the sampled schools. The reliability of the questionnaire items was determined using Cronbach's Alpha, which produced a coefficient of 0.82. This indicated that the instrument had an acceptable level of internal consistency. The records extraction sheet was also cross-checked with class registers and late-coming books to ensure that the information obtained from school records was accurate and consistent.

Data collection was carried out by the researcher with the assistance of trained research assistants. Permission was obtained from the principals and relevant school authorities before administering the questionnaire and accessing students' attendance and punctuality records. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents, and they were assured that the information collected would be used strictly for academic purposes. Confidentiality was maintained by ensuring that students' names were not used in the final analysis. The completed questionnaires and record sheets were retrieved, sorted, coded, and checked for completeness before analysis.

Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency counts and percentages were used to present the demographic information of the respondents, while mean and standard deviation were used to describe the attendance and punctuality patterns of students in urban and semi-urban secondary schools. The independent samples t-test was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. This statistical method was appropriate because the study sought to determine whether significant differences existed between students in urban and semi-urban schools in their attendance rate and punctuality. The decision rule was that any hypothesis with a p-value less than or equal to 0.05 would be rejected, while any hypothesis with a p-value greater than 0.05 would not be rejected.

Results**Research Question 1**

What is the difference in attendance rate between students in urban and semi-urban secondary schools in Yenagoa Metropolis?

Table 1: Descriptive Comparison of Attendance Rate by School Location

School Location	N	Mean Attendance Rate (%)	Standard Deviation	Attendance Level	Decision
Urban schools	180	86.91	7.29	High	Urban school students had a higher attendance rate
Semi-urban schools	120	84.64	7.15	High	
Overall	300	86.00	7.31	High	

The data presented in Table 1 show that students in both urban and semi-urban secondary schools recorded high attendance rates in Yenagoa Metropolis. Students in urban schools had a mean attendance rate of 86.91%, while students in semi-urban schools had a mean attendance rate of 84.64%. This indicates that students in urban secondary schools had a higher attendance rate than students in semi-urban secondary schools by 2.27 percentage points. Although both groups had high attendance levels, the result suggests that school location may influence students' regularity in school attendance, with urban school students attending more regularly than their semi-urban counterparts.

Research Question 2

What is the difference in punctuality between students in urban and semi-urban secondary schools in Yenagoa Metropolis?

Table 2: Descriptive Comparison of Punctuality Rate by School Location

School Location	N	Mean Punctuality Rate (%)	Standard Deviation	Punctuality Level	Decision
Urban schools	180	85.75	6.02	High	Urban school students had a higher punctuality rate
Semi-urban schools	120	82.38	5.17	High	
Overall	300	84.40	5.92	High	

The results in Table 2 reveal that students in both urban and semi-urban secondary schools demonstrated high levels of punctuality. However, students in urban schools had a mean punctuality rate of 85.75%, while students in semi-urban schools had a mean punctuality rate of 82.38%. This shows that students in urban secondary schools were more punctual than students in semi-urban secondary schools by 3.37 percentage points. The result implies that students in urban schools were more likely to arrive at school on time than students in semi-urban schools, possibly because of better transport access, shorter travel time, or more favourable school location conditions.

Test of Hypotheses**Hypothesis One**

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the attendance rate of students in urban and semi-urban secondary schools in Yenagoa Metropolis.

Table 3: Independent Samples t-test on Attendance Rate by School Location

Variable	School Location	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	α -level	Decision
Attendance Rate	Urban schools	180	86.91	7.29	2.66	0.008	0.05	Reject H ₀₁
	Semi-urban schools	120	84.64	7.15				

Significant at $p < 0.05$.

The result in Table 3 shows that there is a statistically significant difference in the attendance rate of students in urban and semi-urban secondary schools in Yenagoa Metropolis, $t = 2.66$, $p = 0.008$. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that school location significantly differs with respect to students' attendance rate. The mean scores show that students in urban schools recorded higher attendance than students in semi-urban schools.

Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the punctuality of students in urban and semi-urban secondary schools in Yenagoa Metropolis.

Table 4: Independent Samples t-test on Punctuality Rate by School Location

Variable	School Location	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	α -level	Decision
Punctuality Rate	Urban schools	180	85.75	6.02	5.03	0.000	0.05	Reject H ₀₂
	Semi-urban schools	120	82.38	5.17				

Significant at $p < 0.05$.

The result in Table 4 reveals that there is a statistically significant difference in the punctuality of students in urban and semi-urban secondary schools in Yenagoa Metropolis, $t = 5.03$, $p = 0.000$. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that school location significantly differs with respect to students' punctuality. The mean scores indicate that students in urban secondary schools were more punctual than students in semi-urban secondary schools.

Discussion of Findings

The first objective of the study was to compare the attendance rate of students in urban and semi-urban secondary schools in Yenagoa Metropolis. The finding revealed that students in urban secondary schools had a higher attendance rate than students in semi-urban secondary schools, and the difference was statistically significant. This finding suggests that school location is an important factor in students' regular school attendance. The result is consistent with wider Nigerian evidence showing that school participation is shaped by location and access conditions. UNICEF reported that out-of-school rates are higher among rural children than urban children in Nigeria, which shows that geographical location continues to affect educational participation, although the present study compared urban and semi-urban schools rather than strictly urban and rural schools (UNICEF, 2026). The finding also agrees with Ejale, Ibrahim, and Ahmed (2025), who argued that long home-school distance, difficult terrain, and weak transport infrastructure can lead to lateness, fatigue, absenteeism, and reduced participation among secondary school students. Therefore, the

higher attendance rate recorded by urban students in this study may be connected to better access to roads, shorter travel time, and easier movement to school.

However, the finding should be interpreted critically because school location may not operate alone. The OECD (2026) explained that school attendance problems are usually caused by interacting individual, family, school, community, and structural factors, including family hardship, school climate, neighbourhood safety, and transport reliability. This means that the lower attendance rate among students in semi-urban schools may not be due to location alone, but to the conditions attached to location, such as transport cost, road quality, flooding, distance from home, parental supervision, and school management practices. This view is supported by Nwosu and Okuru (2025), whose Bayelsa-based study showed that monitoring, record keeping, counselling, parental meetings, incentives, and community collaboration are important strategies for improving students' attendance. In other words, while the present study confirms a significant location difference, the difference should not be reduced to geography alone; it also reflects how well schools and families respond to attendance barriers in different locations.

The second objective of the study was to examine the difference in punctuality between students in urban and semi-urban secondary schools in Yenagoa Metropolis. The finding showed that students in urban secondary schools had a higher punctuality rate than students in semi-urban secondary schools, and the difference was statistically significant. This finding supports Nwobodo, Ogben, Onu, and Ebegbulam (2023), who found that lateness to school among secondary school students was linked to distance from home, walking to school, parents' early morning activities, late sleeping, and traffic problems. It also agrees with Ejale et al. (2025), who observed that students who travel long distances are more prone to lateness, fatigue, and irregular attendance. In Yenagoa Metropolis, this finding is reasonable because semi-urban students may face more movement-related challenges, especially where road conditions, distance, and transportation are less reliable than in central urban areas. The punctuality finding is also supported by local environmental realities in Bayelsa State. Vanguard reported in 2024 that several primary and secondary schools in Bayelsa were still under water after flooding, leading the state government to extend school resumption so that flood water could recede and school premises could be made safe (Oyadongha, 2024). Such evidence shows that punctuality in Bayelsa cannot be treated only as a discipline issue; it may also be affected by flooding, poor roads, transport delays, and the physical accessibility of school locations. At the same time, the finding partially contrasts with the cautious statistical interpretation in Ejale et al. (2025), where the reported p-value exceeded the 0.05 level even though the authors still described distance-related barriers as educationally meaningful. This contradiction strengthens the need for context-specific studies like the present one, because the effect of location on punctuality may be statistically significant in some areas and less clear in others depending on sample, measurement, transport conditions, and local geography.

Conclusion

The study concluded that school location significantly influences student attendance and punctuality in secondary schools in Yenagoa Metropolis. The findings showed that students in urban secondary schools recorded higher attendance and punctuality rates than students in semi-urban secondary schools, and the differences were statistically significant. This implies that students' regular presence in school and timely arrival are not determined only by personal discipline, but also by location-related factors such as distance to school, transport availability, road conditions, flooding, and ease of movement. Therefore, improving attendance and punctuality

in secondary schools requires location-sensitive strategies, especially for semi-urban schools where students may face greater access and mobility challenges.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were put forward:

1. School administrators should provide stronger attendance monitoring and support for students in semi-urban secondary schools by addressing location-related barriers such as distance, transport difficulties, flooding, and poor road conditions.
2. Parents, teachers, and education authorities should work together to improve students' punctuality, especially in semi-urban schools, through early-morning supervision, transport support, counselling, and regular parent-school communication.

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