

Students' Experiences of the School Environment as a Learning Ecosystem: A Case Study of Physical, Social, and Academic Dimensions

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ABSTRACT

The school environment is not only a physical setting for learning but also an ecosystem shaped by students' social relationships and academic experiences. This study aims to describe how an elementary school student perceives the physical, social, and academic dimensions of the school environment and how these dimensions interact within the learning experience. Using a descriptive qualitative approach with a single-case study design, the study involved a fourth-grade student who had attended the school for four years. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation and analyzed thematically through data organization, reduction, categorization, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that classroom conditions, greenery, and school facilities supported physical comfort, although the library was underutilized. Peer support and friendly teacher communication strengthened students' sense of safety and belonging. Educational games, visual media, films, books, and additional academic support also made learning more engaging. The novelty lies in integrating these three dimensions from the student's direct perspective, demonstrating that social relationships connect physical conditions with academic experiences. Although based on a single case, the study provides contextual insights for evaluating learning environments through student voice.



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INTRODUCTION

The quality of the learning process is determined not only by curriculum content, teacher competence, or students' individual characteristics. Learning takes place within an environment that simultaneously provides physical space, networks of social relationships, and academic rules and practices. In elementary school contexts, these elements are closely intertwined with students' everyday experiences because much of their learning, interaction, play, and habit formation occurs within the school setting. Schools are therefore more appropriately understood as learning ecosystems rather than merely as buildings in which knowledge is transmitted. This perspective positions student experience as an important source of evidence for determining whether an environment is genuinely perceived as comfortable, safe, and supportive of engagement in learning.

Research on learning environments indicates that the physical dimension remains a fundamental component. Spatial conditions, lighting, ventilation, cleanliness, layout, and the availability of facilities influence how students experience learning activities. Nursidik et al. (2024) emphasize the importance of physical learning-environment characteristics in supporting elementary students' comfort and learning outcomes. Husna et al. (2025) likewise report that school facilities and the physical environment are associated with learning motivation, while Puspitasari (2016) identifies learning facilities as a factor related to academic achievement. These findings suggest that the physical quality of a school should not be reduced to an inventory of facilities. Facilities acquire educational value when they are accessible, understood as useful, and meaningfully incorporated into students' learning experiences.

However, an adequate physical environment does not automatically produce a positive learning experience. Students learn through interactions with teachers, peers, and other members of the school community. A supportive social environment can foster a sense of acceptance and safety, confidence in

asking questions, and willingness to participate in learning. Dewi and Yuniarsih (2020) show that the school environment and teacher communication are associated with learning motivation. Ardiyansyah (2019) also highlights the role of the school environment in shaping students' experiences and behavior. In relation to motivation, Emda (2017) emphasizes its central role in learning, while Arianti (2019), Suprihatin (2015), and Oktiani (2017) demonstrate that teachers' roles, efforts, and creativity contribute to strengthening students' learning motivation. Thus, the quality of teacher-student relationships and peer relations constitutes a substantive part of the learning environment rather than an auxiliary factor external to learning.

The academic dimension complements the physical and social dimensions through the ways in which schools organize learning experiences. Teaching methods, media, learning resources, enrichment activities, and support for students experiencing difficulty all shape the extent to which the school environment facilitates participation. Tafonao (2018) and Nurrita (2018) emphasize the role of instructional media in enhancing interest and learning outcomes, while Wulandari et al. (2023) show that instructional media remain important because they can make learning content more concrete and easier to understand. Games and digital media may also enrich learning experiences when they remain aligned with instructional goals; Mulyati and Evendi (2020), for example, demonstrate that online game-based media can be used to improve learning outcomes in particular contexts. The academic environment, therefore, concerns not only what is taught but also how students experience the material through the activities made available to them.

The relationship between environment and motivation must nevertheless be interpreted cautiously. Motivation does not arise from a single factor. Nurhasanah and Sobandi (2016) identify an association between interest and learning outcomes, whereas Ricardo and Meilani (2017) position interest and motivation as factors influencing learning outcomes. Under changing learning conditions, Cahyani et al. (2020) show that the learning environment can shape the dynamics of student motivation, while Dewi (2020) illustrates how changes to the learning environment during the pandemic required schools and families to adapt the learning process. Collectively, these studies reinforce the proposition that learning experience emerges from interactions among students' characteristics, social support, physical conditions, and available academic practices.

Although a substantial body of research has examined school environments, facilities, teacher communication, media, and motivation, many studies tend to treat these elements as separate variables and assess their relationships with, or effects on, learning outcomes quantitatively. Such approaches are important for identifying patterns of association among variables, yet they do not always explain how students themselves make sense of the conditions they experience. Systematic studies of the learning environment likewise suggest that learning experiences cannot be separated from learners' perceptions of the environments they encounter (Closs, 2021). In another educational context, Kassab et al. (2024) demonstrate an association between the educational environment, student engagement, and academic performance. Nevertheless, elementary students' interpretations of the combined physical, social, and academic dimensions of schooling still require contextual accounts that are closer to everyday experience.

This gap defines the position of the present study. The study is not intended to quantify the effect of the school environment on learning outcomes, nor does it seek to generalize its findings to all students. Instead, a single case is used to examine in depth how one student interprets the classroom, school facilities, peer relationships, teacher communication, learning media, and academic activities experienced at school. Focusing on student experience enables the study to capture distinctions between the availability and actual use of facilities, between the presence of social interaction and the sense of safety it produces, and between the availability of instructional media and the ways in which such media are experienced as engaging activities.

The novelty of this study lies in integrating three dimensions of the school environment through the perspective of a student's direct experience. In contrast to studies that isolate facilities, motivation, or media as separate variables, this study treats the physical, social, and academic environments as interconnected components. The analysis is directed not only toward identifying conditions students

like or dislike but also toward understanding how one dimension gives meaning to another. In this way, the study offers a conceptual contribution by showing that a positive learning environment emerges from the interconnection of comfortable spaces, supportive relationships, and meaningful academic activities. Its practical contribution lies in strengthening school evaluation practices that incorporate student voice.

Based on this framework, the study aims to: (1) describe how a student interprets the school's physical conditions in relation to learning comfort; (2) explain how relationships with teachers and peers shape a sense of safety and engagement; (3) identify the student's experiences of teaching methods, media, and learning resources; and (4) analyze the interrelationship of the physical, social, and academic environments as a learning ecosystem. These objectives intentionally employ descriptive and interpretive language in order to remain consistent with a qualitative case-study design and to avoid causal claims that exceed the available evidence.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach using a single-case study strategy. The design was selected because the study focuses on one student's meanings and experiences of the school environment in a natural context rather than on testing statistical relationships among variables. Case studies enable a phenomenon to be understood in depth while preserving the relationship between the participant's experience and the context in which that experience occurs (Yin, 2018). In qualitative research, context, participant perspectives, and interpretive processes are integral to the construction of research knowledge (Creswell, 2014). Accordingly, the findings of this study are positioned as an analytical description of a single case rather than as a representation of a population.

The primary informant was a fourth-grade student who had attended the school under study for four years. The informant was selected purposively because this sustained direct experience enabled the student to provide information about the classroom, facilities, relationships with peers and teachers, and learning activities. The focus on a single informant was retained in accordance with the available research data. Consequently, contextual depth became the primary analytical orientation, and all conclusions were restricted to the informant's experience. The terms 'effect,' 'cause,' and 'increase' are not used as empirical claims in this study unless they refer to findings reported in previous research.

Data were collected using three techniques: in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were used to obtain information regarding the informant's experiences of classroom comfort, available facilities, library use, canteen conditions, peer relationships, interactions with teachers, educational games, visual media, learning resources, and forms of academic support received. Observation was used to interpret the physical and academic context relevant to the informant's account, while documentation served as supporting evidence for descriptions of school facilities and activities. The use of multiple data sources was intended to strengthen the traceability of interpretations and reduce dependence on a single type of information.

Data were analyzed thematically by adapting the principles of data organization, condensation, display, and conclusion drawing in qualitative analysis (Miles et al., 2014). The first stage involved reviewing the interview data, observation notes, and documentation in their entirety to develop a general understanding. The second stage consisted of selecting information relevant to the research focus. In the third stage, the data were categorized into themes concerning the physical environment, social environment, academic environment, and relationships among these dimensions. The fourth stage developed interpretations by comparing findings across data sources and relating them to previous research. The final stage involved drawing conclusions while explicitly restricting them to the scope of the single case.

The trustworthiness of the interpretations was supported through triangulation across data sources, traceability between the evidence and the presentation of findings, and a clear distinction among field evidence, researcher interpretation, and recommendations. Statements made by the informant were not automatically elevated into general conclusions about the school. Instead, each finding was treated as an individual experience and was supported by observation or documentation

where such evidence was available. This strategy is important because the quality of a case study is not determined by the number of participants alone, but by the precision of case boundaries, depth of description, transparency of the analytical process, and consistency between evidence and claims.

Operationally, the analysis was organized into four domains, as presented in Table 1. This mapping served as an analytical framework to reduce repetition and ensure that each section was clearly connected to the research objectives.

Table 1. Analytical domains, experience indicators, and data sources

Analytical domain	Experience indicators	Primary data sources	Interpretive focus
Physical environment	Classroom, view, library, canteen, facilities	Interview; observation; documentation	Comfort, facility use, perceived needs
Social environment	Peer relationships, teacher communication, experiences of social disturbance	Interview; observation	Sense of safety, support, belonging, quality of interaction
Academic environment	Educational games, visual media, books, educational films, additional tutoring	Interview; observation; documentation	Interest, variation in learning experience, pedagogical support
Interrelationship among dimensions	Connections among physical conditions, social relationships, and academic activities	Synthesis of all sources	Learning ecosystem and the most prominent dimension in the informant's experience

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that the informant perceived the school environment as an integrated experience. The data do not suggest that any single facility or instructional method operates independently. Rather, the meaning of a comfortable space is strengthened when the student feels socially safe, while instructional media become engaging when teachers use them through positive interactions. To maintain consistency with the single-case study design, the findings below are presented as a contextual account of the informant's experience rather than as a description of all students at the school.

Four major patterns were identified across the data. First, the physical environment was generally perceived as comfortable, although the availability of facilities did not necessarily correspond to their use. Second, peer support and teachers' attitudes were the strongest elements in the informant's account of school experience. Third, variation in academic activities—particularly educational games and visual media—was perceived by the informant as increasing interest in participating in learning in the subjective sense, rather than as an experimentally measured increase. Fourth, the three dimensions mutually reinforced one another to form a learning ecosystem. A summary of the findings is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Matrix of the main research findings

Dimension	Field finding	Meaning for the informant	Research interpretation
Physical	Space perceived as pleasant; garden view; library available but rarely used; canteen sometimes crowded	Comfortable, but the value of facilities depends on actual use	Availability of facilities should be interpreted alongside user experience
Social	Peers are helpful; teachers are friendly and communicative; experienced disturbance in first grade but currently feels safe	Sense of belonging and acceptance; confidence to participate	Social relationships are the most prominent element of the school experience
Academic	"Jumping frog" game, visual media, books, educational films, additional tutoring	Learning is perceived as more engaging and less monotonous	Media are meaningful when integrated with pedagogical practice

Dimension	Field finding	Meaning for the informant	Research interpretation
Integrative	Physical, social, and academic dimensions emerge simultaneously in the student's experience	The school environment is understood as an integrated whole	The quality of the learning ecosystem is shaped by interconnections among dimensions

Physical environment: comfort is not synonymous with completeness of facilities

Within the physical dimension, the informant described the learning space as generally pleasant. One element that emerged explicitly in the narrative was the view of a garden visible from the classroom. The student perceived this view as creating a comfortable atmosphere and making learning activities more enjoyable. This finding is important because it suggests that students do not assess the quality of space solely in terms of objects or facilities. Visual elements and the surrounding atmosphere are also part of spatial experience. In other words, the quality of the physical environment includes both an objective dimension, such as facilities, and a subjective dimension in the form of user-perceived comfort.

This finding is consistent with Nursidik et al. (2024), who position physical environmental conditions as an element supporting comfort and learning outcomes. Husna et al. (2025) similarly report an association between school facilities, physical conditions, and learning motivation. The present study, however, offers a different nuance because it does not seek to measure associations; instead, it demonstrates how a student assigns meaning to simple physical elements. For the informant, the view of greenery from the classroom was more prominent in the narrative of comfort than technical descriptions of lighting, ventilation, or room size. This distinction highlights the value of a qualitative approach: what students consider important may not be identical to the indicators conventionally prioritized by researchers.

The library provides the clearest example of the distinction between the availability and use of facilities. The school has a library, yet the informant stated that it was rarely used for reading. These data are insufficient to conclude that the school library is generally ineffective because the information derives from a single case. Nevertheless, they reveal a gap between the availability of a learning resource and the informant's routine use of it. Puspitasari (2016) shows that learning facilities may be associated with achievement, but facilities are unlikely to produce educational value if they are not integrated into learning routines. Evaluation of facilities should therefore move beyond asking whether a facility exists to examining how it is actually used.

The practical implication of the library finding is not necessarily to construct new facilities but to optimize those already available. Schools could integrate library visits into classroom assignments, literacy activities, guided borrowing, or reading-based discussions. This recommendation is inferential and should not be presented as the result of an intervention that has already been tested. The research evidence supports only the finding that, according to the informant, the library was rarely used. Distinguishing findings from recommendations is therefore essential for maintaining the academic integrity of the manuscript.

The canteen presents a different pattern. The informant reported that the canteen was occasionally crowded, meaning that the student could not always obtain the food desired. However, this condition was not perceived as disrupting learning because bringing snacks from home provided an alternative. These data suggest that shortcomings in facilities do not necessarily carry equal weight in students' experiences. The significance of a limitation depends on the function of the facility, the availability of alternatives, and students' capacity to adapt. Assessments of the school environment should therefore avoid assuming that every physical problem automatically constitutes a barrier to learning.

Overall, the informant did not identify any facilities that required immediate repair. Instead, the student described learning activities as enjoyable and the school environment as generally comfortable. This finding illustrates how physical experience acquires meaning through social and academic contexts. A comfortable space becomes more positive when teachers are perceived as friendly, while facilities gain value when they are used in engaging activities. This interpretation is consistent with the view that the learning environment shapes learning experience through an interaction of related conditions rather than through isolated elements (Closs, 2021).

Social environment: relational support at the center of student experience

Compared with the physical and academic dimensions, the social dimension emerged most strongly in the informant's narrative. Peer relationships were described positively. The informant stated that peers were kind and willing to provide assistance during learning activities. This support made the student feel more comfortable remaining at school. In this case study, peer assistance functioned not only as social interaction but also as practical support during learning activities. Learning, therefore, takes place within relationships and is not an entirely individual process.

This finding is relevant to research on learning motivation that positions social and environmental support as part of the conditions shaping student engagement. Emda (2017) explains that motivation occupies an important position in the learning process, while Dewi and Yuniarsih (2020) demonstrate associations among the school environment, teacher communication, and student motivation. The present study did not measure motivation using a quantitative instrument; instead, it identified experiential indicators related to motivation, including feeling comfortable at school, feeling supported, and enjoying learning activities. By restricting the language to the informant's experience, the interpretation remains proportionate to the research design.

Relationships with teachers were also described very positively. The informant characterized teachers as pleasant, friendly, and easy to communicate with. These qualities made learning feel more enjoyable and less monotonous. In this context, teacher friendliness is not merely a personal characteristic but part of the pedagogical climate. When students perceive teachers as approachable, opportunities to ask questions, communicate difficulties, or participate in classroom activities become more open. Arianti (2019) emphasizes the importance of teachers' roles in fostering learning motivation, while Suprihatin (2015) and Oktiani (2017) show that teacher efforts and creativity can strengthen students' motivation to learn.

It is important to note that the informant's social experience was not entirely positive throughout the years of schooling. The student recalled being frequently bothered by peers in first grade. This experience formed part of the student's school history but did not persist as the dominant evaluation of the school at the time of the study. During data collection, the informant reported feeling safe, accepted, and comfortable at school. These data show that past negative experiences and current positive experiences can coexist within a student's educational trajectory. Studies of the social environment should therefore avoid simplistic 'good' or 'bad' classifications and instead attend to the dynamics of relationships over time.

Ardiyansyah (2019) positions the school environment as a factor associated with students' moral development and experience. From the perspective of the present study, the informant's experience of social disturbance in first grade indicates that a sense of safety is a condition that must be continually maintained rather than an assumption automatically attached to the school setting. A school that is currently perceived as safe still requires mechanisms for preventing and addressing conflict. Open communication, teacher responsiveness, routines that encourage mutual assistance, and strengthened peer relations are practices that may help sustain a positive social climate before problems escalate.

The most important finding in this section concerns the role of social relationships as a 'bridge' across dimensions. The informant could enjoy a comfortable space because it was embedded in a social situation that fostered belonging. The student also enjoyed games and instructional media because these activities were facilitated by teachers perceived as friendly. The social environment thus gave meaning to both the physical and academic environments. This does not imply that the social dimension is causally more influential than the others; rather, relational support was the most consistent theme in the informant's narrative and the element most frequently associated with positive school experiences.

Academic environment: media, games, and pedagogical support

Within the academic dimension, the informant expressed a preference for learning activities that incorporated educational games and visual media. One example mentioned was a 'jumping frog' game displayed on a screen. The informant interpreted this activity as making learning more enjoyable.

This finding indicates that variation in learning experiences is meaningful for elementary students because subject matter is encountered not only through verbal explanation but also through visualization and activities that create opportunities for engagement.

Tafonao (2018) emphasizes the role of instructional media in increasing learning interest, while Nurrita (2018) explains that media can support the delivery of content and learning outcomes. Wulandari et al. (2023) similarly show that instructional media are important for making learning more effective and engaging. In the context of digital games, Mulyati and Evendi (2020) found that the use of Quizizz may serve as an alternative for improving learning outcomes. The present study does not test the effectiveness of any specific game; rather, it documents the subjective experience that games and visual media were perceived as making learning more engaging. This distinction must be maintained so that the article does not transform an informant's experience into a claim of effectiveness.

In addition to games, the school provides books, shared viewing of educational films, and additional tutoring for material considered difficult. The availability of multiple forms of learning resources provides varied channels through which students can engage with subject matter. Such variety is important within the academic environment because students may not have identical learning preferences across topics. Nurrita (2018) and Tafonao (2018) both position media as tools that facilitate learning, although their effectiveness still depends on alignment with instructional objectives and the way teachers organize activities.

The findings also demonstrate that devices and facilities cannot be separated from pedagogical competence. Screens or visual media do not automatically make learning engaging. Their value emerges when teachers use them in activities that students can understand, that are appropriately challenging, and that are connected to the subject matter. The same applies to educational games. If a game functions only as entertainment without an academic purpose, its presence does not necessarily support learning. In this case, however, the informant understood the game as part of the learning experience, suggesting that the medium functioned as a bridge between content and student engagement.

The academic dimension is also related to motivation and interest. Nurhasanah and Sobandi (2016) show that learning interest is associated with learning outcomes, while Ricardo and Meilani (2017) emphasize the influence of interest and motivation on learning outcomes. Cahyani et al. (2020) demonstrate that changes in learning conditions may affect student motivation, particularly when patterns of interaction and learning change. In the present study, positive experiences of games, media, and additional support can be interpreted as indications that academic variety was perceived as supporting interest. However, because no motivation scale was used, the phrase 'increased motivation' is not presented as an empirical finding.

Practically, the findings point to the importance of maintaining methodological variety while preserving pedagogical coherence. Teachers may continue to use visual media, educational games, educational films, and reading resources, but they should ensure that these activities help students understand content, participate, and reflect on what they have learned. This emphasis is consistent with the principle that technology and media are tools rather than the ultimate goal of learning.

Synthesis: the school environment as a learning ecosystem

When the three dimensions are analyzed together, the informant's experience appears not to have been formed through separate mechanisms. The physical environment provides the basic conditions of space and facilities. The social environment provides safety and support. The academic environment provides activities and learning resources. These dimensions intersect: visual media require facilities, facilities acquire meaning when used in learning, and learning becomes more enjoyable when teachers and peers create supportive interactions. These intersections provide the basis for conceptualizing the school as a learning ecosystem.

From the student's perspective as a user, environmental quality is not synonymous with completeness. The library is available but rarely used; by contrast, a simple view of the garden emerged as a pleasant feature. The canteen is sometimes crowded but is not perceived as disruptive. Helpful peers and friendly teachers were the elements most frequently associated with a sense of comfort and

belonging. These findings demonstrate that school evaluations focused solely on facilities risk overlooking students' subjective experiences. Student voice can help explain which facilities are actually used, which relationships are experienced as supportive, and which activities make learning engaging.

Kassab et al. (2024) demonstrate that the educational environment is associated with engagement and academic performance in health professions education. Although the context differs, the idea that environment and engagement are interconnected is relevant to the present case. The informant enjoyed learning not merely because media were available, but also because the student felt embedded in a pleasant social atmosphere. Closs (2021) similarly emphasizes that the learning environment shapes learning experience through multiple interconnected elements. The present study extends this interpretation to an elementary school context through a detailed account of one student's experience.

The empirical novelty of the study lies in the finding that social support emerged as the most prominent dimension in the informant's narrative and simultaneously functioned as a bridge between the physical and academic dimensions. Comfortable spatial conditions did not stand alone because comfort was also shaped by relationships with people occupying those spaces. Likewise, educational games and visual media did not operate independently because their meaning was influenced by how teachers interacted with the student. Social relationships therefore functioned not merely as one of three categories but as a lens that strengthened the interpretation of the other two categories.

The conceptual novelty of the study does not lie in proposing a new theory, but in integrating three dimensions within an analysis grounded in student experience. Previous studies have often examined facilities, motivation, communication, or media as variables that can be measured separately. The present study places the three dimensions within a single experiential sequence: the student occupies a particular space, interacts with other people, and then participates in academic activities. This sequence is closer to students' everyday reality than a rigid separation of variables. The contribution is particularly relevant for school leaders who require evaluation evidence that is not limited to numerical indicators but also explains why particular elements are perceived as meaningful or insignificant by students.

The findings also underscore the need to distinguish between basic needs and developmental aspirations. The informant did not identify any facility requiring immediate repair but suggested a swimming pool as a resource for developing talents and interests. This suggestion cannot serve as a basis for policy because it represents the view of only one student. Nevertheless, it illustrates that when basic needs are perceived as adequately met, students' attention may shift toward opportunities for self-development. Schools may treat such aspirations as part of a student-voice process and subsequently examine them through broader consultation with other students, teachers, parents, and administrators.

From a management perspective, three priorities can be derived. First, schools need to maintain spatial conditions and facilities that are already perceived as comfortable while evaluating how effectively they are used. Second, a friendly and safe social climate should be sustained through open communication, teacher support, and mechanisms for responding to conflict. Third, variation in teaching methods and media should continue to be developed while remaining oriented toward academic objectives. These priorities should not be implemented as isolated programs because the strength of the learning environment emerges precisely from their integration.

The finding concerning social disturbance in first grade also has important implications. A good school environment is not one in which conflict never occurs, but one that can rebuild a sense of safety and prevent recurring problems. In this case, the past negative experience did not dominate the informant's current perception. This can be interpreted as indicating that social experience is dynamic. However, the study does not contain sufficient evidence to explain the mechanism responsible for this change. The article therefore records a shift in perception without claiming the success of any specific program.

In evaluating learning, student voice can be used as complementary evidence for assessing facilities and academic practices. Students are able to identify aspects that adults may overlook, such as

calming views from a classroom, facilities that are rarely used, the classroom activities they find most engaging, or social situations that make them feel comfortable at school. A student-voice approach does not imply that every policy decision should follow individual preferences. Rather, it provides a channel through which school decisions can become more responsive to the experiences of the primary users of educational services.

The findings must also be interpreted proportionately. They do not demonstrate that physical, social, or academic environments cause improvements in learning outcomes. The study did not measure pre- and post-test scores, include a comparison group, or use a sample that would support statistical inference. What can be stated is that the informant associated particular conditions with comfort, safety, interest, and a sense of belonging. This limitation in the scope of claims is not a weakness of expression but an essential alignment between the claims and the research design.

The principal limitation of the study is its reliance on a single informant within one school context. The perspectives of teachers, parents, and school administrators were not used as primary informant sources. The data are also stronger in describing perceptions than in objectively explaining changes in learning outcomes. Future research could employ a multiple-case design involving several students from different grade levels, incorporate the perspectives of teachers and parents, and add structured observations to examine patterns of space use and interaction. A mixed-methods approach could also be considered if researchers wish to test whether qualitatively identified patterns of experience are associated with motivation or learning outcomes in a broader population.

Despite these limitations, the case study has value because it demonstrates how the concept of the school environment is translated into everyday experience. For the informant, school is not merely a classroom, nor is it simply a set of social relationships or instructional methods. The school is perceived as enjoyable when the space is reasonably comfortable, relationships are supportive, and learning offers varied experiences. This integrative finding constitutes the principal contribution of the study.

Practical implications for managing the learning environment

The first implication concerns the evaluation of facilities. Schools can maintain physical elements already perceived as comfortable and prioritize optimizing facilities that are not being used to their full potential. The library in this case provides a concrete example. Rather than immediately adding new facilities, schools can test strategies that connect existing resources more closely to learning activities. Jannah and Sontani (2018) show that learning facilities and infrastructure are associated with learning motivation; therefore, the availability of facilities should be accompanied by management practices that make them relevant to students' needs.

The second implication concerns communication quality. Friendly and approachable teachers represented the strongest element in the informant's experience. This finding suggests that improving school quality cannot rely solely on the provision of facilities. Strengthening teachers' capacity to build safe, dialogic, and supportive interactions is equally important. Such practices may include routinely creating opportunities for students to ask questions, providing feedback without embarrassing students, and remaining attentive to peer-relationship dynamics.

The third implication is the need to maintain a balance between media innovation and instructional objectives. Games or screens can make activities more engaging, but schools must ensure that innovation does not stop at entertainment value. Media should be used when they support conceptual understanding, provide opportunities for participation, or improve the quality of students' interaction with learning content. Under this principle, academic innovation remains centered on the learning experience rather than on technology use for its own sake.

The fourth implication is the strengthening of student-voice mechanisms. Schools can periodically use brief surveys, class forums, suggestion boxes, small-group discussions, or simple interviews to understand how students experience facilities, relationships, and learning activities. Student-voice data can then be compared with teacher observations and information from school

administrators. This approach helps schools distinguish between widespread problems, individual experiences, and developmental aspirations, allowing policy responses to be more proportionate.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the informant's learning experience was shaped by the interrelationship of the physical, social, and academic environments. In the physical dimension, a comfortable classroom, a view of the garden, and the availability of facilities were perceived positively, although facility use was not always optimal, as illustrated by the infrequent use of the library. An occasionally crowded canteen did not automatically constitute a barrier because the informant had alternatives. These findings show that the quality of the physical environment cannot be assessed solely on the basis of the completeness of facilities; it must also be considered in terms of use and meaning for students. In the social dimension, peer support and teachers' friendly attitudes were the most prominent elements. The informant felt comfortable at school when peers were willing to help and teachers were easy to communicate with. An unpleasant experience in first grade indicates that social dynamics may change over time and that a sense of safety requires continuous attention. In the academic dimension, educational games, visual media, books, educational films, and additional tutoring were perceived as making learning more engaging. The value of these media and activities lies not in the technology itself but in their pedagogical use and the interactions surrounding them.

The main contribution of this study is its integrative interpretation of the school environment as a learning ecosystem. In this case, social relationships represented the strongest element in the informant's experience and gave meaning to both physical conditions and academic activities. Because the study is based on a single case, the findings cannot be statistically generalized and do not establish causal relationships. They are more appropriately understood as a contextual account of how one student interprets the school environment. Based on these findings, schools are advised to maintain the quality of spaces already perceived as comfortable; optimize the use of facilities that remain underutilized; sustain safe teacher-student communication and peer relationships; and develop varied teaching methods and media that remain aligned with academic objectives. Future studies should involve multiple informants from different grade levels, include teachers and parents, and use multiple-case or mixed-methods designs so that the experiential patterns identified here can be compared and examined across broader contexts.

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