Status of School Climate in Public Sector Secondary Schools of Punjab, Pakistan: A gender-based Comparison

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Abstract

Every school has specific climate that differentiates it from other schools. It influences the behavior as well as awareness of teachers and students for the school. It is feasible climate of school in which all stakeholders feel cherished and try to make it more suitable for learning. The sound school climate reduces the frustrated behavior of the teachers resulting in increased performance. But a disturbed climate of school produces various problems which make a cause to affect the teaching learning process badly. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the present status of the climate in public sector secondary schools of Punjab, Pakistan. The population for this study consisted of secondary school teachers of public sector secondary schools of Punjab. The sample of the study was 598 secondary school teachers who were selected from 6 Districts of Punjab through a multi stage sampling technique. The data was collected through survey questionnaire method. The results of this study indicated that the status of school climate in secondary schools was satisfactory. But significant difference was found in the climate of male and female schools.

Keywords

Introduction

The climate of school is an important source of useful learning. A sound atmosphere of school consists of combined interaction among all stakeholders. Therefore, the favorable school's climate develops the ability of teachers and learners. It also plays a pivotal role in association between physical structure of school and the procedure of teaching and learning in classroom (Werang, 2017). Likewise, it produces the creative thinking and enhances the teachers' performance as well as students' achievements (Mishra and Acha, 2011). Caglayan (2013) say that school climate is co-related to different factors such as progress of school and the expectations of all stakeholders Moreover, every school has some sense of feelings about its atmosphere. Sometimes, it seems difficult to describe this feeling; however, sometimes it may be very clear. Mostly it depends upon the culture of a school. All the stakeholders like parents, teachers, head teachers and students have some sense of thinking. It may be the result of some strict rules; the relations among the stakeholders and the efforts that have been made for providing quality teaching etc. All this can be defined as the "school climate" (Karpicke & Murphy, 1996; Deal & Peterson, 1999). Furthermore, in the view of Barth (2001), climate of a school is described as the feelings of teachers, head teachers, and students about all kind of activities done within the school. At the same time, Bonstigl (2001) says that school climates differ one school to another in different ways such as depending upon their financial systems, common circumstances and potentials of teachers, head teacher and students. School climate may be affected by inside or outside, positive or negative events being happened in the school or in neighborhood. Moreover, if the values of a school and community will differ, the climate of that school will definitely be differing from other schools (Ashby, Krug & Krug 1998). In the view of Barth (2001), it is a major role of teachers and administrators to manipulate and improve the existing level of school climate for the betterment of teaching and learning process. The level of school climate should be high. It must fulfill the needs and requirements of teachers, students, school community as well as educational authorities. Therefore, it is necessary for all stakeholders to work hard for achieving the future aims and objectives for the betterment of whole educational system. According to Peterson and Deal (1998), an effective communication among different schools about their existing level of climate can create a foundation of guidance that can facilitate the teachers, head teachers, and students to improve the standard of teaching and learning. Only one person cannot develop better climate of school (Freiburg, 1998).

Peterson and Deal (2002) have stated that standards, values, communal interactions, and potentials of people persuade toward all the happenings to be occurred in the school. Thinking, feelings, perceptions, and performance of all staff members and students are affected by the culture and development of society. As a result of all above discussion, Peterson and Deal believed that the head teacher should create such an environment and climate in the school where all the staff members and students would be able to participate in the influential activities for better teaching and learning process. Thus, keeping in mind the importance of school climate, objective of this study was two-fold. First, to assess the status of school climate in public secondary schools of Punjab and second, to compare the school climate level gender-wise.

Dimensions of School Climate

There are five dimensions of school climate which are further divided into two categories, two dimensions explain the behavior of head teacher and other three dimensions are related to the teachers. The two dimensions concerning to the head teacher are supportive behavior and directive behavior whereas; engaged behavior, frustrated behavior and intimate behavior are about teachers (Hoy, 1991). Hoy, Tarter and Kottkamp (1991), Hoy and Hannum (1997) and Hoy (2014) have discussed these dimensions comprehensively. A brief summary of each of these dimensions is given in the following paragraphs. A supportive behavior is an attitude of head teacher which is a symbol of essential appreciation for all teaching staff. Supportive head teachers are broad minded.

They accept all kind of submissions given by subordinates and other community members for the betterment of teaching and learning environment (Hoy & Clover, 1986). Moreover, it is the quality of supportive head teacher that he/she appreciates all the useful suggestions of teachers. Supportive head teacher's behavior creates a beneficial interaction and communication among teaching staff and other school community (Hoy & Hannum 1997). Supportive head teacher should expose the essential aspect to gain the respect and confidence of teachers that they are working under a kind supervision of their head (Ceyans & MacNeil, 1998). In the view of Sweeney (1992), a proficient head teacher understands that the honor of subordinates increases the level of students' achievements and ensures the quality of education. According to Hoy and Miskel (2002), if the head teacher involves other teachers in decision making procedure, it will increase the attempt, will-power and obligation of other staff. When head teacher will provide proper respect to teachers, keeping in mind their personal efficiencies and capabilities, in return, teachers would like to engage the students in learning and enhancing their achievement level (Sweeney, (1992). Directive head teacher has strict and inflexible manners of administration. In view of Hoy and Clover (1986), directive behavior is a behavior of head teacher which is unbendable and does not engage other faculty members in an administration procedure. Directive behavior of head teacher maintains continuous supervision and command on all the faculty members and school management without involvement of any other person. Many directive head teachers are considered as to be micromanagers. According to Namishan (1989), schools which have authoritarian head teachers, the teachers of such schools show attitude of displeasure, discontentment and unhappiness.

Moreover, according to Blase and Kirby (2000) the teachers show quick response under the leadership of head who demonstrates directive behavior. But the head teachers having directive behavior cannot fulfill the educational and departmental requirements. Neuman and Simmons (2000) affirmed that a friendly and democratic head teacher has more time to sharing the ideas, thinking, proposals, and educational problems while a directive boss has not any feeling or consciousness about sharing anything to others. Engaged behavior is revealed due to high morale of school teachers. Teachers having engaged behavior are satisfied to their school environment and fulfill all assigned tasks for the betterment of teaching and learning process. They are proud of their school and try to share their ideas with other teachers and feel happy to support each other. They are not only concerned about teaching but also, they are highly committed to the welfare of students and institutions. They show friendly behavior and self-confidence to all colleagues as well as students. The teachers having engaged behavior are hopeful and try to enhance their ability for better performance and high level of students' achievements (Hoy & Tarter 1991). Frustrated behavior of school teachers has negative effects on good relation among colleagues as well as students' learning process. According to Hoy and Tarter (1991), frustrated behavior refers to a general pattern of involvement of teachers in which they divert themselves from the basic task of teaching. Routine duties, administrative paperwork, and assigned nonteaching duties are unnecessary for them. Moreover, these teachers show anger and displeasure, and usually disturb each other. This kind of behavior has negative effects on the performance of students as well as disturbs the atmosphere of school. Intimate behavior of teachers refers to a strong and consistent arrangement of social relationships among teachers and other community members. Teachers know each staff member very well and share common and specific problems among themselves. They become close friends and regularly visit homes of other staff members. Intimate behavior is a quality that encourages working for the well-being of students and the betterment of school climate (Hoy, Tarter & Kottkamp 1991). Keeping in view all above facts, it was a dire need to conduct such study which evaluates the existing status of school climate in public secondary schools. For this purpose, the aim of this study was to examine the present status of school climate in secondary school of Punjab, Pakistan.

Research Ethics

The process of the research was completed with transparency and honestly. Before collecting data, prior permission was taken from the heads of schools. Information concerning the objectives and other aspects of the study was provided in advance. The confidentiality and anonymity of information gathered from respondents was ensured. Efforts were made to protect the participants from any kind of psychologically or physically harm.

Methodology

This was a descriptive type of research in which survey was conducted to accomplish the study. To measure the status of school climate of secondary schools, a questionnaire for the assessment of school climate was adapted from Hoy (1991). The population of the study comprised of all the male and female teachers of 6043 public sector secondary schools (boys and girls) functioning in the urban and rural areas of the Punjab province. In these schools, a total of 40542 male and female secondary school teachers are working (Anees-ul-Husnain, 2011). Multi stage sampling technique was used to select an appropriate sample for this study. At first stage, all schools of Punjab were divided into three strata on the basis of their location viz upper, central and lower Punjab. Then two districts from each stratum were selected randomly. The selected districts included Mianwali and Gujrat from upper, Faisalabad and Okara from central and Bahawalpur and Vehari districts from lower Punjab. After that, 24 secondary schools including 12 urban (6 male and 6 female) and 12 rural (6 male and 6 female) were selected from each district. Finally, 50% secondary school teachers were taken randomly from each of the sampled secondary school. The detail of sampling is shown in Figure 1.
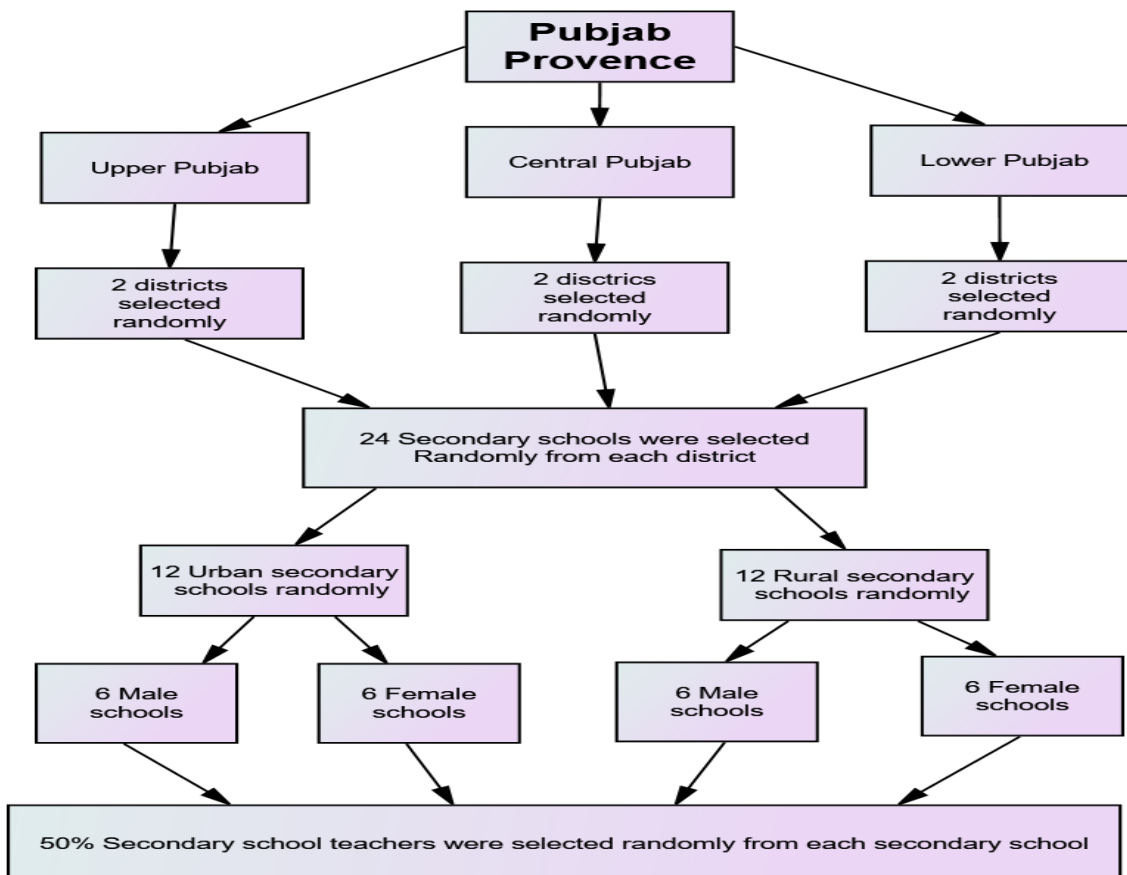

Figure 1: Flow chart of sampling Procedure

Research Instruments

To obtain the opinions of the respondents, a questionnaire about school climate consisted of 34 items was adapted from Hoy (1991) This questionnaire was designed on four-point Likert scale i.e., rarely occurs, sometimes occurs, often occurs and very frequently occurs. A pilot study was conducted on a sample of 80 secondary school teachers in which 40 were male and 40 were female from district Kasur, Punjab. The draft of questionnaire about school climate was tried out on the sample in order to improve each item of the questionnaire in respect of its wording and meaning according to the Pakistani perspective. Thus, the reliability of questionnaire was ensured. In this process, many items of the instrument were modified and two of them were deleted. Reliability of the instrument was calculated with the help of Cronbach's alpha value. This value has been calculated for each dimension of school climate. Overall and dimension wise separate values of reliability were: school climate 0.79, supportive behavior 0.64, engaged behavior 0.62, frustrated behavior 0.54, directive behavior 0.51 and intimate behavior 0.43

Statistical Analysis

In order to measure the status of school climate, we used the descriptive statistics. To measure the significance i.e., whether a status is significantly high or low, we used one sample t-test. For making comparison between male and female schools' climates, independent samples t-test was used. Cronbach's alpha was used to check the reliability of the used instruments.

Results

Status of school climate can be studied using the descriptive statistics, as well as t-test. It seems logical to assume that average scores of school climate should be greater than 2.5 (average of 4 points of Likert Scale), then we can compare our observed mean scores with this value. Observed mean value and the results of one sample t-test are given in the Table1 below:

Table 1: One-Sample t-test results

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
School Climate	511	2.599	0.298	0.012

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 2.5					
	T	Df	p-value	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
School Climate	196.551	510	0.000	2.599	2.571	2.623

The above table indicates that the mean score of school climate is 2.6 which is greater than 2.5. Similarly, observed sample mean has been compared with the hypothesized mean value of 2.5 using the one sample t-test. In this test, we have $H_0 : \mu \leq 2.5$ vs $H_1 : \mu > 2.5$. We can see from the above table that p-value is very small (0.000) which indicates that our test is significant. Thus, we reject the H_0 and accept the alternate hypothesis. It means that school climate in government secondary schools is significantly high. It seems important to study the school climate according to different behaviors of teachers and headmasters/headmistresses. There are two dimensions/behaviors relevant to head teachers i.e., directive behavior and supportive behavior. And three dimensions/behaviors are relevant to teachers viz engaged behavior, frustrated behavior and intimate behavior. Let us now study these behaviors individually. The results have been computed and presented in the Table 2 below. It is found that mean value of head teachers of secondary schools is 2.6872 which is

significantly high (t=8.230, p-value=0.000). Similarly, mean value of supportive behavior (2.6612) is also significantly high (t=7.997, p-value=0.000). It indicates that head teachers of public secondary schools are supportive which a very good indication of appropriate school climate, however, they are also found directive. It means, they use their authority most of the time. As regards the behaviors of school teachers, the mean value of their frustrated behavior is 2.344 which is significantly low (t=-5.955, p-value=0.000). It provides an indication that school climate, with respect to frustrated behavior of teacher is appropriate. The mean value of engaged behavior is 2.6625 which is also significantly high (t=8.812, p-value=0.000). Similarly, the mean value of intimate behavior is 2.6301. It is also significantly high because t-value is 5.251 with p-value=0.000. Thus, we can say that, overall, school climate is very good.

Table 2: One-Sample T-Test Results (Test Value = 2.5)

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	Df	p-value
Supportive Behavior	2.6872	0.51409	0.02274	8.230	510	0.000
Directive Behavior	2.6612	0.45561	0.02015	7.997	510	0.000
Frustrated Behavior	2.3444	0.59058	0.02613	-5.955	510	0.000
Engaged Behavior	2.6652	0.42371	0.01874	8.812	510	0.000
Intimate Behavior	2.6301	0.56028	0.02479	5.251	510	0.000

The difference between the climate of boys' and girls' schools was checked through independent samples t-test. The results of t-test are given in the Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for male and female schools

	School Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
School Climate	Male	280	2.631	0.316	0.016
	Female	231	2.532	0.254	0.018

Independent samples t-test Results for comparison

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	T	Df	p-value	Mean	Std. Error
School Climate	Equal variances assumed	8.062	0.005	3.522	509	0.000	0.099	0.029
	Equal variances not assumed			3.784	412.520	0.000	0.099	0.027

Table 3 shows that there is significant difference between the mean score of boys' and girls' schools' climate. The p-value is 0.000 which indicates that the test is significant and statistically significant difference exists in the school climate of boys' and girls' schools. If we compare the observed mean scores of school climate of boys' and girls' schools, mean score of boys' schools is a little bit greater than the girls' schools. Thus, with the help of descriptive statistics and results of t-test, we can say that school climate of boys' schools is better than the girls' schools. One thing more, given in the above table, seems appropriate to be discussed, that is the Leven's test for equality of variances. Actually, it tests the hypothesis of equality of variances of two populations' i.e., $H_0 : \sigma_1^2 = \sigma_2^2$. It needs to be used before using

the t-test. In the above table, p-value for this test is very small (0.005), thus the alternate hypothesis of "equal variances not assumed" is accepted. Accordingly, we will consider the T value as 3.784. The p-value for T=3.784 is very small (i.e., 0.000), thus, the test is significant, and we conclude that there is significant difference between the school climates of boys and girls schools, and climates of boys schools is better than the climate of girls schools. The basic purpose of this study was to discover the existing status of the climate of secondary schools and to find the difference between the climate of boys' and girls' schools. According to the objectives of the study, the results show that the level of school climate is significantly high in the public sector secondary schools in Punjab and the level of school climate in boys' schools is higher as compared to girls' schools.

Discussion

Looking at the Pakistani perspective, it is being observed that the teachers have a central role in educational system. They have been facing many problems and challenges to perform their sanctified responsibilities. School climate or the place of working is one of the factors which directly or indirectly influence the existing status of performance of their teachers. One concept such as school climate was included in this study which was not easily measurable. An attempt was made to discover existing status of climate of secondary schools on the basis of a tool after proper modification. The basic purpose of this study was to explore the status of school climate of public sector secondary schools. The results of this study agree with the study of Najeemah (2007), that the existing status of school climate is satisfactory. The level of school climate in boys' and girls' schools is statistically significantly high. This may be due to the provision of same infrastructures and facilities. Moreover, the existing status of school climate in boys' secondary schools is better than the school climate of girls' schools. It may be due to the fact that girls' schools have some problems of management and proper use of materials and resources. The results of the study of Cook and Toby (1980) are not in support to our results about directive behavior. As an administrator, head teacher has significant role in developing or increasing the level of school climate. If the head teacher will have the directive behavior, the teachers who are working under this kind of leadership will not be satisfied and will not perform their teaching responsibilities heartedly. It may be due to fact that under the directive style of leadership, the teachers show attitude of displeasure, discontentment and unhappiness.

Therefore, the head teacher should adopt supportive behavior instead of directive behavior. This study revealed that the schools in which head teachers have supportive behavior, the teachers of such schools show better performance and take part in all kinds of activities. The results of the study of Smith (2009) also support it that the teachers are more committed when they feel support and guidance by the head teacher and other colleagues. The status of school climate having head teachers of supportive behavior is high than those which have head teachers of directive behavior. It may be due to the fact that supportive head teachers provide assistance and guidance to subordinates. It was also found that school teachers do have very small frustrated behavior because its mean value was significantly lower. These results conform to the results of Hoy and Tarter (1991) in that teacher with such a low frustrated behavior do have good relations with the colleagues, and they accept to perform any tasks for the betterment of the educational system.

As regards the comparison of schools according to the gender, we have evidenced that there is significant different between the good school climate of boys' and girls' schools. The climate of boys' schools is significantly higher than the climate of girls' schools. It is perhaps due to the fact that usually male teachers have only the responsibilities of teaching, and they do not have to do any work at homes, but, on the other hand, female teachers have to perform duties at home, in addition to performing duties at schools. This dual burden makes them more tense, and more frustrated.

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