

Investigation Of Physical And Psychosocial Environment Of Government Schools: Measuring Of Students' Supportive Learning

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Abstract

Physical and psychosocial elements of schools contribute to the students learning. The study focused on the investigation of the physical and psychosocial environment of government schools. A multistage sampling technique was adopted in the selection of forty schools from four districts of Punjab and eight hundred and five (805) students of the IX and X grades were the sample of the study. A self-developed questionnaire was used as a research tool. Validation of the tool was established in the light of experts' opinions. Reliability was measured through Cronbach Alpha and its value was found 0.83. To analyze the data, descriptive statistics were applied i.e. mean score and standard deviation. It was found a positive student-teacher relation to some extent, teachers assign a lot of homework, schools have sufficient facilities but students feel psychologically and physically unsafe, and the using of facilities is not up to the mark.

Keywords: Learning Environment, Physical and Psychosocial Environment, Supportive Learning

Introduction

Effective teaching and learning environment is based on a psychosocial environment (Abe, 2005). Haertel and Walbeg (2007) stated that psychosocial environment is the combination of the student's interaction with teachers, student interaction with students as well as the interaction of the students with instructional material while Anderson (2007) opined that psychosocial environment is the procedure of interactive

relationship among students, teacher and students link with the subject matter as well as teaching approaches used in the classroom. It is also the accommodation of resources and materials for effective teaching and learning process. Therefore, the psychosocial environment promotes social interaction and communication as well as psychological comfort with the environment, teachers and with their peers (Abe, 2005).

The classroom plays a significant role in the settings of the school. In the classroom, students get together and through the teaching-learning process, they get opportunities to achieve the aims of education. Talton and Simpson (2014) defined the classroom atmosphere as a mini-community in which the members influence the behaviours of others as well as created interactions. Though classroom management teacher shape and maintain the behaviours of students and its main aim is to promote prosocial behaviour as well as develop academic arrangements (Emmer and Saborine, 2015). Similarly, Hinson and Brown (2003) opined that classroom management refers to all those necessary activities which create a supportive and organized environment. It comprised teaching and learning planning, promoting expectations, and implementation of rules. However, Froyen and Iverson (2017) stated that classroom management increases teacher efficiency and contributes to enriching students' academic achievements. Student performance and achievement have become a burning topic in the educational domain, particularly in the context of teachers' accountability. Hornby (2010) defined achievement as the ability to meet goals through efforts as well as the art of finishing something with success and success in the academic area is the academic achievement assessed through achievement tests.

Student competitions provide a platform to motivate students' natural interest in learning new concepts. Students' competition teaches students how to get success or how to face failure and learn from their failure and grow by improving performance. In a competitive environment, students feel a challenging situation for themselves and prepare themselves to cope with the situation with a positive approach and meet these challenges. Davis and Rim (2014) stated that student competitions may promote

high productivity and achievement. The students push themselves positively to increase their performance as compared to the previous. The competition may promote their motivation and they try to perform better and better over time and achieve high performances in their learning. Therefore, Bishop and Walters (2008) argued that through students' competitions, they become leaders in the classroom. It means that student competitions motivate to study and learn materials as they will be ready to compete with their peers in the classroom or outside the classroom. The competitions in the learning environment boost the motivation level of students and they take an interest in the teaching and learning activities. Through students' competitions, they learn how to study through different techniques, how to communicate and how to manage classroom challenges.

In the formal educational system, students spend a lot of time in school. This factor puts an impact on their learning. A lot of research proved that school and classroom environments put a significant impact on the students' learning and academic performance. Those schools which provided a conducive environment for learning performed well compared to a situation where students feel uneasy (Fraser, 2015; Shernoff, Tonks, & Anderson, 2014). Schools need to provide a conducive environment for students' better learning. So the provision of a conducive and supportive environment for learning is the base for quality learning. The teaching-learning may need physical and human ingredients i.e. physical infrastructure and psychosocial components and can't be established on open ground. Physical facilities include i.e. furniture, lighting, condition of the classrooms, science and other labs, etc. The psychosocial components include i.e. teachers-students and student-student interactions. This model of both ingredients

will promote a supportive learning environment. The classroom learning environment is generally based on the following ingredients:

1. Teacher- students' relationship (teacher's empathy and warmth)
2. Violence prevention (protection from harm, cruel or humiliating punishments; bullying)
3. Reasonable workload (monitor assigned work)
4. Equity
5. A discipline that promotes socio-emotional development (happiness of being cared for)
6. Learning and physical resources

Schools are responsible to provide a conducive environment for learning. The overall development can be achieved by providing a supportive learning environment. A conducive and attractive learning environment raises the motivation level of the students and put positive effects on the students' performance. The learning environment in the schools is very important and the paper focused on supportive learning. The learning environments' main aspects i.e. physical and psychosocial were concentrated.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the physical environment of government schools in the context of students' supportive learning.
2. To explore the psychosocial environment of government schools in the context of students' supportive learning.

Review of Related Literature

The literature focused on the supportive learning environment ingredients:

Teacher-Students Relationship

The relationship between teachers and students plays a key role in effective learning. Both of them feel comfortable

conveying their ideas and refining them. Teacher-student relationship occurs between the teacher and student which may be stated as love, friendship, communication and cooperation. Hughes and Chen (2011) stated that the teacher-student connection is based on social interaction which promotes learning. Both teachers and students set the social interaction based on mutual understanding and respect. Similarly, Liberante (2012) stated that the teacher-student relationship is not only effective but also enhances learning in the social scene. The students feel safe in case of positive relationships between teachers and students as well as a supportive school environment. Students convey their understanding of the different phenomena and discuss them with their teachers without any hesitation based on mutual understanding (O'Connor, Dearing, & Collins, 2011). Students perform well if teachers support them in their learning. Students learn in a positive environment and share their experiences with their peers and teachers and teachers suggest guidelines for improvement if students face any learning problem (Silver, Measelle, Armstrong, & Essex, 2005). The teachers' caring for their students, warmth and positive attitude in a learning environment resulted in academic activities. Teachers' behaviour put positive effects on the performance of students in their learning domain as well as in their positive thinking (Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

It is an exciting fact that a positive teacher-student rapport has a substantial impact on the academic performance of low-income students. In the learning environment, the students feel very excited and pleased when their teachers behave them with love and affection (Murray & Malmgren, 2005). The basic reason for this achievement is more motivation. Motivational theories concluded that students' motivation relies on the

understanding of the relationship with their teachers. The teachers who motivate their students always resulted in better achievement as well shows good gesture in their practical life as they transfer their experiences to the future generations (Fan & Williams, 2010). The higher level of relationship resulted in higher expectations from students which keeps them overall motivated (Muller, Katz, & Dance, 2019). The features of good relationships are to establish a positive rapport with students for result-oriented performance. A better relationship and positive environment always put a better impact on the student's performance as it promotes mutual understanding which is essential for learning (Gillespie, 2002).

Violence Prevention

A safe and secure environment plays a key role to promote a positive and attractive environment for students learning. A safe and secure environment in schools is an important component of a conducive learning environment. The harmful, humiliating and bullying schools make the learning environment hateful. The UNESCO, article by Salim (2018) indicates very disheartening evidence around the world which is a very critical mark for the world community and the need of the time is to address it with serious initiatives. He argued that 50% of students face violence from teachers and peers. Every third student faces bullying. So violence put a bad impact on students lifelong. Physical and psychological violence by school staff is more harmful as compared to peer violence. Both type of violence by their teachers and peers badly affect their physical, emotional and psychological health and overall development. The majority of the students hate their peers and teachers and they feel uncomfortable in their learning and resulting in withdrawing themselves from the whole process of learning (Kim et al., 2000). The school's

attractive environment changes the perception of the community and students to feel secure and safe from every possible negative situation and take interest in their learning. The school should provide a positive learning environment where the students may feel safe and secure from physical and psychological violence.

The Happiness of Being Cared

Caring for the students is the responsibility of the schools. The provision of a conducive and child-friendly environment promotes the motivation level and results in better performance of the students. The schools which continuously care for the students, the students feel an active members of the school community. Community is a two-way structure: the geographical and the other is the quality of human relationships (McMillan & Chavis, 2016). The students feel a sense of ownership and they own their schools in their performance reflection. The sense of being a member of the community can be developed through the "Sense of belongingness" (Solomon et al., 2016). A sense of belongingness can be developed by a sense of care. John Dewey and Vygotsky point of view also declared education as a social process and through the social process and teaching learning activities, it is possible to change the whole community in positive and productive activities. So the positive and quality relationship should be focused on as it promotes motivation and attraction in the students to perform well by using mutual understanding between students and teachers (Anness, 2013). The positive understanding and sense of respect for each other promote an attractive and conducive environment for learning. The positive relationship results in great academic achievement while the absence is destructive to the overall development of different domains of students learning and personality development (Opdenakker,

Manulana, & Brock, 2012). So an atmosphere which provides a sense of affection and love improves academic achievement and overall personality development.

Reasonable Homework and Feedback

Homework is considered an important component of schooling. Proper planning for assigning homework may put a better impact on students' academic achievement. Homework is the learning task assigned to students after instructional time which motivates the students to learn and the students feel a competitive environment with their peers (Cooper, 2011). He argued that assigning homework to the students was higher academic achievement than those students given no homework. The one important study by Nordenbo et al. (2010) conducted to analyze the 71 kinds of research conducted between 1990 and 2008 concluded that the assigned homework put significant positive impacts on students learning. The students take interest in the learning activities more than those students who were kept without assigning homework. The study confirmed that there is a link between academic achievement and the quantity of homework but the amount of homework is unknown and no there is no specific pattern or model of homework and quality feedback on assigned homework.

Equity

Equity is considered an important component of a positive learning environment. The students performed well who were behaved with an equity approach. During the last two decades, a lot of attention given to equity in inclusion in making the school environment supportive of learning. Always the homework put positive effects on the students' performance (Windchief, 2019). Equity is the fair treatment to accommodate the

students without any discrepancies. It is also the provision of equal opportunities to all students to available resources and creating an impartial atmosphere in a school to decrease inequalities (Kinzie, McCormick, Gonyea, & BrckaLorenz, 2018). Many students from different suffering backgrounds face poverty, hunger and living insecurities and this situation resulted in violence and badly affect learning and behaviours. Equity brought positive changes in the thoughts and behaviour of the students and they take an interest in the learning activities (Kyriakides, Creemers, & Charalambous, 2018). So quality education is based on the provision of equity in learning and the overall school environment.

Physical Resources

The physical resources are a component of the school environment in which the students feel happiness. A quality learning environment is based on the school resources which not only facilitate the educators but also make the learning process comfortable (Asiabaka, 2008). The physical facilities help in conveying the learning material in an effective and attractive. The teachers who use the facilities always get better performance from their students. The physical resources cover so many aspects of learning and these resources are e.g., cleanliness, toilets, number of classrooms, library, laboratory, sports facilities, classroom facilities, furniture and gardens etc. (Walford, 2013). The quality learning environment relies on the provision of physical resources that promote the motivation level of the students as well as help in promoting an attractive and conducive environment. A quality learning environment is very important for quality education. Akpan (2003) argued that parents prefer and are satisfied with those schools where more learning facilities are available. Parents prefer and take an interest in quality

learning for their children which is possible with well-equipped schools. The resources play a crucial role in creating a positive and supportive environment for learning and students enjoy their leisure in the school (Akamolafe & Adesua, 2016).

Learning Environment of Pakistani Schools

This study was established from the perspective of Pakistan. The literature supported the key concepts of this study. Few more kinds of research will help us to comprehend the situation in public schools of Pakistan. Pakistan is spending 2.1% of its GDP on education which should be 4-6% of its GDP. Pakistan is a developing country and did not completely achieve the sustainable development goals (SDGs) the main hurdle is financing for education and due to financial problems, Pakistan has not achieved the targets of quality education as well the attractive and conducive environment in the schools is rare (Bourn, Hunt, & Bamper, 2017). Finance is the main hurdle in the way to achieving the targets but Pakistan is struggling to improve the infrastructure and basic facilities in schools; provide training to teachers to play an effective role in quality education; develop innovative curricula according to the current trends; engage of stakeholders in the schools; developing quality and equity trends in schools; use of ICT in labs; monitoring mechanism and evaluation of schools' overall performance (Government of Pakistan, 2016). The school environment may be ideal for students learning. When a school follows the basic standards, the psychosocial environment may be promoted. The students feel a safe and healthy environment may be promoted for student well-being (Ahmed, 2019).

Research Methodology

The learning environment is not limited to observable characteristics (Kangas, 2010). Students all around the globe are thought the best viewers of the learning environment, and researchers around the world rely on the students' insights. The study investigated the physical and psychosocial environment of government schools. Using a multistage sampling technique, forty schools were selected from four districts of Punjab. Grades IX and X eight hundred and five (805) students were the sample while the ratio of male and female schools and students was not equal. A self-developed questionnaire based on five points Likert scale was used for research data collection. Validation was confirmed through experts' opinions. The tool reliability was measured through Cronbach Alpha and 0.83 was its value. For the analysis of collected data, descriptive statistics i.e. mean score and standard deviation were used. The analyzed data is presented in table form and explained consequently. Every analysis table concentrated on a single factor of the school environment. It was found positive student-teacher relationships to some extent but students feel psychologically and physically unsafe. Teachers assign heavy homework but proper feedback is rare. Moreover, the schools are plenty of facilities and resources but teachers don't use them properly to enhance students learning. Therefore, concluded that the government may improve the physical set-up of the schools as well as concentrate on the psychological element to promote a child-friendly environment in the schools.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through descriptive statistics and explained accordingly.

Table1 Teacher-Students Relationship in School Environment

Indicators	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Mean	SD
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1- Appreciating work	27	153	224	263	138	3.43	0.93
2- Positive communication during teaching	23	137	236	264	145	3.48	0.88
3- Teacher soft behaviour on low performance	107	185	203	170	140	3.08	1.02
4-School-parent Communication	292	253	174	69	19	2.10	1.04

Table 1 indicates that most students receive appreciating on work (M=3.43, SD=0.93); the communication with teachers and classmates (M=3.48, SD=0.88); the teachers remain polite when the

performance is low (M=3.08, SD=1.02); the teachers think that the interaction between school and parent is missing (M=2.10, SD=1.04).

Table 2 Violence Prevention in School Environment

Indicators	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Mean	SD
1- Facing teacher harsh behaviour	37	50	103	468	147	3.83	1.01
2- Corporal punishment	125	94	287	206	93	3.06	0.87
3- Risk of Peer violence	108	359	213	79	46	2.52	0.82
4- Unhappy go to school	90	112	264	209	130	3.23	0.84

Table 2 depicts that most of the students are facing harsh behaviour from the teachers (M=3.83, SD=1.01), the corporal punishment (M=3.06, SD= 0.87). So they

don't feel a higher level of peer violence (M=2.52, SD=0.82) although they are unhappy to go to school (M=3.23, SD=0.84).

Table 3 Happiness about Care in School Environment

Indicators	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Mean	SD
1- Teachers worry On absenteeism	120	159	328	118	84	2.88	0.93
2- Classmates concern On low performance	177	199	275	94	64	2.59	0.85
3- Loving school	84	156	195	235	130	3.25	0.88
4-Happy for vacation	44	83	347	161	165	3.45	0.93

Table 3 shows that the students asked about the care in the school and whether they are receiving it or not, most of them answered that teachers did not show worry on absent from school (M=2.88, SD= 0.93) as well as the classmates have not shown grievances

about their low performance regarding studies (M=2.59, SD=0.85). The majority of them agreed on loving public schools (M=3.25, SD=0.88), and the students also answered that they feel happy about vacations (M=3.45, SD=0.93).

Table 4 Workload and Giving Feedback in School Environment

Indicators	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Mean	SD
1-Teacher assigns homework	25	61	172	233	314	3.97	0.89

2- Feeling burden about homework	83	99	209	182	232	3.53	0.97
3- Giving proper time for refreshment	203	165	232	143	62	2.63	0.94
4- Feedback about homework	164	210	237	127	67	2.69	1.25

Table 4 depicts that most of the students replied that teachers assign homework (M=3.97, SD= 0.89) but don't take regular feedback (M=2.69, SD= 1.25). The

students feel a burden in completion of a lot of workload (M=3.53, SD=0.97) and they give no proper time for refreshment (M=2.63, SD=0.94).

Table 5 Equity in School Environment

Indicators	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Mean	SD
1-Equal treatment of all students	40	39	138	172	416	4.13	1.08
2- Teachers' help when needed	25	37	177	270	296	3.94	1.02
3- Special attention on missing a class	229	309	123	79	65	2.34	1.22
4- Teachers know my needs	103	139	194	280	89	3.16	0.92

Table 5 reflects that most of the students showed their perception that the teacher treats them on an equal basis (M=4.13, SD=1.08). The respondents reflected the fact that the teachers know their needs (M=

3.16, SD=0.92) and also help students (M=3.94, SD=1.02) but don't give special attention to missing a class (M=2.34, SD=1.22).

Table 6 Learning Resources in School Environment

Indicators	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Mean	SD
1- Use of AV aids	263	241	204	75	22	2.21	0.89
2- Use of school library	395	164	138	72	36	2.01	0.99
3- Use of computer lab	427	140	136	72	30	1.94	1.18
4- Use of science lab	455	183	126	34	07	1.75	0.95

Table 6 indicates that the majority of the students reported that there is no proper utilization of the available learning resources while most of the students reported the availability of the learning resources i.e. AV aids (M=2.21, SD=0.89), using library (M=2.01, SD=0.99), computer laboratory (M=1.94, SD=1.18) and science laboratory (M=1.75, SD=0.95).

Discussion and Conclusions

The school environment is considered an important factor for learning and a

supportive environment for learning makes the learning process interesting and easy. The students in a supportive and conducive environment feel easy for learning and take participation in the learning activities actively. In Pakistan, the school learning environment is under criticism and students left their schooling at any stage of their education. Many research studies conducted on the school environment in Pakistan reflected the fact that there are so many problems the students are facing which are a hurdle in making the school

environment attractive and child friendly. In these problems, the physical and psychosocial environment of the schools is very crucial and students feel the learning process is a heavy burden, as well as the teacher's role, is also a question mark. So many students expressed their negative feelings about their teachers as well as their classmates. The current investigation reflected that most of the students are pleased with the teachers' behaviour. The findings link with (Iqbal, 2012; Mobeen-ul-Islam, 2011). Although at the same time, the students also revealed that they are facing teachers and peers bullying and they feel unhappiness to go to school and feel happiness on long vacations (Government of Pakistan, 2009). A child-friendly environment is missing at schools; corporal punishment still practices in schools and they don't feel attracted to government schools (Government of Pakistan, 2016). The study also found that students reported that there is an interaction gap between teachers and their parents (Akhter, 2016; Hussain, Zulfqar & Hameed, 2018). Communication between parents and teachers put significant effects on achieving academic performance (Mahuro & Hungi, 2016). There is also a heavy workload of students' homework but the students don't receive proper feedback from their teachers. Moreover, allocated homework was related to textbooks and correction from teachers is also rare. He concluded that it is the reflection of less professionalism, and training, administrative problems, absence of clear mechanisms and ambiguity in the government policies are the main challenges to putting positive feedback on students' homework (Shah, 2017). The study also depicted that enough school resources are available in schools but their utilization is not up to mark and to enhance the students' quality learning. There is no shortage of learning and physical facilities in Punjab after the Education Sector

Reforms in 2005 and 2011 (Government of Pakistan, 2008). The main challenge is the utilization of these learning and physical resources i.e. lack of teachers' interest, lack of teacher' rote learning due to examination mechanism and lack of budget (Hussain, Hameed & Malik, 2015).

It can be concluded that the learning resources are available in government schools of Punjab but lack of training and teachers' interest, there is no proper utilization of these resources. The examination system which is almost based on rote learning is a major hurdle in the utilization of the learning resources. The research concluded that socially, physically and emotionally, government schools are unable to provide a safe and conducive environment to the students.

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