



# Sociological Analysis of the School Climate

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### ABSTRACT

The study was aimed at to analyze the social aspect of school climate. The objectives of the study were to highlight the public relations associated with school and to identify the factors that affect the social climate of a school. The population of the study was comprised of the sixty six boys' high and higher secondary school in public sector at district Charsadda. Out of the target population, twenty two schools were taken as a sample through random sampling technique. The data was collected through questionnaire administered to principals and teachers of selected schools as well as through non-participant observation checklist. The data was screened for errors and cleaned thereof, and then tabulated and analyzed. The findings of study revealed that most of the school had no regular co-curricular activities. Grouping exists among teachers. The relationship between school and community was quite poor and the Parents Teachers Councils were ineffective. Teachers participate in making school base decisions but their criticism is not welcomed by most of the principals. In the schools there are political interventions. Most of the teachers like to have long discussion on politics. Use of abusive language in schools is also observed. There is no proper procedure for social education of the students. It is recommended that the deficiencies might be overcome by strengthening Parents Teachers Councils, discouraging politics and grouping among teachers. Organization of co-curricular activities and social education and use of cultured language should be encouraged.

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### Introduction

School climate is a comprehensive and inclusive phenomenon, which apparently refers to the perceptions of the people about the operational activities of a school or school leadership characteristics, communication, expectations, public relations, discipline etc.

It is difficult to get an adequate and intact definition of school climate; however, there is consensus on constituting elements of school climate. National School Climate Council (2007) asserted that school climate is the essence of people's experiences in school. It shows norms, aims and objectives, affectations, public relations, instructional activities and hierarchy of the organization. Hoy & Miskel (2008, p.198) provide that "the set of internal characteristic that distinguishes one school from another and influence the behaviour of each school's members is the organizational climate of the school." So the school climate plays a significant role in determining the standard of school life, instructional processes, peoples' behaviour, achievement level, relations, communications, norms and values.

#### Positive School Climate

A positive school climate refers to a sense of peoples' safety and soundness, respect, trust and acceptance. It affects the school personnel and pupils. The National School Climate Center (2010) has documented that a conducive and healthy school climate results in the needed education and development of young generation for a prosperous life in a society based on democratic values. In such a climate, there is mutual respect and sharing. Student, parents, teachers and other experts attempt

collaboratively to develop school vision and to live in accordance with that. Educators adopt a positive attitude that lay emphasis on advantages of, and satisfaction from, learning. Every individual participate in academic functions and take care of the physical plant of the school.

#### Social Dimension of School Climate

The school climate consists of physical, academic and social dimensions (Loukas, 2007). The physical dimension is concerned with the hygienic standards of schools. Classrooms, libraries, laboratories, grounds, offices, hallways are to be neat and clean. Proper light, ventilation and other resources should be available in order to gratify students' physical wants (School Climate and Learning, 2004).

The school has academic goal to be achieved. A high standard of performance is expected from teachers and students. Attempts are made for the all round development of the students. Educational activities are regularly monitored and supervised and feedback is provided.

The social dimension refers to the healthy and fair relations among principal, teachers, student and other staff members. Collegial and friendly relationships among teachers are encouraged. Students feel easy to communicate and share their problems, ideas, suggestions with the teachers and principal. Principal makes in time decisions with the cooperation of teachers. Teachers and students suggestions and criticism are welcomed by the principal. Parents and community actively participate in the process of schooling.

Hoy & Miskel (2008) argue that the social aspect of school climate can be classified into two broad categories: open climate

and closed climate. Open climate is characterized by the mutual cooperation, trust, respect between principal and teachers. The principal supports teachers to do his work in the way he likes. He imposes no or little restrictions upon them. Teachers in an open climate have friendly and collegial relations among themselves. They also extend their support and assistance to students in order to resolve their academic and personal matters. According to Hoy & Miskel (2008) "The open climate is marked by cooperation and respect with in the faculty and between faculty and principal. The principal is open to teachers' suggestions, giving genuine and frequent praise, and respects and professional competence of the faculty."

For Hoy and Miskel (2008) a school's closed climate is highly restrictive. The principal emphasize a stereotype schedule of routine activities. He imposes strict and rigid control over school activities. Teachers are expected to work hard, even though the principal himself would not exemplify hard work. There is little time for social interaction. Teachers can be seen busy in routine duties and indulged in paper work.

#### **Public Relation**

A school principal has an important role of public relation. In school, the principal is expected to have good relations with and positive attitude toward teachers, students, parents and community. Robbins & Harvey (2009) stated that good human relations impact the culture, climate, activities and all individuals in a school.

There should be warm relations between principal and teachers. Principal should be democratic in attitude. He should involve teachers in making school base decisions. In the words of Bhatnagar & Gupta (2005), "the headmaster should strive to establish true rapport within the staff through informal and formal, individual and group consultations and conferences." Principals should allow full freedom of response to teachers, so they can contribute whole-heartedly in school improvement efforts.

The relations of student with teachers, principals and among themselves are also very significant. Rajendra (2008) stated, "Teachers relations with students influence students' relations with teachers, with fellow students and other in the community at large." Students should have the confidence to communicate their academic and personal problems to the principal and teachers.

The progress of school is indispensable without community involvement. Students' performance rests to a greater extent on the mutual relation between school and society. Nieto (2004) documented that students' achievement is positively associated with parent involvement in school. The school that encourages high level of parental involvement, results in better performance than the schools that do not encourage parental participation.

Establishment of Parents Teachers Councils is an important step in improving school-community relations. The goals of parent teachers councils was to improve the teaching-learning process, complete projects in time and to bridge the gap between school and community (Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2007).

To sum up, the public relation aspect of the school should be properly developed by involving all parties in the school improvement efforts. There should be a culture of peace, harmony, justice, sympathy and cooperation in the school.

#### **Collegiality**

Collegiality refers to friendly, cooperative, and harmonious relationships especially in professional matters among staff

members. In a collegial environment, the principal and teachers of an institute thoroughly discusses the teaching-learning process, administrative process, curriculum and syllabus, supervision, guidance and counseling etc. They willingly share their professorial experiences and knowledge. Khan et al. (2009) states that principals must encourage teachers to develop professionally, help them to overcome barriers and appreciate their efforts. A healthy and collegial relation between principal and teachers, among teachers, between teachers and students and between principal and community leads the institute towards the achievement of goals.

In effective schools, principals hold collegiality as their prime goal. They expect teachers to work as team members and like family. They persuade teacher for mutual help, cooperation and sharing of knowledge. Principals exemplify themselves as collegial models. They support and reward professional cooperation and communication. They provide opportunities for staff members to discuss the curricular and co-curricular issues.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

The following were the objectives of the study.

1. To highlight the mutual relationships among the principal, staff members and students.
2. To find community participation in school activities.
3. To highlight factor that affects the social aspect of school climate.

#### **Method and Procedure**

The study conducted in order to carry out sociological analysis of the prevailing school climate across district Charsadda of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan. The population of the study included principals and teachers of sixty-six boys' high and higher secondary schools of public sector in district Charsadda. The cluster sampling technique was followed. Out of the total population, 22 schools were taken randomly as a sample for the study. The principal and four teachers from each school were taken as a sample for the study.

The data was collected through the administration of questionnaires and observation checklist. The questionnaires were designed on Likert scale with options as Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (Un), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). After collection of data, it was checked for error and cleaned and then analyzed, tabulated, and interpreted using percentage and Chi square.

#### **Results and Interpretation**

The data in table 1 indicates that all the statement regarding important factors of school social climate are statistically significant as the calculated value of chi square in all the six statements for both principals and teachers is greater than the table value at significance level 0.05.

The data in table 2 reveals that in all cases the value of  $\chi^2$  is significant at a significant level of 0.05 and justifies the various measures that a principal has to take for the improvement of the social climate of a school.

The data in table 3 indicates that in 72.7% schools, teachers were involved in discussion on politics, whereas 54.5% schools were politically interfered in different matters. It was also observed that 63.6% teachers use abusive language inside the school premises. It was observed that in 68.1% schools parent-teacher council (PTC) was not functioning, while 72.7% schools did not paid attention to social education.

#### **Discussion**

Mutual respect is an important factor for the social climate of school verified by the contingency table, also affirmed in

Khalil (1998) and Din (2010). Another important factor in this regard is teachers' cooperation with their principals in different matters and activities of the school. The importance of co-curricular activities in the social climate of a school can be of high value, as it helps the learners to learn the social behaviours needed for the later practical life; however, it was observed during the study that there were no regular co-curricular activities in most of the schools. A negative aspect of social climate of schools is the grouping on the part of teachers as confirmed by Ahmad (2004) but contradicted by Khalil (1998), which not only creates mess but also adversely affects the school's performance.

The study underlines that most of the principals and teachers disagree that the community participates in school improvement efforts. The same result is verified by Ahmad (2004) and Haider (2004); however, Khalil (1998) has contradictory findings in this regard.

Both principals and teachers provided that they have a positive attitude towards their students as confirmed by Khalil (1998) but the same was contradicted by Din (2010). The results of observation contradict the views of the principals and teachers in confirmation with Din (2010).

The principals considered that they do justice to the teachers as their staff members; however, the teachers have some disagreement with the notion. Furthermore, the study reveals that in the views of principals, teachers were included in the decision-making process as supported by Ahmad (2004) and Din (2010); however, teachers' criticism of the principals' decisions was rarely welcomed. Collegiality is stressed upon by the principals, but in practice, grouping among teachers prevails, verified by both responses of the teachers as well as the results of observation in this connection. Principals were of the view that they have communication with the students' parents, but the same was negated by the teachers' responses, which upheld by Haider (2004).

The school environment was polluted by unwarranted and unnecessary political involvement, but the idea was contradicted in Khalil (1998) and teachers often busy in discussion on party politics, which sometimes lead to a bitter situation. Both principals and teachers frequently use abusive language while interacting with the students; even in a humorous mood. Parents-Teachers Councils (PTCs) were formed by the government to ensure the school-community interaction, but the same is ineffective and non-functional and the purpose is rarely served. In addition, the schools had no proper system of educating students socially and ethically, which has adverse effects for the society as a whole.

### Conclusions

The analysis of data revealed that in most of the schools there was mutual respect between principals and teachers. Principals and teachers were divided in their opinions about teachers' cooperation and regular co-curricular activities. Most of the teachers accepted the existence of grouping among teachers whereas principals disagreed with the notion. Both principals and teachers agreed upon that parents and the community do not participate in school improvement efforts. The principals and teachers held the view that they have a positive attitude towards students which is contradicted by the findings of the observation checklist.

Principals involve teachers in decision-making but they mostly did not welcome teachers' criticism and also did not practice equality. The principals claim that they attempt to

ensure collegiality but in practice there is grouping among teachers.

In schools, there are unwarranted political interventions. The teachers also like discussion on party politics. Abusive and non-ethical language often used in schools. The Parent Teachers Councils are nominal. In most of the schools, there was no proper system to educate students socially.

### Recommendations

In the light of findings, discussion and conclusions of the study, it may be recommended that strong school-community relationships should be ensured especially by strengthening the Parents Teachers Councils. Principals should discourage unwarranted political interventions by adopting merit, encourage collegiality by equal treatment of the teachers, organize co-curricular activities on a regular basis, and welcome teachers' criticism openly. In school, there should be collegiality rather than grouping. Teachers should discuss academic issues instead of useless discussion on politics. The language of principals and teachers should be respectable and ethical with students. A regular system for the social education of students should be introduced.

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**Table 1: Important Factors of School's Social Climate**

S.N	Items	Respondents	Percentage of Responses					$\chi^2$
			SA	A	Un	D	SD	
1	Mutual respect	Principals	36.3	50	4.5	9	0	21.18
		Teachers	25	42	11.3	12.5	9	33.47
2	Teachers cooperation	Principals	22.7	45.4	13.6	18.1	0	12.09
		Teachers	22.7	42	7.9	21.5	5.6	37.22
3	Co-curricular activities	Principals	9.1	45.4	13.6	22.7	9.1	10.27
		Teachers	10.2	17.0	18.1	37.5	17.0	22.31
4	Grouping among teachers	Principals	9.1	22.7	9.1	45.4	13.6	11.6
		Teachers	17	32.9	13.6	19.3	17	9.95
5	Parents and Community participation	Principals	0	13.6	9.1	45.4	31.8	14.81
		Teachers	0	15.9	10.2	43.1	30.6	51.20
6	Positive attitude toward students	Principals	27.2	63.6	0	9.1	0	31.63
		Teachers	26.1	51.1	2.2	9.1	11.3	66.65

$\rho$  at 0.05 is 9.488

**Table 2: Principals' Measures for Improving School's Social Climate**

S.N	Items	Respondents	Percentage of Responses					$\chi^2$
			SA	A	Un	D	SD	
1	Equality	Principals	59	22.7	9	9	0	23.90
		Teachers	12.5	22.7	14.7	31.8	15.9	10.88
2	Involve in decisions	Principals	40.9	50	9	0	0	21.7
		Teachers	15.9	52.2	12.5	12.5	6.8	59.15
3	Welcome criticism	Principals	36.3	54.5	0	0	9	29.2
		Teachers	12.5	29.5	10.2	36.3	11.3	25.75
4	Ensure collegiality	Principals	40.9	50	0	9.1	0	24.81
		Teachers	13.6	42	12.5	22.7	12.5	28.44
5	Communication with parents	Principals	13.6	59	9.1	18.1	0	23.0
		Teachers	10.2	29.5	9.1	39.7	11.3	33.93

$\rho$  at 0.05 is 9.488

**Table 3: Results of observation checklist**

S.N	Observation made	No. of Schools	Frequency	Percentage
1	Political involvement in schools	22	12	54.5
2	Discussion on Politics	22	16	72.7
3	Abusive language	22	14	63.6
4	Non-functional PTC	22	15	68.1
5	No proper social education	22	16	72.7

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