

WORKING ENVIRONMENT: A CASE STUDY OF GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The developmental and smooth functioning of education system also depends upon gender and location wise equal infrastructure based on participation and cooperation. The basic aim of the study was to compare the gender and location wise opinions of secondary school teachers about the working environment in schools. While using a descriptive survey design, views of 295 secondary school teachers were taken on a five point likert scale. Both the gender wise and location wise differences in opinions were compared and independent t-test was applied. The results showed the significant differences in opinions of both categories of the teachers. Balanced physical and psychological environment in schools is suggested.

Keywords: Working environment, Physical infrastructure, Psychological factors, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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INTRODUCTION

Political stability, economic development and social progress are directly affected by education. Political stability is maintained by proper equation of duties and rights as well as awareness of people at large. Proper education system and awareness creates suitable environment for effective implementation of policies as well as regular participation and cooperation of the people. Education is quite effective and durable human investment that increase both performance and efficiency of the workers and it directly affect the country's output and economic progress. Similarly education makes a person social, dutiful and responsible and thus the whole society becomes a progressive and dynamic in the nature.

Physical and psychological factors play a key role in school working environment. Physical factors include school building, classrooms, water facility, electricity, cleanness, furniture, laboratories and libraries. When there is no availability of the essential physical facilities, the teachers do not concentrate on teaching and the students also not concentrate on learning (Adams, 2001). Partners focus resources on improving the health of school-aged children, highlighting the need for hygiene promotion, life skills development and water, sanitation and hand-washing facilities in schools (Heschong, 2001).

There is luxurious life and society enjoys these luxuries. However the luxuries depends upon the country's income level. There may be some things considered to be luxury like furniture in one part of the world but the same thing may be considered as basic needs of the people. Because the country having low level of income and standard of life may think about sophisticated furniture as valuable luxury but on the other hand furniture in a rich country is used by people at large as basic and indispensable need. We would have nowhere to eat our meals, store our belongings, relax after a hard day at work, or even sleep without furniture (Evans 2006).

There are many facilities that affect learning environment positively. For example thermal environment is one of the same. Many studies have revealed that the thermal environment in the classroom was affecting the ability of students to grasp instruction. Adams (2001) noted

that ideal thermal classroom environments had an effect on the mental efficiency of students especially in situations where students were performing clerical tasks calling for quick recognition and response. On the basis of this finding he recommended for an ideal temperature range for higher achievement. In relation to mental efficiency and thermal conditions, Cummings (2000) found that human beings work most efficiently at psychomotor tasks when the environment is at a comfortable temperature.

Psychological factors include professional development, relation with teachers, relation with heads, relation with students, and relation with Parent Teacher Council.

Relation with the heads teachers and peaceful environment is must for the showing of good results by any institution. In a peaceful environment may be included relation among the teachers as well as with that of the head of the institution when there is a good relation with the head of the institution the teacher would try their best to show good results. In this way good relationship between teachers and heads works as an incentive for the teachers.

Factors like good relationship also affect the learning. Teachers who have close and good relations with their pupils reveals that such pupils are more interesting in schools, self directed, more cooperative and more engaged. Benya, (2001) also is of the view that good relationship of teacher and students positively affect the academic performance and school readiness. Further work describes that children with more closeness and less conflict with teachers developed better social skills as they approached the middle school years than those with more conflicted relationships in kindergarten.

Similarly physical factors also affect the performance and efficiency of students. For example water resources, sanitation and hygiene affect children's right to education in many ways. In a poor health environment, children are unable to fulfill their education potential. For example, 400 million school-aged children a year are infected by intestinal worms, which, research shows, decrease their learning abilities (Weinstein, 1992).

For productive and effective students-teachers relationship there must exist three elements:

First of all, the student needs to give highest respect to his/her teacher. Not only this one but the students will definitely feel deference and admiration provided the teacher plays a role of a spiritual leader. In such a case the student will actively listen to even though this instruction may be uncomfortable and disconcerting at times.

Secondly, the student must notice the teacher's concern. The student must believe that the teacher always think about him/her in positive, however if the student does not take interest or consider the teacher advice as light and passive, he or she would not be able to surrender whole heartedly to the teacher's advice, and this would make the entire exchange meaningless.

Finally, there must be discipline and obedience on the part of the student. As like doctor advises the patient to be careful, the same case is that of a student who take advise from his/her teacher and he / she must obey for betterment (Stewart & Evans 1997).

Since freedom from British rule in 1947, the educational system in Pakistan has been gradually transformed through a series of reforms. The government is striving hard for quality improvement, increasing organizational efficiency, quality control and assurance. The Pakistan National Education Census 2006 shows that most schools are sparsely equipped. Library facilities, computer resources, sports and recreation facilities are in short supply (Government of Pakistan 2006-2007). In addition, according to government statistics for 2007–2008, the lack of facilities was exacerbated by the fact that only 63.9% of schools had drinking water; only 60.8% had latrine facilities; and only 60% schools had boundary walls, notwithstanding the fact that progress has been recorded in each of these areas since 2000–2001 (Government of Pakistan 2006-2007).

According to a recent *Economic survey* of Pakistan, public expenditure on education as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) is lowest in Pakistan as compared with other countries of the South Asian region. For example, while expenditure on education is only downloaded by about 2% of GDP in Pakistan, it is 2.6% in Bangladesh,

3.2% in Nepal, 3.3% in India, 5.2% in Iran and 8.3% in the Maldives. As a result, the poor quality of the learning environment is evident from the fact that a large number of schools do not have basic infrastructure. For example, 37.7% of schools up to elementary level are without a boundary wall; 33.9% are without drinking water; 37% do not have latrines; and around 60% schools do not have electricity (Government of Pakistan 2010-2011).

Thus it can be inferred that both the physical and psychological factors are important to consider while assessing working environment in context of gender and location of the schools. Since they have direct effect on performance and we cannot ignore the role of such factors.

The Current Study:

The current study was an effort to know about the working environment in schools in the light of opinions by secondary school teachers. The nature of physical infrastructure and psychological environment was compared for gender and location wise in government secondary schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The main objective of the study was to know about the working environment (physical and psychological factors) in government secondary schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan, and to compare the opinions of male and female teachers working in rural and urban schools in secondary schools. In the light of the objective, two main hypotheses (each having two sub-hypotheses) were formulated.

Ho1: There is no significant difference between the opinions of rural and urban school teachers about the working environment.

Sub-Hypothesis-1: There is no significant difference between the opinions of rural and urban school teachers regarding physical factors of working environment.

Sub-Hypothesis-2: There is no significant difference between the opinions of rural and urban school teachers regarding Psychological factors of working environment.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between the opinions of Male and Female school teachers regarding working environment.

Sub-Hypothesis-1: There is no significant difference between the opinions of Male and Female school teachers regarding physical factors of working environment.

Sub-Hypothesis-2: There is no significant difference between the opinions of Male and Female school teachers regarding Psychological factors of working environment.

Significance of the Study:

This study is an attempt to know about the working environment in government secondary schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan and to find out the differences in physical infrastructure and psychological environment in male and female schools located in urban and in rural areas. Differences in opinions may reflect the unbalanced approach of the government in provision of physical resources in government schools. The reason may be lack of teacher's perceptions regarding working environment and fund or efficiency or lack of judicious use of education policy, its direct impact may be on performances of teachers as well as on students. These differences may also reflect the differences in psychological background among the teachers in rural and urban based schools. It may be the result of lack of professional education or other reasons but it too affects the performances of both teachers and students. This study will highlight all such differences which may be useful for the policy makers, school teachers and all the concerned.

METHODOLOGY

Participants:

The opinions of 295 secondary school teachers (Male 132, Female 163) were taken on five point likert scale. On the basis of location, 174 were urban school teachers while the remaining 121 were belonged to rural based schools. It means that 45 percent of teachers were male and 55 percent were female teachers. On location wise, 59 percent teachers belonged to urban and 41 percent belonged to rural schools. There are total of 25 district units in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where seven districts were randomly selected for the study, namely the Districts of Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Hangu, Karak, Kohat, Lakki-Marwat and Tank.

Design and Tool:

A survey type descriptive design was used in the study. Five point Likert scale questionnaire was developed to explore the teachers perceptions regarding working environment in government secondary schools. The questionnaire was modified on the basis of expert opinions in pilot study. The questionnaire was validated by total 7 experts. The percentage for rejection was 30% and Percentage for acceptance with changes was 70%. Those items were dropped from questionnaire whose item total correlation was less than 0.25. The Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.745. A total of 30 questions were asked from the teachers with five possible options in the questionnaire. Questions relating to physical infrastructure were thirteen in number while questions asked on psychological grounds, were seventeen. After collecting the data, Mean, SD and t-test for independent samples was applied. For the descriptive analysis following scale was applied.

Weight	Scale	Range (Mean Scores)
1	Strongly Disagree	1.00— 1.50
2	Disagree	1.51— 2.50
3	Undecided	2.51—3.50
4	Agree	3.51— 4.50
5	Strongly Agree	4.51— 5.00

Research Ethics:

While conducting research in general and dealing with participants in particular, all research norms and ethical values were fulfilled. The participants were informed of the aim and objectives of the research in detail and their all rights and secrets were assured to them. The names of participants and their schools were kept secret throughout the research. After confirmation the researcher got written consent from the participants and they assured full cooperation in this regard.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Table 1: Perceptions of teachers about physical factors regarding working environment (N=295)

S.N	Physical Factors	Mean	SD
1	The number of classrooms are sufficient	4.16	1.02
2	School play ground is suitable for playing	4.04	1.06
3	School lawn is clean	4.18	0.93
4	Class rooms are well ventilated	4.16	0.86
5	Class rooms are well lighted	4.06	1.04
6	Wash room facility is available	4.05	.95
7	School is swept daily	3.95	0.95
8	Furniture is available for staff	3.80	1.09
9	Furniture is available for students	3.76	1.11
10	School Library is well equipped	3.56	1.23
11	Science laboratory is available in school	3.73	1.14
12	Class teacher uses the science laboratory when needed	3.60	1.17
13	The school is adequately staffed	3.61	1.09
	Overall	3.89	1.05

Table 2: Perceptions of teachers about Psychological factors regarding working environment

S.N	Psychological Factors	Mean	SD
1	School environment is conducive to learning	3.48	0.99
2	Teachers helps each other in teaching learning process	3.51	0.99
3	The attitude of the head is authoritarian	3.30	1.09
4	The head consults teachers in day-to-day activities of the school	3.27	1.11
5	The head provide chance to every member to participate in group discussion	3.16	1.20
6	The head conveys suggestions of teachers to high-up's	3.09	1.15

7	Teachers follow the instructions of their head about any specific matter	3.16	1.19
8	The head communicates with teachers when required	3.17	1.22
9	The head arranges workshop for professional development of teachers	2.74	1.18
10	The head arranges seminars for the teachers'	2.71	1.18
11	Teachers' cooperate with the head in the management of the school	3.14	1.26
12	Teachers' are affectionate towards their students	3.21	1.27
13	Teachers' take interest in solving the problems of the students	3.10	1.26
14	Parents teachers council exists in school	2.95	1.26
15	Parents participate and cooperate in school activities	2.77	1.25
16	The school celebrates the annual parents teacher day every year	2.74	1.23
17	The head calls meetings of parents when required Valid N (list wise)	2.97	1.26
	Overall	3.08	1.18

Table 3: Location-wise difference on teacher's perceptions regarding working environment in Government secondary schools

Working Environment	Location	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	P-value
Physical	Urban	174	54.55	8.879	293	4.13	0.01
	Rural	121	50.63	9.691			
Psychological	Urban	174	54.61	13.18	293	2.53	0.025
	Rural	121	50.42	12.95			
Overall	Urban	174	106.68	17.74	293	2.65	0.02
	Rural	121	101.7	13.38			

Table 4: Gender-wise difference on teacher's perceptions regarding working Environment in Government secondary schools

Working Environment	Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	P-value
Physical	Female	163	53.06	9.18	293	2.05	0.04
	Male	132	50.33	7.88			
Psychological	Female	163	54.04	13.98	293	2.216	0.027
	Male	132	50.67	11.63			
Overall	Female	163	106.34	17.81	293	2.32	0.021
	Male	132	101.74	15.8			

RESULTS

A total of 295 secondary school's teachers were included in the study. Questions were asked about working environment in their schools regarding physical and psychological factors on five Likert scale. Total of 13 statements were related to physical factors of the schools. The respondents were found Agree (Range: 3.51-4.50) with the sufficient number of classrooms and their cleanliness, ventilation, and lighting. They were also Agree with the availability and suitability of playgrounds, staff and students' furniture, library and laboratory facilities etc. In short, they were generally Agree with the availability and suitability of the physical facilities. (Table-1)

Similarly, total of 17 statements were related to psychological factors of the school environment. The result detail is as under.

1. School environment is conducive to learning (Mean 3.48, SD 0.99)
2. Teachers helps each other in teaching learning process (Mean 3.51, SD 0.99)
3. The attitude of the head is authoritarian (Mean 3.30, SD 1.09)
4. The head consults teachers in day-to-day activities of the school (Mean 3.27, SD 1.11)
5. The head provide chance to every member to participate in group discussion (Mean 3.16, SD 1.20)
6. The head conveys suggestions of teachers to high-up's (Mean 3.09, SD 1.15)

7. Teachers follow the instructions of their head about any specific matter (Mean 3.16, SD 1.19)
8. The head communicates with teachers when required (Mean 3.17, SD 1.22)
9. The head arranges workshop for professional development of teachers (Mean 2.74, SD 1.18)
10. The head arranges seminars for the teachers' (Mean 2.71, SD 1.18)
11. Teachers' cooperate with the head in the management of the school (Mean 3.14, SD 1.26)
12. Teachers' are affectionate towards their students (Mean 3.21, SD 1.27)
13. Teachers' take interest in solving the problems of the students (Mean 3.10, SD 1.26)
14. Parents participate and cooperate in school activities (Mean 2.95, SD 1.26)
15. Parents participate and cooperate in school activities (Mean 2.77, SD 1.25)
16. The school celebrates the annual parents teacher day every year (Mean 2.74, SD 1.23)
17. The head calls meetings of parents when required Valid N (list wise) (Mean 2.97, SD 1.26)
18. Overall (Mean 3.08, SD 1.18) (Table-2)

The mean of urban school teacher on physical factors is 54.55 while the mean of rural school teachers is 50.63. Similarly on psychological factors, the mean of urban school teacher is 54.61 while the mean of rural school teachers is 50.42. Overall mean of urban school teacher is 106.68 while that of rural is 101.7 and p-value is 0.02 at 0.05 level of significance shows a significant difference between the opinions of teachers locating in urban and rural schools. Therefore, we reject the main hypothesis 1 and its sub hypotheses 1 and 2 which show significant difference in views between rural and urban school teachers regarding working environment in Government secondary schools(Table-3).

While comparing the views of male and female school teachers, the mean of female school teacher on physical factors is 53.06 while the mean of male school teachers is 50.33. Similarly on psychological

factors, the mean of female school teacher is 54.04 while the mean of male school teachers is 50.67. Overall mean of female school teacher is 106.34 while that of male is 101.74 and p-value is 0.021 at 0.05 level of significance shows a significant difference between the opinions of teachers locating in urban and rural schools. Therefore, we reject the main hypothesis 2 and its sub hypotheses 1 and 2 which show significant difference in views between male and female school teachers regarding working environment in Government secondary schools (Table-4).

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The results of the study can be viewed and compared with the previous research findings on working environment in the schools. As this study was an attempt to know about the working environment in government schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. School teachers (gender wise and location wise) were asked about physical and psychological factors relating to working environment in government schools. On the responses obtained from 295 participants, various relationships and differences were found.

Huang & Fraser (2009), undertook a study to investigate high school teacher's perceptions of school environment. A total of 275 school teachers from eight high schools were responded. The results revealed that most of these teachers had favourable perceptions. Female teachers scored higher than male teachers on job satisfaction, teacher-student relationship and student's discipline, however no significant difference was found in teacher's perceptions of principal leadership.

The results of this study with regard to gender wise perceptions are confirmed the study results that female teachers scored higher than male and therefore the two views on relationship between teacher and students were different.

Another study, (Farooq, 2011) also showed the differences between male and female teachers on the working environment. This study was designed to get an insight about the perceptions of prospective teachers about influential factors of classroom management. Participants of the study were graduates of three teacher training institutions with Master degrees in Education. Most of the respondents strongly agreed that classroom environment and student teacher interaction are the

important factors influencing classroom management. Female prospective teachers differ in intensity with male counterparts in their perceptions. The same differences were found in the present study regarding working environment.

Keeping in view the above similarities, it is said that on both physical and psychological factors, the male and female teacher's views were different. Similarly, there were also differences on location wise among the teachers.

The study should be viewed in the light of some limitations. The number of participants was small and was confined to a province. Further, the study was limited to only government schools and privately owned schools were excluded. Therefore, there is a need of deep study on the issue for more tangible outcome about the working environment.

It was concluded that the respondents were agree while responding on physical factors in schools. The overall mean of the perceptions of teachers about physical factors regarding working environment was 3.89 and SD was 1.14. However, the respondents were undecided on the psychological factors in schools. The overall mean of the perceptions of teachers about psychological factors regarding working environment was 3.08 and SD was 1.18. The views of teachers in urban and rural schools were quite different regarding the working environment in the schools. The views of teachers in urban and rural schools on both physical factors and psychological factors were also different regarding the working environment in the schools. Similarly, the overall views of male and female teachers were quite different regarding the working environment in the schools. The views of male and female on both physical factors and psychological factors were also different regarding the working environment in the schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the conclusions of the study, it can be suggested that equal physical infrastructure should be provided in both urban and rural as well as in male and female schools. The results also show that psychological differences were found between male and female teachers as well as urban and rural based teachers. Since, the teachers were undecided on psychological factors in schools, it is recommended, that

psychological factors should be improved in the schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The psychological differences must also be removed through proper trainings and mutual understanding of the teachers, so that teachers have no psychological problems both location wise and gender wise. Meanwhile, the attitude of the head should be democratic instead of authoritarian. There must be consultation through group discussions and parents teachers councils should be activated.

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