



INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract:

Educational process of development occurs in the physical, social, cultural and psychological environment. A proper and adequate environment is very much necessary for a fruitful learning of the child. The child spends most of his time in school, and here his environment is exerting a different influence on performance through curricula, teaching techniques and relationship (Lawrence, 2012). School safety, academic climate, and the community are the different dimensions of school environment which help improve student's performance, attendance and retention in schools. Regardless of how it has been defined over the years, to a greater or lesser extent, all research on school climate finds a positive correlation between better school environment and increased student learning and achievement. In this context, a study was conducted by the researcher with an objective to comprehend the influence of school environment on the academic performance of students. School environment can have a favorable influence on the health of the learning environment or a significant barrier to learning. (Freiberg 1998). It has a significant impact on mental health and socio-emotional well-being, academic achievement and behavioral outcomes of students. The present study was accomplished on 120 respondents. For the study, twelve high schools of Mysore was selected using stratified random sampling, and twelve students from each school were selected, and Simple descriptive statistics were used. School climate survey was administered, where questions focusing on various elements of school climate were asked. The study concludes highlighting the need for a positive school environment which fosters the well-being of students in schools.

Key Words: School Environment, Academic Achievement, High School & Adolescents

Introduction:

Education is a continuous process of experiencing and of revising or non-revising experiences. It is the development of all those capacities in the individual, which enables him to control his environment and fulfill his possibilities (Y. K. Singh, 2012). Educational process of development occurs in physical, social, cultural and psychological environment. A proper and adequate environment is very much necessary for a fruitful learning of the child. Especially the home and the school should provide the necessary stimulus for learning experience. The child spends most of his time in school and here his environment is exerting a different influence on performance through curricula, teaching techniques, relationship.(Lawrence,2012). Environment plays a vital role in the development of the personality of the students. As a student spends most of his life at school, the school environment is highly responsible for the inculcating of great values in him. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) has beautifully said, "The destiny of India is now being shaped in her classrooms". As students are the backbones of the nation it is important to maintain a healthy school environment. While school is the second most intimate environment next to the home, it has a fascinating influence on the child's academic performance, acts as an agency equipped with multiple opportunities that stimulates the child to explore, investigate and experiment in many ways. The students' academic performance may be influenced by various external factors other than their personal characteristics including school environment, peer relationship, home environment, socio-economic factors, teacher responsiveness in class etc. A good School environment can promote student's learning motivation and affect their academic efficacy and adaptation.

Adolescence is the most enjoyable, most stressful and turbulent period in life. The psychological challenges that the adolescent must cope with are moving from childhood to adulthood. As the adolescents continue their journey of self-discovery, they continually have to adjust to new experiences as well as the other changes happening to them biologically and socially. This can be both stressful and anxiety provoking. These psychological changes appear in the areas of emotional, social, cognitive, and moral development. As such, schools play a key part in children's development, from peer relationships and social interactions to academic attainment and cognitive progress, emotional control and behavioural expectations, and physical and moral development. (Fazel, 2014). School constitutes a large part of an adolescent's existence. They encounter with problems of poor academic performance and unacceptable behaviors. Some of the scholastic problems of adolescents include problems of adjustment, lack of concentration, lack of memory, lack of motivation for study, difficulties in learning specific subjects and difficulty in making career choices etc which makes them vulnerable to many school problems during adolescent years that may result from a combination of rebellion and a need for independence (most common), mental health issues such as depression or anxiety, substance use,

family conflict learning disorders and behavior disorders. Social, emotional, and physical health problems and other major barriers to learning must be addressed if schools are to function satisfactorily and students are to learn and perform effectively. Creating a healthy school environment requires the involvement of virtually everyone in the school-students, administrators, teachers, custodial and maintenance staff, school counselors, school nurses, nutrition services workers. In addition, schools need involvement of families and environmental, public health, public safety, public welfare, and other community agencies (Gargi, 2015).

Methodology:

School is the primary institution outside the family within which the development of adolescents can be directed and shaped. In this perspective, a study was accomplished by the researcher on 120 respondents with the following objectives:

- ✓ To comprehend the impact of school environment on the students with focus on adolescence
- ✓ To identify the significance of medium of instruction on academic achievement
- ✓ To distinguish the difference in academic achievement between boys and girls
- ✓ To identify the relationship between school environment and academic achievement
- ✓ To emphasize the need for a positive school environment which fosters the well-being of students in schools, especially adolescents

Sampling:

For the study, twelve high schools of Mysore, six Kannada medium and six English medium schools were selected and ten students from each school were selected. All were co-ed schools. Total respondents=120. The method of sampling used for the study was stratified random sampling method, and Simple descriptive statistics was employed.

Research Design: Descriptive research design was adopted.

Tool:

School environment survey was administered, where questions focusing on equity, inclusive education and bullying/harassment were asked. The tool included the different elements of school environment where school climate was emphasized. The instrument consist of 23 items to measure school environment, rated on a five point Likert-scale (1 = ‘I do not agree’ to 2 = ‘I partially disagree’, 3 = ‘I neither agree or disagree’, 4 = ‘I partially agree’ and 5 = ‘I agree’) y positive correlations between the scales of the learning climate and the grades for the different elements of the school environment. The students were asked to assess the different aspects of the school environment which included teacher responsiveness, peer relationship, the things you learn in the class, the atmosphere in the class, the level of honesty in the class, the (integrity of the) rules in the classroom and the safety in the school. The students could also give an explanation or comment on their grade and grade from 0 (= really bad) to 10 (= really good).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:

The study included adolescent students studying in regular schools of Mysore. Variables like background (rural/urban) of the respondent and students of residential schools were excluded.

Results and Discussion:

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics (n=120)

Socio-Demographic Variables	N=120	%
Age		
13-14	42	35
14-15	38	31.67
15-16	40	33.33
Total	120	100
Class studying		
8 th std	42	35
9 th std	38	31.67
10 th std	40	33.33
Total	120	100
Medium of instruction in school		
English	75	62.5
Kannada	45	37.5
Total	120	100
Place of stay		
With parents	95	79.17
Relatives/Hostel	25	20.83
Total	120	100

Table 1 illustrates the socio-demographic details of the respondents. For the study, students from 8th, 9th and 10th standard (13, 14 and 15 years respectively) were selected. Questions on medium of instruction were asked since they have relevance the adjustment. 50% respondents are from English medium school and 50% are from Kannada medium. Medium of instruction also plays an important role in student adjustment. Occupations of parents were asked. 60% of respondent's mothers are working mothers.

Table 2: School Environment measurement

S.No	Measure	Frequency	Response (%)
1	Teacher responsiveness	75	62.5
2	Peer relationship	81	67.5
3	The things you learn in the classroom	60	50
4	Atmosphere in the class	48	40
5	Medium of instruction	79	65.8
6	The integrity(rules) in the classroom	70	58.3
7	Safety in the school	75	62.5

Table 2 illustrates the various parameters of school environment. 62.5% of the students have said that teacher responsiveness and interaction is an important measure for a positive school climate. 67.5% of the students agree that peer relationship is very important and learning environment (50%) as well. 58.3% of them concur that rules of class room has an impact on them while 62.5% agree that school safety as an important determinant of school environment. Another important determinant found here is medium of instruction (65.8%) which also has a major influence on academic performance.

Here the highest response given by the students is Peer relationship. Acceptance by the peer group becomes so important during adolescence. Various literatures provide resounding evidence that peer relations become more salient in adolescence. The transition from childhood to adolescence engenders changes in the individual, social context, and social norms that serve to elevate the importance of peers.

Table 3: Medium of Instruction

Medium of instruction	N	Mean	SD	T value	Sig.	Remark at 5% level of significance
English	60	41.93	4.558	2.014	0.046	Significant
Kannada	60	44.05	6.743			

From the above table which shows the impact of medium of instruction, Since, $P = 0.046 < 0.05$, the test was significant at 5% levels which means it is one of the main determinant of academic performance.

Table 4: Difference in the Academic Achievement between boys and girls

Gender	N	Mean	SD	T-value	Sig.	Remark at 5% level of significance
Male	70	43.71	6.488	1.618	0.108	Not Significant
Female	50	41.98	4.631			

The above table indicates that there is no significant gender difference in school achievement since, $P = 0.108 > 0.05$ at 5% levels. This implies that gender has no much role to play in academic achievement

Table 4: Relationship between School Environment and Academic Achievement

School Environment and Academic Achievement	N	' γ ' value	table value	Remark at 5% level of significance
	120	0.098	0.024	Significant

From the above table, it is clear that there is a relationship between school environment and academic achievement since, calculated chi square value was < table value which is found to be significant at 5% levels. This result indicates that there is a foremost relationship between school environment and academic achievement.

Discussion:

A positive, respectful school environment provides a solid foundation for supporting students' academic achievement and development of positive attitudes and behaviours. Several factors of school environment also have a major role in fostering student achievement and molding behavior.

Table 1 discusses about various determinants of school environment. Here the highest response given by the students is Peer relationship. Acceptance by the peer group becomes so important during adolescence. According to Erickson, this developmental stage is defined as 'crisis of identity vs. identity confusion'. Peer pressure is another important aspect during adolescence which is often associated with negative outcomes. Hence peer relationship is very important during adolescence. The second identified response is on medium of instruction which also has a major influence on the adolescents. The third response is teacher relationship in the classroom. The quality of relationship forged by the teachers with students influences on the social climate of the classrooms. When students feel respected and liked by their teachers, they find more success in schools: behaviourally and academically. School safety is another important determinant of a positive school environment. Safe schools promote the protection of students from violence, exposure to threats, sale or use of illegal substances in around schools. School safety is linked to improve student as well as school outcomes. The

other determinant is Classroom rules or integrity. In classes, students are told how to behave, what to learn, when and how to talk etc. Here an important concept for teachers is to empower students, which build leadership qualities in them. Teacher has to provide with a number of opportunities for students to develop good qualities, work on their assignments, and by doing so, the teacher can manage behavioural issues effortlessly. Yet another determinant is Classroom atmosphere. Many studies on school effectiveness and quality of school life studies have emphasized on the concept of school climate and student outcome relationship. A good classroom environment can promote student's learning motivation and affect their academic efficacy and adaptation.

The test conducted to accomplish second objective was found significant (table 3). Medium of instruction has a very crucial role in transforming education and making it either easy or difficult for a student. Out of many factors which determine students' academic success, language is one of them. Especially when there is a change in medium of instruction (8th standard), it hinders student's performance. The test conducted to achieve third objective was found not to be significant (table 4). Several studies support that there is a significant gender differences between boys and girls and some more studies have proved that there is no significant difference, this study also highlights that there is no significant difference among boys and girls with respect to school environment. Table 5 illustrates the relationship between school environment and academic achievement. This test was found to be significant which means that there is an association between school environment and academic achievement.

Conclusion:

School is a very important setting in the development of individuals. A positive school environment is recognized as an important target for school reform and improving behavioral, academic, and mental health outcomes for students. Students, who are connected to school feel safe, perceive themselves to be treated fairly by adults, are happy to be in school, feel they are a part of the school community, and feel close to people at school experience less distress and engage in fewer risk-taking behaviours. Social Workers working in school settings need to understand how to go out into the greater community to engage families and community organizations to create better outcomes for students, focusing their services on students who are struggling in school due to barriers to learning that may exist within the students or their environments using the best social work strategies and interventions.

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