

School Climate in Kerala - A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

The study describes the dimensions of school climate and compares these dimensions school-wise, location-wise and management-wise. In order to measure climate, four dimensions of climate were identified. They are Collegial Leadership, Professional Teacher Behaviour, Achievement Press, and Institutional Vulnerability. The analysis is based on the data collected from teachers of government, aided and unaided schools representing both HSS, VHSS in urban and rural areas from selected districts of Kerala. Questions on school climate were adapted from the Organizational Climate Index (OCI) developed by Hoy Smith and Sweetland (2002). Multi-stage random sampling with proportionate allocation has been used for the selection of the sample for the study Three-Way ANOVA was attempted. It is observed that teachers' perception with respect to Collegial Leadership, Professional Teacher Behaviour, Achievement Press and Institutional Vulnerability varies considerably according to type of school, locality, and type of management.

1. Introduction

God has given a child the greatest and a natural gift – the brain, which needs to be moulded to lead a comfortable and disciplined life. The process which brings out this change is education. Education brings about a change in an individual, a society and also in the entire nation. The performance of teachers is very crucial in the field of education. The Educationalists generally agree that the goodness of an education programme is determined to a large extent by the quality of learning process. Whenever the learner failed to attain the pre specified goals, something was wrong with the teacher, either with the plans she/he made or with the ways in which she/he carried them out. An educational institute may have excellent infrastructure and a good curriculum, but it cannot achieve its goal if the teachers are ineffective and indifferent. Effective teachers are required in the class room because even the best curriculum and most perfect syllabus remain ineffective in the absence of a good teacher.

Attracting and retaining high quality teachers is a prime necessity for a strong education system because a high quality teaching staff is the cornerstone of a successful education system. One step in developing a high quality faculty is to understand the factors associated with teaching quality and retention. Unless and until the teacher is a fully competent person, greatly interested and involved in her/his work and does the job satisfactorily, all other efforts that are taken to effect any improvement in the field of teaching are bound to fail. The pre-requisite for teachers to efficiently carry out the crucial task they are responsible for is that they have a desirable school climate. Even the most efficient teacher will remain handicapped in the proper discharge of her/his functions for want of proper school environment or climate. The students can't get any benefit from the teacher if they do not work in healthy surroundings. It is an accepted fact that the behaviours of human beings are directly influenced by the work environment.

The atmosphere or surroundings in which the school conducts itself in a unique way is technically known as its organizational climate. Organisational climate has a rich history in the study of educational institutions. Since a considerable part of education is received in schools, they have a special position as a sensitive and important social system. The topic of school climate and its effect on school's overall performance have attracted the attention of many researchers across the last decades (Hoy 1986). Teachers tend to function wholeheartedly and more effectively in schools with more open climate in which ideas and feelings are expressed more openly and vice-versa. The school teachers are working in different types of institutions like government, government aided, and private unaided. Each school is different in its organizational climate with respect to Principal, management, and relations with colleagues. In these educational structures teachers who are provided with open type of climate and happy environment and in which their needs and problems are taken care of by the management were found to be satisfied in their job. Positive school climate is important for the smooth running of the institution which in turn promotes a high level performance, satisfaction and commitment among teachers.

Climate has been described as a description of the work environment and, more specifically, teacher's perceptions of the formal and informal policies, practices and procedures in their organization. In simple words, the set of internal characteristics that distinguishes one school from another and influences the behaviour of teachers is its organizational climate.

2. Dimensions of School Climate

In this study climate is measured in four dimensions as identified by Hoy Smith and Sweetland (2002). These dimensions are Collegial Leadership, Professional Teacher Behaviour, Achievement Press, and Institutional Vulnerability

According to Hoy, 'Collegial leadership' is the principal behaviour which is directed toward meeting both social needs

of the teachers and achieving the goals of the school. The principal of a healthy school is open, pleasant, unrestricted and treats teachers as his colleagues.

In the words of Hoy, 'Professional Teacher Behaviour' is the teacher behaviour. It is marked by respect for co-worker capability, obligation to students and common mutual aid and backing of the colleagues. Besides, the teachers in a healthy school encourage a serious and arranged education environment.

Hoy defined 'Achievement Press' as academic emphasis. A healthy school is one that sets high but reachable academic standards and goals. Students persist, work hard and struggle to achieve success. Both students and teachers respect one another for academic success and achievements. According to Hoy, 'Institutional Vulnerability' denotes the extent to which the school is exposed to few vocal or spoken parents and political groups. High vulnerability suggests that both teachers and principals feel pressure from individuals and groups from outside the school.

3. Significance of the Study

The climate of the organization has a vital impact on individuals in the workplace. A school climate with open, healthy and collegial professional interactions and strong academic emphasis empowers teachers, creates norms of collective efficacy and influences teacher behaviour. When teachers believe that they can organize and execute their teaching in ways that are successful in helping students learn, and when the school climate supports them, teachers plan more, accept personal responsibility for student performance, are not deterred by temporary setbacks and act with determination to enhance student learning.

In Kerala, education has been assigned top priority in the state development strategy and accordingly, conscious efforts have been made towards the massive expansion of educational facilities in the State. As a result there is increase in the number of educational institutions, students and teachers and the variety of educational activities. However, effective utilization of resources and success of educational set-up to produce quality output has been a subject matter of concern. Nowadays, there is, however, a general feeling that the teachers do not have satisfaction in their job. There seems to be growing discontent towards their job as a result of which standard of education falls. In fact, some of these teachers again are of the opinion that communication and decision-making problems exist in their institutions because the Principals take certain decisions without involving them which in turn, creates additional negative work environment. Identifying the factors affecting job satisfaction among teachers and creating healthy school climate can have an effectual role in the achievement of educational goals and success of the students. So far, no comprehensive study on school has been conducted in Kerala context. This work is an attempt in this direction.

4. Scope of the Study

The study describes the dimensions of school climate and compares these dimensions school-wise, location-wise and management-wise. The analysis is based on the data collected from teachers of government, aided and unaided schools representing Higher Secondary (HSS) and Vocational Higher Secondary (VHSS) levels in urban and rural areas from selected districts of Kerala.

5. Objectives of the Study

- To compare the dimensions of school climate in government, aided and unaided schools.
- To compare the dimensions of school climate in HSS and VHSS levels.
- To compare the dimensions of school climate in Rural and Urban schools.

6. Hypotheses

- There is no significant difference in the dimensions of school climate in government, aided and unaided schools.
- There is no significant difference in the dimensions of school climate in HSS and VHSS.
- There is no significant difference in the dimensions of school climate in Rural and Urban schools.

7. Methodology

Data Source

Primary data were collected from the selected teachers of both higher secondary and vocational higher secondary schools in Kerala using a pre-tested questionnaire. The secondary data were collected from the published reports of the DHSE, DVHSE, the DPI, Economic Reviews of various years and other published reports.

Research Instrument

Questions on school climate were adapted from the Organizational Climate Index (OCI) developed by Hoy Smith and Sweetland (2002).

Method of Sampling

Multi-stage random sampling with proportionate allocation has been used for the selection of the sample for the study. In the first stage, Kerala is divided into three regions. In the second stage, three districts have been selected at random from each region: Kozhikode from the northern region, Thrissur from the central region and Pathanamthitta from the southern region. In the third stage, 350 government, 208 aided and 92 unaided school teachers were selected representing both HSSs and VHSSs based on the proportion of teachers working in the selected schools from the districts identified for the study in Kerala. Altogether a sample size of 650 teachers was fixed statistically to represent the whole population and this sample size is allocated equally to each district. The data collected were edited, coded and analysed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 22).

Tools of Analysis

The statistical tools used for the analysis of primary data consist of descriptive statistics like arithmetic mean and Three-way ANOVA.

8. Discussion and Results

In order to evaluate the variation in teachers' observation with respect to the dimensions of school climate based on type of school, locality, and type of management, Three-Way ANOVA was attempted. The results of analyses are shown in Tables from 1 to 4.

Table 1
Mean Values of Dimensions of School Climate Based on Type of School, School Location and Type of School Management.

Dimensions Category	MEAN VALUES			
	Collegial Leadership	Professional Teacher Behaviour	Academic Press	Institutional vulnerability
VHSS	31.745	25.938	33.029	13.446
HSS	34.726	24.992	30.388	12.953
Rural	32.845	25.448	31.841	17.710
Urban	33.250	25.442	31.577	8.689
Govt	29.663	26.975	30.271	19.156
Aided	34.403	22.341	32.148	13.805
Unaided	35.640	27.079	32.707	6.638

Source: Survey Data

*Significant at 5 per cent level of significance

As per table1 VHSS teachers have better perception with respect to principal-teacher relationships than HSS teachers (High mean score of 34.726). Urban school teachers have better perception with respect to principal-teacher relationships than rural school teachers (High mean score of 33.625). It is inferred that unaided school teachers have better perception with regard to principal teacher relationship than aided and government school teachers (High mean score of 35.640).

It is inferred that HSS teachers have better perception with respect to Professional Teacher Behaviour than VHSS teachers (High mean score of 25.938) and rural school teachers have better perception with respect to Professional Teacher Behaviour than urban school teachers (High mean score of 25.488). It is also observed that unaided school teachers have better perception with respect to teacher-teacher relationship than government and aided school teachers (High mean score of 27.079).

HSS teachers have better perception with respect to Achievement Press than VHSS teachers (High mean score of 33.029). Location-wise, rural school teachers have better perception with respect to Achievement Press than urban school teachers (High mean score of 31.841). It is inferred that press for achievement is high in unaided schools and low in government schools (High mean score of 32.707).

Further, it is inferred that higher secondary schools are more vulnerable or exposed to outside pressure than vocational higher secondary schools. It is also found that rural schools are more vulnerable or exposed to outside pressures than urban schools (High mean score of 17.710). It is also observed that government schools are more vulnerable or exposed to outside pressures than aided and unaided schools.

Table 2: Three-way ANOVA-Collegial leadership

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable: Collegial leadership					
Source	Type I Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F Value	Sig.
Type of School	238.733	1	238.733	154.991	0.000
Locality	1061.987	1	1061.987	689.467	0.000
Type of Management	3586.662	2	3586.662	1164.273	0.000

Source: Survey Data

*Significant at 5 per cent level of significance

Table3: Three-way ANOVA- Professional Teacher Behaviour

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable: Professional Teacher Behaviour					
Source	Type I Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F Value	Sig.
Type of School	28.335	1	28.335	5.846	0.016
Locality	88.839	1	88.839	18.330	0.000
Type of Management	2970.359	2	2970.359	306.439	0.000

Source: Survey Data

*Significant at 5 per cent level of significance

Table 4: Three-way ANOVA- Achievement Press

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable: Achievement Press					
Source	Type I Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F Value	Sig.
Type of School	1060.059	1	1060.059	730.259	0.000
Locality	35.315	1	35.315	24.328	0.000
Type of Management	576.486	2	576.486	198.566	0.000

Source: Survey Data

*Significant at 5 per cent level of significance

Table 5: Three-way ANOVA- Institutional Vulnerability

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable: Institutional Vulnerability					
Source	Type I Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F Value	Sig.
Type of School	244.894	1	244.894	29.388	0.000
Locality	22809.458	1	22809.458	2937.157	0.000
Type of Management	10242.415	2	10242.415	614.550	0.000

Source: Survey Data

*Significant at 5 per cent level of significance

From tables 2, 3, 4 & 5 it is observed that teachers' perception with respect to Collegial Leadership, Professional Teacher Behaviour, Achievement Press and Institutional Vulnerability varies considerably according to type of school, locality, and type of management. Mean variation is statistically significant at 5 per cent level of significance (**with $p = 0.000 < 0.05$**).

9. Findings

1. Different dimensions of school climate such as Collegial Leadership, Professional Teacher Behaviour, Achievement Press and Institutional Vulnerability, show significant variations with regard to the type of school (HSS or VHSS), school location (rural or urban) and type of school management (Government, Aided or Unaided) in which teachers work.
2. In the case of Collegial Leadership, perception of teachers working in VHSS seems to be better compared to teachers working in HSS. With respect to Professional Teacher Behaviour and Achievement Press, it is found that, perception of teachers working in HSS seems to be better compared to teachers working in VHSS. In the case of Institutional Vulnerability, it is found that, Higher Secondary Schools are more vulnerable or exposed to outside pressures than Vocational Higher Secondary Schools.
3. In the case of Collegial Leadership, it is found that, perception of the teachers working in urban schools seems to be better compared to teachers working in rural schools. With regard to Professional Teacher Behaviour and Achievement Press, it is found that, perception of the teachers working in rural schools seems to be better than teachers working in the urban schools. In the case of Institutional Vulnerability, it is found that, rural schools are more vulnerable or exposed to outside pressures than urban schools.
4. Unaided school teachers have better perception with respect to Collegial Leadership and Professional Teacher Behaviour than the aided and government

school teachers. Aided school teachers have better perception with respect to principal teacher relationship than the government school teachers. Government school teachers have better perception with respect to teacher- teacher relationship than the aided school teachers.

5. In the case of Achievement Press, it is found that press for academic achievement is high in unaided schools and low in government schools. Aided schools stand in between these two. In the case of Institutional Vulnerability, it is observed that, government schools are more vulnerable or exposed to outside pressures than aided and unaided schools. Unaided schools are least affected by outside pressures and dangers

10. Suggestions

1. The score of collegial leadership is not so strong. Principals may express fundamental respect for teachers' ideas, suggestions, decisions, knowledge and growth. They should also develop skills to build and maintain friendship and collegiality. For this, direct confrontation and direct conversation with teachers should be there in the agenda of principals. Criticism is to be handled constructively, praise is to be given genuinely, and principal may listen to and accept teachers' suggestions.
2. The poor professional teacher behaviour scores in the aided and government schools indicate low collaboration and support among teachers.. As the teachers often value the interpersonal interactions and associations, the schools have to make transparent, formal and informal arrangements to improve the relationship among the staff members.
3. The moderate score of achievement press indicates that the parents, students and the Principal are not exerting pressure for high academic standards and school improvements. This can be achieved to a certain extent by means of: (1) various counseling given to the students, teachers and the parents; (2)

- frequent (formal and informal) interactions on matters of academic importance and other issues affecting the educational community between the teachers and parents; (3) specially arranged classes by the competent parents and other well-wishers/stakeholders.
4. High institutional vulnerability score in government rural schools indicate that some vocal parents and political parties are interfering and influencing in the school activities and the Principal is reacting more to their requests. Often the teachers and students behave as per the instructions of the political parties or other external organisations. This undue loyalty towards the non-academic outside community has to be ceased.
 5. It has been realized that the higher secondary school principal-ship is a burn-out position especially for female principals in the science stream, since they report a large degree of role conflict as they work to have balance between the domestic and official demands. As principal-ship is a feeder category, the Principal should be relieved of teaching and permitted to indulge in the administrative affairs round the clock.
 6. Mentoring programmes may be developed to assist the principals in becoming more effective. Such programmes offer training in developing relationships and forging partnerships with parents and students and provide awareness of various community outreach possibilities to equip principals better to provide assistance to their school population.

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