

Exploring the Relationship Between School Climate and Teacher Job Satisfaction in Lahore's Public Primary Schools

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between school climate and teacher job satisfaction in primary schools in Lahore, Pakistan—a context where limited research exists. Using a quantitative correlational design, data were collected from 202 teachers (101 male, 101 female) across ten public primary schools through standardized survey instruments. Results revealed a significant positive correlation between school climate and job satisfaction ($r = .241$, $p = .015$), consistent across gender and experience. Teachers reported higher satisfaction with pay, supervision, promotion opportunities, and responsibility, but only moderate satisfaction with recognition, working conditions, and collegial relationships. The findings underscore the importance of fostering a positive school climate to enhance teacher satisfaction and effectiveness. Policy recommendations include transparent promotion systems, structured professional development, supervisory support, and initiatives to strengthen collegial collaboration, thereby contributing to sustained improvement in primary education quality in Pakistan.

Keywords: School climate, job satisfaction, primary school teachers, Pakistan, educational leadership

Introduction

Education is widely recognized as a cornerstone of social, cultural, and economic progress. Beyond transmitting knowledge, it cultivates civic values, fosters creativity, and equips individuals with essential skills for personal and societal development. Schools, as microcosms of society, provide not only academic learning but also social, moral, and emotional competencies necessary for responsible citizenship (Rapti, 2013). The effectiveness of this transformative role is heavily dependent on teachers, whose commitment, motivation, and satisfaction make them the most critical resource in the education system (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005).

Teacher job satisfaction has been extensively examined in developed countries due to its strong links with teacher retention, professional performance, and student achievement. Satisfied teachers tend to display greater enthusiasm, professional commitment, and openness to innovation, whereas dissatisfaction often results in burnout, absenteeism, and attrition (Ingersoll, 2001; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). In contrast, research in developing countries, including Pakistan, remains limited despite the clear implications for educational quality (Ali, Zubair, & Iqbal, 2019). As primary education constitutes the foundation of the wider education system,

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ensuring the satisfaction of primary school teachers is especially critical for sustaining effective learning outcomes.

Alongside job satisfaction, the construct of school climate has emerged as a significant theme in international educational research. Defined as the quality and character of school life as perceived by its members, school climate encompasses norms, values, relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009). A positive school climate has been linked to enhanced student achievement, stronger teacher efficacy, and improved psychosocial well-being for both students and staff (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013). Conversely, adverse climates are associated with stress, conflict, and diminished job satisfaction among teachers (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012).

In Pakistan, however, research on school climate remains scarce. Existing studies on teacher performance largely emphasize training, resources, or curriculum, often neglecting the psychosocial and organizational conditions under which teachers work (Shah, 2012). This omission is significant, as international evidence indicates that teachers' perceptions of school climate directly shape their satisfaction and effectiveness (Aydin, Sarier, & Uysal, 2013).

Within this context, the present study explores primary school teachers' perceptions of both school climate and job satisfaction in Lahore. It examines the relationship between these variables and investigates possible differences across gender and teaching experience. By addressing this gap, the study aims to provide insights for policymakers, administrators, and educational leaders to foster environments that enhance teacher satisfaction, improve student learning outcomes, and strengthen the overall quality of schooling.

Research Objectives

1. To measure teachers' perceptions of the school climate in public primary schools.
2. To assess teachers' perceptions of job satisfaction in primary schools.
3. To determine the relationship between school climate and job satisfaction.
4. To compare perceptions of school climate and job satisfaction based on gender.

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of primary school teachers about school climate?
2. What are the perceptions of primary school teachers about job satisfaction?
3. What is the relationship between school climate and job satisfaction?
4. Do male and female teachers differ in their perceptions of school climate and job satisfaction?

Literature Review

School climate has long been recognized as a central factor influencing both teacher and student outcomes. It is a multifaceted construct that encompasses the norms, values, interpersonal relationships, organizational structures, and practices that

shape daily life in schools (Anderson, 1982). Hoy and Miskel (1982) describe school climate as the psychological and social atmosphere that directly affects the behavior, motivation, and performance of teachers and students. Thus, school climate extends beyond the physical environment, capturing the relational and emotional interactions that define the lived experiences of school stakeholders.

The conceptualization of school climate has evolved over time, with various models attempting to explain its dimensions. The Organizational School Climate (OSC) model, grounded in Baumrind's (1968) theory of authoritative parenting, emphasizes the balance between high expectations and strong support systems as a hallmark of effective schools. Schools that embody these principles foster trust, open communication, and mutual respect among students, teachers, and leaders. Research consistently demonstrates that teachers in such environments report reduced burnout, lower stress levels, and greater professional stability (Gregory & Cornell, 2009; Huang & Cornell, 2018). Conversely, negative school climates characterized by weak leadership, limited collaboration, and insufficient professional support tend to stifle teacher engagement, discourage innovation, and increase turnover.

International scholarship further underscores the significance of school climate in shaping academic and professional outcomes. Fraser (1994) and Wang and Dishion (2011) established strong associations between positive school climates and improved student achievement, as well as enhanced teacher effectiveness. Similarly, Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, and Higgins-D'Alessandro (2013) argue that supportive school climates contribute to social-emotional development, higher motivation, and a stronger sense of belonging for both students and teachers. Importantly, school climate is not a fixed attribute but rather a dynamic and evolving process that reflects ongoing interactions within the school community. This perspective positions school climate as both a product of existing structures and a determinant of future practices.

In addition to influencing student learning, school climate is closely linked to teacher job satisfaction. Teachers who perceive their school climate as collaborative, respectful, and supportive are more likely to exhibit professional commitment and adaptability (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012). By contrast, toxic or unsupportive climates often lead to feelings of isolation, reduced morale, and professional dissatisfaction. Several studies suggest that aspects such as leadership style, collegial relationships, and opportunities for professional growth are particularly influential in shaping teachers' perceptions of climate (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012; Aydin, Sarier, & Uysal, 2013).

Research in developing countries has also begun to explore the role of school climate, though the evidence remains limited compared to Western contexts. For example, Ali, Zubair, and Iqbal (2019) highlight that in Pakistan, teacher performance studies often overlook organizational and psychosocial factors, focusing instead on curriculum reforms and training programs. This narrow approach risks neglecting the broader school environment that profoundly influences teacher well-being and student outcomes. As Shah (2012) emphasizes, systematic research into the psychosocial

dimensions of schooling is essential for a holistic understanding of educational quality in Pakistan.

Taken together, the literature demonstrates that school climate is a critical determinant of both student success and teacher satisfaction. Its influence extends across academic achievement, professional stability, and organizational development. However, gaps remain in terms of context-specific studies, particularly in South Asia, where the interplay between school climate and teacher outcomes has not been sufficiently examined. This study seeks to address this gap by focusing on primary school teachers in Lahore, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of how school climate shapes teacher satisfaction and, ultimately, educational effectiveness.

Teacher Job Satisfaction

Teacher job satisfaction is a well-established construct in educational research, primarily because of its strong association with teacher retention, professional performance, and student learning outcomes. Locke (1976) conceptualized job satisfaction as a positive emotional state resulting from an individual's evaluation of their work or work-related experiences. Within the teaching profession, satisfaction arises when educators perceive their work as meaningful, adequately supported, and aligned with both their professional aspirations and personal needs.

Several theoretical frameworks have been used to explain the determinants of job satisfaction. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) suggests that satisfaction is hierarchical, beginning with the fulfillment of basic physiological and safety needs and progressing toward higher-order needs such as belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. Herzberg's two-factor theory (1959) complements this perspective by distinguishing between intrinsic motivators such as achievement, recognition, and responsibility that generate satisfaction, and extrinsic hygiene factors such as salary, working conditions, and organizational policies that prevent dissatisfaction but do not necessarily enhance satisfaction. Together, these models highlight the multidimensional nature of teacher satisfaction and underscore the importance of addressing both internal motivations and external working conditions.

Empirical research further supports these theoretical perspectives. Studies in developed contexts consistently show that teachers who experience autonomy, recognition, and professional growth report higher levels of satisfaction and commitment (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Conversely, dissatisfaction is closely linked to absenteeism, stress, and eventual attrition (Ingersoll, 2001). Job satisfaction also influences teaching practices: satisfied teachers are more likely to adopt innovative pedagogies, engage students actively, and sustain long-term dedication to the profession (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2006).

In developing countries, systemic challenges often undermine teacher satisfaction. Limited remuneration, inadequate opportunities for career advancement, insufficient teaching resources, and overcrowded classrooms have been identified as persistent obstacles (Adejumobi & Ojikutu, 2013). Maslow (1954) argued that without

the fulfillment of fundamental needs such as fair compensation and workplace security, higher-order professional satisfaction is difficult to attain. Despite these challenges, research indicates that satisfied teachers in resource-constrained environments demonstrate greater resilience, stronger relationships with students, and higher levels of creativity in navigating instructional difficulties (Goodenow, 1993).

Recent scholarship has also emphasized the contextual and cultural dimensions of teacher job satisfaction. For instance, cross-cultural studies suggest that factors such as societal respect for teachers, administrative support, and collegial collaboration significantly shape satisfaction levels (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). In contexts where teaching is socially valued, intrinsic motivators tend to outweigh material constraints, whereas in environments where teaching is undervalued, extrinsic factors such as salary and promotion opportunities become more critical. This dynamic is particularly relevant in Pakistan, where teacher satisfaction has been relatively underexplored despite its crucial role in strengthening primary education systems (Ali, Zubair, & Iqbal, 2019).

In summary, teacher job satisfaction is a multidimensional construct shaped by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. While systemic barriers often undermine satisfaction in developing contexts, satisfied teachers demonstrate higher levels of commitment, innovation, and resilience, thereby directly contributing to improved student outcomes and institutional effectiveness. Understanding the determinants of satisfaction within specific educational contexts, such as Pakistan's primary schools, is therefore essential for designing effective policies and interventions that sustain both teacher well-being and educational quality.

School Climate and Job Satisfaction Relationship

A substantial body of research has consistently demonstrated a strong positive relationship between school climate and teacher job satisfaction. Schools characterized by effective leadership, collaborative cultures, equitable policies, and transparent communication foster a sense of belonging, respect, and purpose among teachers, which in turn enhances their motivation and satisfaction (Brown, Anfara, & Roney, 2004). Conversely, schools with autocratic leadership, limited trust, and poor working conditions frequently experience low teacher morale, dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and ultimately, higher rates of teacher turnover (Jankens, 2011).

Empirical evidence across diverse cultural and educational contexts further supports these associations. For example, Treputtharat and Tayiam (2014) found that Thai teachers working in schools with positive climates reported significantly higher levels of job satisfaction. Similarly, Villiers (2006) documented comparable findings in South Africa, where supportive school climates were linked to greater teacher commitment and professional dedication. In the United States, numerous studies confirm that positive school climates not only enhance job satisfaction but also reduce teacher burnout, strengthen professional identity, and create opportunities for continuous professional growth (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012). Collectively, these

findings suggest that the psychosocial environment of schools plays a decisive role in shaping teachers' professional experiences.

Scholars also highlight that school climate functions as both a predictor and mediator of teacher satisfaction. On one hand, it facilitates intrinsic motivation by providing recognition, collegial support, and meaningful opportunities for engagement; on the other, it minimizes dissatisfaction by addressing structural and organizational barriers such as inequitable policies or unsupportive leadership (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012). Schools that establish a culture of collaboration and respect not only enhance teacher well-being but also strengthen institutional effectiveness through greater teacher commitment and reduced attrition.

This relationship is particularly salient in developing countries, including Pakistan, where systemic challenges such as inadequate resources, large class sizes, and limited career progression already undermine teacher morale (Ali, Zubair, & Iqbal, 2019). In such contexts, fostering a positive school climate can serve as a critical buffer against structural deficiencies by reinforcing teachers' sense of value, support, and professional purpose. In this way, school climate emerges as a vital determinant of teacher satisfaction, with direct implications for both educational quality and long-term system sustainability.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative correlational research design to investigate the relationship between school climate and teacher job satisfaction among primary school teachers in Lahore. A correlational design was considered appropriate because the purpose of the study was not to manipulate variables or establish causality, but rather to measure the degree of association between two naturally occurring constructs (school climate and job satisfaction). Quantitative methods allowed for the collection of objectives, standardized data from a relatively large sample, thereby ensuring reliability, replicability, and generalizability of findings.

Population and Sample

The population for the study comprised all primary school teachers working in public schools across Lahore. Since it was not feasible to survey the entire population, a **sample of 202 teachers** was selected through a multistage sampling technique. In the first stage, **ten schools** were selected, ensuring representation of both boys' and girls' schools (five each). In the second stage, teachers were selected proportionally from these schools, with careful attention to gender balance. The final sample consisted of 101 male teachers and 101 female teachers, which allowed for meaningful comparisons across gender groups.

The use of multistage sampling ensured representativeness while maintaining feasibility in terms of time and resources. The sample size of 202 was considered adequate for applying statistical techniques such as correlation, t-tests, and ANOVA, thereby ensuring the validity of the study's results.

Instruments

Data were collected using two standardized questionnaires, both of which had been previously validated for use in educational research:

1. **School Climate Questionnaire** – This instrument measured teachers' perceptions of the psychological, social, and organizational environment within their schools. It was validated for use in the Pakistani context, ensuring cultural relevance and appropriateness.
2. **Teacher Job Satisfaction Questionnaire** – This tool assessed teachers' levels of satisfaction across various dimensions, including pay, supervision, promotion opportunities, recognition, responsibility, working conditions, and collegial relationships. The instrument was adapted to the local educational context to ensure clarity and applicability.

To assess the **reliability** of the instruments, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated. Results indicated acceptable internal consistency:

- School Climate Questionnaire: $\alpha = 0.703$
- Teacher Job Satisfaction Questionnaire: $\alpha = 0.796$

These values confirm that the instruments were sufficiently reliable for measuring the intended constructs.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were gathered through self-administered questionnaires, which were distributed to teachers during working hours with the consent of school authorities. Teachers were assured of confidentiality and anonymity to encourage honest and unbiased responses. Completed questionnaires were collected on the same day to minimize response attrition.

The data were coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed:

- **Descriptive statistics** (mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage) were used to summarize teachers' perceptions of school climate and job satisfaction.
- **Inferential statistics** were applied to test hypotheses and examine relationships between variables:
 - **Pearson's product-moment correlation** was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between school climate and teacher job satisfaction.
 - **Independent samples t-tests** were conducted to explore potential gender-based differences.
 - **One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)** was used to examine differences in perceptions based on teaching experience.

The combination of these statistical techniques provided a comprehensive analysis of the data, enabling the study to not only describe but also interpret patterns in teachers' perceptions.

Data Analysis

This chapter presents the results of the statistical analyses conducted to examine the relationship between school climate and teacher job satisfaction among primary school teachers in Lahore. The findings are organized into four sections: (1) descriptive statistics, (2) gender-based differences, (3) experience-based differences, and (4) correlation analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize teachers' perceptions of school climate and job satisfaction. The results indicate that teachers reported **moderate levels** of both constructs, with a mean score of 3.32 (SD = 0.37) for school climate and 3.35 (SD = 0.44) for job satisfaction.

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics of School Climate and Job Satisfaction*

Variable	N	M	SD
School Climate	202	3.32	0.37
Job Satisfaction	202	3.35	0.44

Note. N = sample size; M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

Gender Differences

To determine whether male and female teachers differed in their perceptions of school climate and job satisfaction, **independent samples t-tests** were conducted. Results indicated **no statistically significant gender differences** in either variable. For school climate, $t(200) = 1.44$, $p = .152$, while for job satisfaction, $t(200) = 0.74$, $p = .461$.

Table 2: *Independent Samples t-Test Results for Gender Differences*

Variable	Gender	N	M	SD	t	p
School Climate	Male	101	3.29	0.36	1.44	.152
	Female	101	3.35	0.38		
Job Satisfaction	Male	101	3.33	0.45	0.74	.461
	Female	101	3.37	0.44		

Note. N = sample size; M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

Experience Differences

A **one-way ANOVA** was conducted to explore whether teachers' perceptions of school climate and job satisfaction differed across groups based on teaching experience. Results revealed **no statistically significant differences** for either variable across experience levels.

Table 3: *ANOVA Results for Differences by Teaching Experience*

Variable	Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
School Climate	Between Groups	0.152	2	0.076	0.55	.576
	Within Groups	27.678	199	0.139		
Job Satisfaction	Between Groups	0.183	2	0.092	0.48	.619
	Within Groups	38.236	199	0.192		

Note. SS = sum of squares; df = degrees of freedom; MS = mean square.

Correlation Analysis

To examine the relationship between school climate and teacher job satisfaction, a **Pearson product-moment correlation** was performed. Results indicated a **significant positive correlation** between the two variables, $r(200) = .241$, $p = .015$. This finding suggests that as perceptions of school climate improve, teachers' job satisfaction also increases.

Table 4: *Correlation Between School Climate and Job Satisfaction*

Variable	1	2
1. School Climate	—	.241*
2. Job Satisfaction	.241*	—

*Note. $p < .05$.

Summary of Findings

The results of this study can be summarized as follows:

1. Teachers reported **moderate perceptions** of both school climate and job satisfaction.
2. **No significant gender-based differences** were found in perceptions of either variable.
3. **No significant experience-based differences** were observed.
4. A **significant positive correlation** was found between school climate and teacher job satisfaction, indicating that improvements in school climate are associated with higher levels of teacher satisfaction.

Discussion

The findings of this study reaffirm that school climate exerts a significant influence on teacher job satisfaction, corroborating earlier research (Fraser, 1994; Adejumbi & Ojikutu, 2013). The absence of notable gender-based differences is also consistent with international evidence indicating that male and female teachers tend to evaluate their professional environments in similar ways when operating under comparable structural conditions (Koustelios, 2001). This suggests that school climate factors, rather than demographic characteristics, play a more decisive role in shaping teachers' professional experiences.

The moderate levels of overall satisfaction reported by teachers highlight important areas for improvement. Although respondents expressed relative contentment with extrinsic factors such as pay, supervision, and promotion opportunities, they reported lower satisfaction with intrinsic dimensions, including recognition, collegial collaboration, and working conditions. This imbalance points to the need for schools to strengthen intrinsic motivators and professional support mechanisms, which are critical for sustaining teacher engagement, commitment, and long-term effectiveness. Enhancing recognition, fostering collaborative professional cultures, and improving workplace conditions may therefore serve as key levers for boosting teacher satisfaction and, by extension, educational quality.

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence that school climate exerts a significant influence on teacher job satisfaction within public primary schools in Lahore. A supportive, equitable, and collaborative environment was found to enhance teachers' morale, motivation, and professional performance, thereby strengthening their long-term commitment to the teaching profession. The results indicate that teachers experience greater satisfaction when leadership is perceived as supportive, decision-making processes are participatory, and collegial relationships are cooperative. Such conditions not only mitigate stress and burnout but also foster belongingness and recognition, which are essential for sustaining teacher engagement.

The findings underscore the need for policies and practices that prioritize the development of positive school climates. By cultivating supportive leadership, transparent governance, and collegial collaboration, educational institutions can improve teacher satisfaction, reduce turnover, and ultimately enhance student learning outcomes. In this regard, fostering a positive school climate emerges as a strategic pathway for improving both teacher well-being and the overall quality of primary education in Pakistan.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance teacher job satisfaction and overall educational quality. First, transparent and merit-based promotion policies should be established to ensure fairness in career advancement, thereby motivating teachers and reducing perceptions of favoritism. Second, professional support mechanisms need to be strengthened through regular professional development programs, structured mentoring, and recognition initiatives that acknowledge teachers' contributions and build their sense of professional value. Third, schools should prioritize improved working conditions by ensuring adequate infrastructure, maintaining manageable class sizes, and fostering supportive leadership practices that enable teachers to perform effectively. At the policy level, it is imperative that educational reforms explicitly incorporate school climate as a central consideration, given its critical influence on teacher retention, satisfaction, and student achievement. Finally, future research should extend to other districts and provinces of Pakistan to allow for broader generalization of findings and to generate a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between school climate and teacher job satisfaction across diverse educational contexts.

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