



Perceived school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students in relation to their gender and type of school

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Abstract

The study was conducted on secondary school students to find out the relationship between school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students studying in government and private schools. A sample of 240 secondary school students (120 Male and 120 Female) was selected randomly from two districts (Pulwama and Kulgam) of Kashmir (J&K). For data collection, self-standardized *School Climate Scale (SCS)* was administered to measure the perceived school climate of secondary school students. The yard stick to measure the academic achievement has been taken from students' performance in JKBOSE Examinations. Statistical treatments such as mean, t- test and correlation approach were computed for data analysis. The results of the study highlighted a significant and positive relationship between school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students. Further, the study reflected a significant difference in the perception of school climate with respect to gender and type of school. The results also revealed a significant difference in academic achievement of male-female and government-private secondary school going students.

Keywords: school climate; academic achievement; gender; type of school

Introduction

School is a holy place where pupil and teacher interact with each other to influence pupil's educational achievement, their acquisition of knowledge, literacy and numeracy. These basic skills are keys to child's further education, training or employment (Good & Brophy, 1986) [26]. Students spend much of their lives in school activities and they are greatly influenced by school's social, emotional, physical and academic climate (Curie *et al.*, 2004). Climate in a particular form is found everywhere. When a student leaves a school and enters another one, that student is actually moving from one climate to another. The sense or perception of specific experiences and behaviours' people embraced by a particular organization constitutes its organizational climate (Schneider, Bowen, Ehrhart, & Holcombe, 2000) [61]. So, climate of an organization is actually a detailed description of what people see and feel about the practices, policies, routines, norms, interactive relationships and outcomes of an organization (James & Jones, 1974) [38].

Each and every school has a unique climate for teaching and learning. This climate may be productive or unproductive (Howard, Howell & Brainard; 1987) [33]. A productive school is a satisfying school which fulfills the basic needs of its members and unproductive school suppresses the harmonious development of students. Productive or supportive organization provides a democratic, trust based relational and effective disciplinary climate (Hallinger, Mitman, Murphy & Weil, 1985) [28]; fosters positive pupil-teacher relationships (Wentzel, 1997) [74]; emphasizes a sense of belongingness to its stakeholders (Berman, 1997) [6] and appreciation of responsibility of individuals role towards the common good of

school (Flanagan, Bowes, Jonsson, Csapo, & Sheblanova, 1998) [20]. Supportive school climate also favours less violent behaviours among its members (Brookmeyer, Fanti & Henrich, 2006) [7].

The term school climate has been defined in several ways by researchers but the general feeling is that it strikes on individual's perception of school as a room for learning and interacting with its members (Nwankwo, 1979; Anderson, 1982; Freiberg, 1998; Libbey, 2004; Loukas, 2007) [55, 1, 21, 42, 43]. School climate defines the quality of school that develops and maintains healthy learning atmosphere, nurtures children's and parents' dreams and ambitions, inspires teachers creativity and enthusiasm, and promotes the status of all its members. It is about the quality or essence of school that guides a school child, teacher, staff member, parent or administrator to exhibit affectionate feelings towards the school and to stay there with joy each and every day (Rogers & Frieberg, 1994) [59]. School climate is the vein through which blood of belief and quality of pupils, teachers, parents, head teachers and administrators flow in a collaborative way (Hoy & Miskel, 2001) [35]. The term school-fit and school connectedness have been introduced to reveal the level of bond between school natives and school foreigners (Zimmer-Gembeck, Chipuer, Hanisch, Creed & McGregor, 2006) [75]. School climate is the ethos of a school (Welsh, 2000) [73]. It is the total personality of a school (Creemers & Reezigt, 1999) [13]. It is the core and nucleus of school (Frieberg & Stein, 1999). The nucleus of one school may feel friendly, inviting, democratic, caring and supportive while for other school it may feel unfriendly, hostile and discouraging one. If the nucleus of your school is conflictual or quarrelsome in nature,

the students will possess behavioural and academic problems in later stages of life (Hamre & Pianta, 2001) ^[29]. Infact, the criteria for parents to admit their wards in a particular school is often considered to be the prevalent climate of that school as the climate determines whether it is a good place for learning or not. Positive school climate is the best predictor of one's success in future life and negative school climate prevents optimal learning and development of students (Frieberg, 1998; Ghaith, 2003; Natrajan & Dandapani, 2003) ^[24]. Climate of the school may be of caring or formal type (Rosenblatt & Peled, 2002) ^[60]. Caring type of school climate ensures concern for the welfare of all school members. When teachers feel caring climate within a school, they are likely to render their services more effectively to others and are more devoted to accomplish group goals (Kelly & Dorsch, 1991; Trevino, Butterfield, & McCabe, 1998; Cullen, Parboteeah, & Victor, 2003) ^[40, 67]. In formal school climate, the school members are expected to follow the rules and regulations of an organization set by the authorities. It is through these ethical codes and rules that subordinates learn about- what to behave, how to behave and which behaviours are to be reinforced and punished (Appelbaum, Deguire, & Mathieu, 2005) ^[3].

Achievement is the end-product for all educational arenas including the school arena. It indicates the learning outcome of students. It includes both curricular and co-curricular performance of students (Mehta, 1969) ^[50]. Academic achievement of student refers to the skills developed or the level of knowledge attained by student in academic subjects measured by standardized tests and expressed in grades or marks assigned by teachers (Traw, 1956; Good, 1959). It is actually the students' status of subject-matter knowledge, understanding and skills in a given time (Crow & Crow, 1969) ^[14]. On the basis of academic performance, students are labeled as pass or fail candidates (Sinha, 1970) ^[63]. The pass or successful candidates are promoted to next knowledge acquisition level and fail or unsuccessful candidates have to repeat the existing knowledge acquisition level.

In this paper the investigators examine the students' perception of school climate and its influence on their academic achievement. School climate plays a vital role towards the balanced development of students. Research has be-toned on the importance of developing a positive school climate and its association with academic achievement of students.

Justification of the study

School climate is the worth property of school. It is the total interaction taking place between human motivation and subsequent environment (Pretorius & de Villiers, 2009) ^[57]. Infact, it measures the frequency and quality of interactions stirring among its stakeholders (Haynes, Emmons, & Corner, 1993) ^[19]. School climate affects not only students' motivation and school satisfaction, but their lifestyles, health and quality of life as well (Vieno, Santinello, Galbiati & Mirandola, 2004) ^[64]. Attempts have been made to correlate school climate with emotional and mental health outcomes (Way, Reddy, & Rhodes; 2007) ^[72]. School climate is essential to prevent students from dropping out (Maurice, 2010) ^[47]. School climate has also been studied as one of the best indicator of

students further and continuing education (Astor, Meyer & Pinter, 2001) ^[4]. High school students failed to attend secondary schools because of the violence and personal nuisance they experience during their previous school days. Violence is a destructive evil which includes physical attacks, mental attacks and verbal or non-verbal attacks to a student or subordinate (Holtappels & Meier, 2000; Barbarin & Ritcher, 2001) ^[32, 51]. To be safe at school or to have safety in a given school is the crux of favourable school climate. When a student feels safe at school, his learning capacity is optimized (Torney-Purta, 2002) ^[66]. When teachers are threatened or assaulted by students and other authorities, they do feel unsatisfied to their jobs and thereby the rate of their school absenteeism increases (Ishumi, 1994; Chonjo, 1994; Voelkl, 1995; & Dworkin, 1998) ^[36, 11, 70, 18]

Review of related literature has shown that school climate is directly or indirectly related to academic success of students. School climate affects the child's psychosocial development and this in turn shapes their academic achievement (James, 1960; George, Carol & William, 2001) ^[37, 23]. Positive and democratic school climate promotes academic achievement of students, and negative and unsupportive school climate fosters academic failure and antisocial behaviour among students (Hoy & Fedman, 1987; Haynes, Comer & Hamilton-Lee, 1989; Goh, Young & Fraser, 1995; McEvoy & Welker, 2000; McNeely, Nonnemaker & Blun, 2002; Anderson, Hamilton & Hattie, 2004; Moran, Parish & DiPaola, 2006; Brown & Medway, 2007; Chen & Weikert, 2008; MacNeil, Prater & Busch, 2009; Dagnew, 2014) ^[34, 38, 34, 31, 36, 35, 5, 3,4]. A positive school climate is vital for developing the scientific temper among secondary school students (Usha, 1985). Various dimensions of school climate such as leadership style of the Head, teachers' job satisfaction, effective relationship among staff members and physical infrastructure of school were found to be significantly related to the academic performance of students (Kumar & Mukhopadhyaya, 1988). The type of school is also important to determine the academic performance of students. Students studying in non-government schools were found better in academics than students studying in government schools (Pande, 2000).

Academic achievement has been studied in terms of school climate characteristics such as enrolment ratio, lack of teaching-learning facilities, teacher absenteeism (Puja & Kassimoto, 1994; Malmberg & Hanson, 1996) ^[58, 46]; parents' education level (Malekala, 1994; Temu, 1995; Mganga & Mizambwa, 1997) ^[65, 51]; socio-economic status of students (Temu, 1995) ^[65]; gender differences (Puja & Kassimoto, 1994) ^[58]; teacher's monitoring system towards student progress (Wasanga & Kyalo, 2009) ^[71].

After going through trend reports and review of related research, the investigator has concluded that most of the studies have been conducted on school climate of primary and elementary schools in relation to academic success, motivation, psychosocial health, behavioural outcomes of students, and little work has been done on school climate of secondary school students in relation to their academic achievement. There is no study on school climate and academic achievement of government and private secondary schools. The investigator, thus, found an ample opportunity to explore this unbeaten area of school climate. The investigator

is hoped that the present study will help to open new doors in educational practices.

Statement of the problem

The problem chosen for the study is stated as: “Perceived School Climate and Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Relation to their Gender and Type of School”

Objectives

1. To study the perceived school climate of secondary school students.
2. To compare the perceived school climate of government and private secondary school students.
3. To compare the perceived school climate of male and female secondary school students.
4. To study the academic achievement of secondary school students.
5. To compare the academic achievement of government and private secondary school students.
6. To compare the academic achievement of male and female secondary school students.
7. To study the correlation between perceived school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students.

Research questions

The research paper attempted to answer the following questions.

1. In secondary schools, whether government and private students possess more favourable perceived school climate?
2. How different are the perceptions of male and female secondary school students on school climate?
3. To what extent, if any, is there a difference in academic achievement of government and private secondary school students?
4. In secondary schools, whether academic achievement is greater among male and female secondary school students?
5. What is the relationship between perception of school climate and subsequent academic achievement of secondary school students?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between government and private secondary school students on their perceived school climate.
2. There is no significant difference between male and female secondary school students on their perceived school climate.
3. There is no significant difference between government and private secondary school students on their academic achievement levels.
4. There is no significant difference between male and female secondary school students on their academic achievement levels.
5. There is no significant relationship between perceived school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students.

Operational definition of terms

- **School Climate:** In the present investigation school climate mean the scores obtained by respondents on School Climate Scale constructed by investigator himself.
- **Academic Achievement:** In this research study, academic achievement refers to the aggregate marks obtained by 9th and 10th standard students in their previous Board examinations.
- **Secondary School Students:** Secondary school students refer to the students studying in 9th and 10th standard in any secondary school of Kashmir valley.
- **Type of School:** For the present study, the type of school implies any government and private secondary school of Kashmir valley.
- **Gender:** Gender refers to male and female secondary school students.

Procedure

Sample

The investigator has employed stratified random technique for data collection. Stratified random sampling technique is a mixture of both deliberate and random sampling techniques. First, the data have been divided into different classes such as male-female and government and private, and then certain units from each class were selected randomly. A sample of 240 secondary school students (9th and 10th standard) from two districts Pulwama and Kulgam of Kashmir valley was selected. Two secondary schools from each district and 60 students (30 male and 30 female) from every school were chosen as the sample of the research study. The brief summary of sample is shown below:

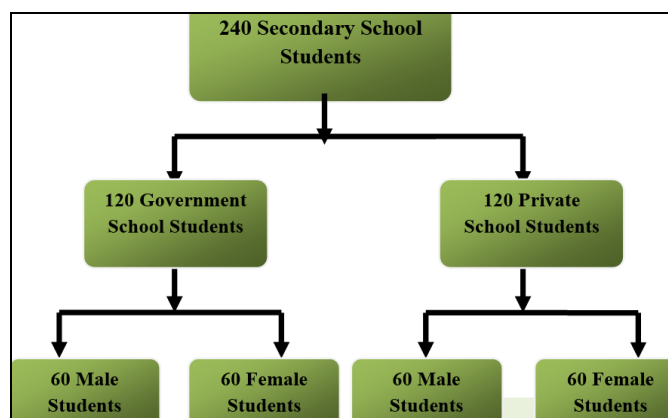


Fig 1: Sampling Frame

Tools Used

For the measurement of school climate, self-standardized *School Climate Scale (SCS)* was administered. There are 48 items in the test. Each item has five alternatives ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. There are 41 positive statements and 7 negative statements. Positive statements are given 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 scores against strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree respectively and negative statements are scored in a reverse way (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). In the end all scores are to be added. The maximum score of the scale would be 240 and minimum would be 48. The

reliability coefficient of the scale, computed by Split-half method between odd and even items using Spearman’s Brown Prophecy Formula, was found to be $r = 0.72$ and the validity coefficient of scale, calculated by correlating the scores with Renuka Sinha’s Socio-Emotional School Climate Inventory, was found to be 0.83.

To measure the academic achievement of students, their total marks obtained in previous Board exams were taken as the raw data for academic achievement.

Analysis of the data

In order to achieve the objectives formulated in the research study, the data collected have been analyzed by employing statistical techniques such as mean, standard deviation, percentage, t-test and correlation approach (product moment correlation coefficient). The brief summary use of statistical techniques is given in table 1.

Table 1: Objective Wise Use of Statistical Techniques

S. No.	Objective Number	Statistical technique employed
1.	1,4	Percentage
2.	2,3,5,6	t-test
3.	7	Product Moment Correlation

Besides the above stated statistical techniques, mean and SD were also calculated.

The statistical treatment of the data and the results obtained thereupon has been arranged in a tabular form and are presented in the following order.

1. Overall Perception of School Climate of Secondary School Students
2. Comparison between Government and Private Secondary School Students on perceived School Climate
3. Comparison between Male and Female Secondary School Students on perceived School Climate
4. Overall Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students
5. Comparison between Government and Private Secondary School Students on Academic Achievement
6. Comparison between Male and Female Secondary School Students on Academic Achievement
7. Correlation between School Climate and Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students

Objective wise data analysis

Objective 1: Overall perception of School Climate of Secondary School Students

One of the objectives of the present research study was to explore the school climate as perceived by secondary school students. To achieve this objective, analysis of data was done which is presented in table 2.

Table 2: showing School Climate of Secondary School Students

Category	*N	Mean Score	Percentage		
			Favourable	Moderate	Unfavourable
School Climate	240	169.33	40.56%	44.93%	14.55%

*N= Number of Respondents

Observation: Table 2 reveals that total mean score possessed by secondary school students is 169.33. Further, the table

shows percentage wise distribution of school climate. 40.56% of secondary school students perceived the school climate as favourable for learning the various things, 44.93% perceived it as moderate and 14.55% considered school climate as unfavourable.

Interpretation: By following the test manual the above stated mean score falls on moderate category. This indicates that students are having of the opinion that school climate should be more democratic in nature to foster teaching-learning process and it should exhibit mutual trust and relationship feelings amongst its stakeholders.

Objective 2: Comparison between Government and Private Secondary School Students on perceived School Climate

In this section attempt has been made to study the comparison between government and private secondary school students on perceived school climate, the results of which are presented in table 3.

Table 3: showing comparison between Govt. and Private Secondary School students on perceived School Climate

Group	*N	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
Government	120	160.90	34.41	6.27	Significant at 0.01 level
Private	120	177.77	23.57		

*N=Number of Respondents; tabulated value at 0.01=2.59

Observation: Table 3 reveals that the mean scores possessed by government and private secondary school students are 160.9 and 177.77 respectively. The calculated t-value is 6.27.

Interpretation: By following the manual of scale, the above mentioned mean scores fall on moderate category. Further, the calculated t-value of 6.27 is found to be significant at 0.01 level. So, it may be interpreted that there is a significant difference between private and government secondary school students on their perceived school climate. Hence, Hypothesis 1 which reads as “There is no significant difference between government and private secondary school students on their perceived school climate” stands rejected. The results also revealed that private secondary school students perceived the school climate higher than government students.

Objective 3: Comparison between Male and Female Secondary School Students on perceived School Climate

In this section attempt was being made to study the comparison between male and female secondary school students on perceived school climate. The results obtained are presented in table 4.

Table 4: Showing comparison between Male and Female Secondary School students on perceived School Climate

Group	*N	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
Male	120	163.97	26.99	3.85	Significant at 0.01 level
Female	120	174.70	33.74		

*N=Number of Respondents; tabulated value at 0.01=2.59

Observation: Table 4 depicts that the mean scores of male and female secondary school students on perceived school climate are 163.97 and 174.70 respectively. The table also

shows that t-value is 3.85.

Interpretation: After following the manual of the scale, the obtained mean scores fall on moderate category of school climate. The calculated t-value of 3.85 is found to be significant at 0.01 level (tabulated value= 2.59). So, it may be interpreted that there is a significant difference between male and female secondary school students on perceived school climate. Hence, Hypothesis 2 which reads as “*There is no significant difference between male and female secondary school students on their perceived school climate*” stands rejected. The results also show that the female secondary school students perceived the school climate more favourable than male secondary school students. The similar kinds of results were established by Goodenow & Grady (1993), Dindar (2008), Turhan & Akgiil (2017).

Objective 4: Overall Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students

One of the objectives of the present research study was to explore the academic achievement of secondary school students. To achieve this objective, analysis of data was done and the consequent results are presented in table 5.

Table 5: showing Percentage Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students

Category	*N	Mean Score	Percentage		
			Above Average	Average	Below Average
Academic Achievement	240	299.77	53.33%	35.83%	10.83%

*N= Number of Respondents

Observation: Table 5 depicts that mean score obtained by secondary school students on academic achievement is 299.77. The table also demonstrates the percentage academic achievement of secondary school students. 53.33% fall on above average category, 35.83% are average and 10.83% are below average students in their academic performance.

Interpretation: The obtained mean score indicates that secondary school students fall on average category of academic achievement level.

Objective 5: Comparison between Government and Private Secondary School Students on Academic Achievement

In this section effort has been made to study the comparison between government and private secondary school students on academic achievement, the results of which are presented in table 6.

Table 6: showing comparison between Govt. and Private School Students on Academic Achievement

Group	*N	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
Government	120	287.84	75.43	3.50	Significant at 0.01 level
Private	120	311.70	73.79		

*N=Number of Respondents; tabulated value at 0.01=2.59

Observation: Table 6 shows the mean score of government and private are 287.84 and 311.70 respectively. The results revealed that calculated t-value is 3.50.

Interpretation: The obtained t-value of 3.50 is found to be significant at 0.01 level. Hence, Hypothesis 3 which reads as “*There is no significant difference between government and private secondary school students on their academic achievement levels*” stands rejected and it is concluded that there is a significant difference between academic achievement of government and private secondary school students. The result obtained indicates that private secondary school students were found to have higher academic achievement than government students. The obtained results are, therefore, in conformity with the previous findings of Pande (2000) & Bharat Mimrot (2014).

Objective 6: Comparison between Male and Female Secondary School Students on Academic Achievement

In this section attempt has been made to study the comparison between male and female secondary school students on academic achievement, results of which are presented in table 7.

Table 7: showing comparison between Male and Female Secondary School Students on Academic Achievement

Variable	*N	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
Male	120	286.71	80.26	3.83	Significant at 0.01 level
Female	120	312.83	68.54		

*N=Number of Respondents; tabulated value at 0.01=2.59

Observation: The above table shows that the mean value of academic achievement of male and female students is 286.71 and 312.83 respectively. The calculated t-value is 3.83.

Interpretation: The above calculated t-value of 3.83 is found to be significant at 0.01 level. So, it may be interpreted that there is a significant difference in academic achievement of male and female secondary school students. Hence Hypothesis 4 which reads as “*There is no significant difference between male and female secondary school students on their academic achievement levels*” stands rejected. It was also revealed that the academic achievement level of female students is greater than male students. The results, thereby, obtained are in accordance with the previous findings of Spinrad, *et al.* (1999) [64]; Chambers & Schreiber (2004) [9]; Codjoe & Henry (2007) [12]; Bharat Mimrot (2014) [52] but are contradictory to the previous findings of Pandey & Ahmed (2008); Kaur (2005) [32].

Objective 7: Correlation between School Climate and Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students

To find out the relationship between school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students, coefficient of correlation was applied and the result is presented in table no. 8.

Table 8: showing correlation between School Climate and Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students

Variables	*N	df	Co-efficient of Correlation
School Climate	240	238	0.637**
Academic achievement			

*N= Number of Respondents; tabulated value at 0.01 level= 0.148

Observation: Table 8 reveals that the calculated co-efficient of correlation between school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students is 0.637.

Interpretation: The above calculated coefficient of correlation of 0.637 is found to be positive and significant at 0.01 level. It means that there is significant correlation between school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students. Hence, Hypothesis 5 which reads as “*There is no significant relationship between perceived school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students*” stands **rejected**. The finding supports the prior findings of Elias & Haynes (2008) ^[19]; Shindler, Jones, Williams, Taylor & Cadenas (2014) ^[62] but it doesn't support the finding of Lawrence (2012) ^[41].

Major findings

After going through different stages of investigation, the investigator has finally arrived at following conclusions:

- The present study, in general, indicates that secondary school students perceived moderate level of their school climate. Analyzing the mean score of school climate, it was found that difference was in favour of female secondary school students. In other words, female students considered a more positive school climate than male students in their respective secondary schools.
- Private school students were found to have perceived school climate as more favourable than government secondary school students.
- A significant difference was found between male and female secondary school students on their level of academic achievement. Female secondary school students were found to have higher academic achievement than male secondary school students.
- Private secondary school students were found to have higher academic achievement than government secondary school students.
- A significant relationship was found between school climate and academic achievement of secondary school students. In other words, school climate predicts the academic achievement of students.

Educational implications

The results of the study confirmed the strong connection between students' perception of school climate and their academic achievement. Students have perceived various factors of school climate as the major cause of their poor academic performance. Such factors include teacher work load, traditional teaching, trust-deficit relationships, low motivation, lack of infrastructural facilities, bungling heads' leadership behaviour, communication gap between parents and teachers, improper class size, lack of suitable co-curricular activities, students' insecurity level and load of home assignments on part of students. Students' poor performance in academics is a major concern. This requires prompt attention on the part of educational planners and policy makers to improve the academic situation in secondary schools.

Based on one of the findings of the study, it is stated that academic achievement of female students exceeds male

students. Ideally there should be no such gender academic achievement gap. If this gap exceeds more, the role of school staff is said to be not relevant. The results implied that teachers of Boys Secondary Schools' have had conventional approach of teaching which created the conditions of poor performance among male students. If this trend continues, the literacy rate among males' would slim more in coming days. The need of the hour is to have efficient teachers in the school wherein teachers can teach and improve some crucial academic proficiency among male students. School authorities should concrete the way for increasing academic achievement of male students in order to make their life more successful in very coming time.

The present study revealed that private secondary school students have perceived their school climate more favourable than government secondary school students. The query is who must lead the positive change in government schools? The Secretary of School Education, Director of School Education, Joint Director of School Education, Chief Education Officer of the district, Zonal Education Officer, DIET Principal, Cluster Head, Deputy Commissioner, Tehsildar backed up by the central administration initiate and promotes change in the climate of school. Their decisions regarding schools' physical infrastructure, staff selection, training priorities, budget allocation and communication with parent society play an ample role in encouraging a positive change. Within each school, principal has an important role in exhibiting effective leadership styles to support the school staff. If staff is supported by authorities, it means that students are supported. When teachers found vigorous opportunities in mapping the change, the output is high morale of students and their willing participation in curricular and co-curricular activities is enhanced. Parents should also be highly motivated to admit their wards in government schools. In short, a congenial school climate is the need of hour in government schools. In such climate, the school staff acts as a learning community for the articulation of institutional common goal.

The study demonstrates that private schools are more effective in academic outcomes than government schools. It is so because private schools are more or less financially dependent on student fees, local aids, sponsorship and parental fundraising. The private students came mostly from favourable socio-economic background, which in turn improves the socio-economic composition of school population. This better socio-economic composition increases the educational outcomes of private school students significantly above the level of government school students. If this trend continues, more parents will shift their wards to private schools which in turn will fabricate bulk of students to private secondary schools. Very unfortunately, the higher enrolment ratios of students have curved private schools into profit earning industrial units. So, the focus should be more on government schools. The school climate of government schools should be at par with the private schools.

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