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## Relationship between Classroom Environment and Moral Values of Secondary School Students

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### Key Words

Classroom Environment, Moral values, Secondary school students, Secondary School Teachers

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**Abstract:** The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between the classroom environment of schools and the moral values of secondary school students. Specifically, the study focused on exploring the perceptions of secondary school teachers regarding the classroom environment and the levels of moral values exhibited by students. A sample of 1288 secondary school teachers was selected for the study, representing ten districts within the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. To ensure comprehensive representation, the sample included 200 secondary school teachers from each district. The selection of teachers was carried out using a non-random approach, with 100 teachers chosen from rural areas and 100 teachers from urban areas within each district. This sampling strategy aimed to capture a diverse range of perspectives on the classroom environment and its impact on students' moral values. In order to examine the relationship between the classroom environment and students' moral values, a correlation analysis was conducted. The results of the analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between the classroom environment and the moral values of students. This finding suggests that the classroom environment plays a significant role in shaping and influencing the development of students' moral values. The recommendations derived from the study offer practical implications for educators and policymakers to enhance the classroom environment and facilitate the cultivation of positive moral values among students.

## Introduction

In the realm of education, the classroom environment plays a pivotal role in shaping students' experiences and outcomes. While academic achievements are of paramount importance, education also strives to foster the development of well-rounded individuals with strong moral values. Although the influence of families and peers on students' moral values is widely acknowledged, the impact of the physical and social environment within the classroom should not be overlooked. Therefore, understanding the effects of the classroom environment on students' moral values becomes

crucial for educators and policymakers striving to create supportive and nurturing learning environments.

This study aims to delve into the multifaceted dimensions of the classroom environment and explore their influence on students' moral values. By conducting a comprehensive review of the research conducted, this study seeks to uncover the current understanding of this topic while identifying potential gaps in the existing literature.

The classroom atmosphere holds great significance in shaping student learning and achievements. It encompasses elements such as physical setup, social dynamics, teacher-student bonds, and instructional methodologies. This review explores the core dimensions of the classroom environment and their impact on student engagement, motivation, and academic success. The physical layout of classrooms, including lighting, seating, and resources, influences student behavior and outcomes (Barrett et al., 2015). Studies show that classrooms with ample natural light, comfortable seating, and well-organized materials create positive learning environments, enhancing student concentration and academic success (Heschong, 2002; Woolner et al., 2007). Interactions within classrooms, such as teacher-student relationships and peer dynamics, profoundly impact student well-being, engagement, and learning outcomes. Positive teacher-student relationships characterized by warmth and support contribute to higher motivation and achievement (Roorda et al., 2011; Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Fostering an inclusive and supportive classroom climate that encourages collaboration enhances student engagement and performance (Wentzel, 2015; Wang & Eccles, 2012).

Effective instructional strategies significantly influence student learning. Active involvement through cooperative learning, inquiry-based approaches, and differentiated instruction leads to improved academic achievement (Johnson & Johnson, 2014; Hattie, 2009). Providing timely feedback, clear expectations, and appropriate use of technology also yield positive learning outcomes (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; OECD, 2015). The classroom environment encompasses diverse dimensions that shape student learning experiences. A well-designed physical environment, positive social interactions, and effective instructional practices foster engagement, motivation, and academic achievement. Recognizing the importance of creating supportive and stimulating classroom

environments is crucial for educators and policymakers, as it lays the foundation for optimal learning outcomes.

A plethora of research consistently demonstrates that the physical aspects of the classroom environment hold significant sway over students' attitudes, behaviors, and values (Bakhshi, 2019; Khosravi et al., 2021). Elements such as seating arrangements, lighting conditions, and decorations wield a profound impact on students' moral development. Furthermore, the social dynamics inherent within the classroom, including teacher-student interactions, peer relationships, and the presence of prosocial role models, have been found to shape students' moral reasoning and ethical decision-making processes (Hassan et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2022).

Recent studies have emphasized the vital role of integrating moral education and character development into the curriculum as a means of enhancing students' moral values (Johnson & Lee, 2020; Wang et al., 2023). The instructional approaches, teaching strategies, and learning materials employed within the classroom wield considerable influence in promoting positive moral development and nurturing students' ethical principles.

Despite the growing body of research investigating the relationship between the classroom environment and students' moral values, there remains a need to comprehend the specific mechanisms and factors that contribute to this association. Additionally, exploring potential moderating variables such as students' age, cultural background, and socio-economic status can provide valuable insights into the intricacies of this relationship.

By addressing these research gaps and shedding light on the nuances of how the classroom environment impacts students' moral values, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature while offering practical implications for educators and policymakers alike. A deeper understanding of how the

classroom environment influences moral development can inform the design of educational interventions and policies that foster a supportive and nurturing environment, facilitating students' holistic growth.

### Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this study was to explore and analyze the correlation between the classroom environment and the moral values exhibited by secondary school students.

### Research Questions

The following are the research questions of the study:

1. What are the teachers' experiences about the classroom environment in their schools?
2. What are the teachers' views about students' moral values in their schools?
3. What are the teachers' views about the relationship between students' moral values and the classroom environment in their schools?

### Research Methodology

In this study, a quantitative approach was chosen, and a correlational research methodology was employed. The target population consisted of all secondary school teachers teaching in government high schools located in the 28 settled districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Determining the appropriate sample size required considering factors such as precision, representativeness, and data collection feasibility.

Although the researcher's objective was to survey all secondary school teachers in the province quantitatively, conducting a study with the entire population was impractical. Therefore, a decision was made to either use a census or sampling method. In this case, proportional stratified sampling was selected to address the diverse sizes and characteristics of the 28 districts across different regions.

Proportional stratified sampling involves selecting a proportional number of districts from each region based on their representation in the total population. This approach ensures that the sample adequately captures the diversity of districts in the province. The researcher determined specific percentages of districts to include from each region, considering factors such as the desired sample size, representativeness, and available resources for data collection.

By employing proportional stratified sampling, the study aims to obtain a representative sample that can provide insights into the entire population of secondary school teachers in the province. This approach helps overcome the practical challenges of collecting data from all teachers while maintaining the study's validity and generalizability.

Geographical or regional distribution was used to determine the sampling approach for the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The province consists of seven divisions: Malakand (Northern division), Peshawar, Mardan, Hazara, Kohat (Central divisions), and Bannu and DI Khan (Southern divisions), comprising 12, 11, and 5 districts respectively. To ensure an adequate sample size, which typically ranges from 10% to 30% of the population (Cochran, 1977; Krejcie & Morgan, 1970; Aron & Coups, 2019) four districts were selected from the northern division, four from the central divisions, and two from the southern divisions. These ten districts were chosen in a non-random manner. Within three regions, a non-random sample of 1950 secondary school teachers was taken.

The response rate, which indicates the percentage of completed and usable responses received from the total number of questionnaires sent out, was also considered. In this study, the researcher distributed 1950 questionnaires and received 1288 completed responses. The response rate can be calculated as follows:

Response rate = (Number of completed responses / Number of questionnaires sent) × 100

In this case, the response rate would be:  
 Response rate =  $(1288 / 1950) \times 100 = 66.05\%$

The response rate is an important measure in research as it reflects the level of participation and engagement from the targeted population.

**Table 1**

*Population of the study*

| Category                                                                               | Target population | Accessible Population |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Secondary school teachers in all 28 settled districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. | 11652             | 5859                  |

There are 11652 secondary school teachers working in the 28 settled districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Annual School Census Report, 2020–21)

**Table 2**

*Sample of the study*

| Target Population                                                    | Accessible Population               | Accessible Population | Sample |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------|
| Secondary school teachers in:<br>Northern region (Malakand division) | Swat, Shangla, Dir, Chitral         | 2090                  | 478    |
| Central region (Peshawar, Hazara, Mardan and Kohat divisions)        | Peshawar, Mardan, Abbottabad, Kohat | 2688                  | 608    |
| Southern region (DI Khan and Bannu divisions)                        | Bannu, DI Khan                      | 1081                  | 202    |
| Total                                                                |                                     | 5859                  | 1288   |

### Sampling Techniques

A multistage Sampling was used.

**Multistage Sampling:** Multistage sampling involves a combination of different sampling methods. It typically involves selecting clusters or groups in the first stage, followed by sampling individuals within the selected clusters in subsequent stages.

**Stratified Sampling:** The researcher divided the target population (all teachers in the province) into three regions: northern, central, and southern. Each region represents a stratum. By selecting districts from each region, the researcher ensured representation from each stratum. This helped to capture the diversity within the province and obtained a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' views.

**Cluster Sampling:** Within each selected division, the researcher further divided the districts into clusters (groups of districts). For example, the researcher planned to take 4 districts from the northern, 4 districts from the central, and 2 districts from the southern region. By selecting clusters of districts, the researcher simplified the sampling process and made it more feasible to reach a larger number of teachers.

Overall, this sampling approach involved selecting clusters of districts within each region (cluster sampling) and then selecting a sample of teachers from each district (stratified sampling within each cluster). This combination of stratified and cluster sampling allowed the researcher to balance representation across regions while also ensuring manageable access to teachers within the selected districts.

### Instrument of the Study

In order to align with the study's design, the researcher developed a questionnaire for teachers that aimed to assess their perspectives on classroom environment practices and their impact on students' moral values. The questionnaire utilized a five-point Likert scale, allowing teachers to provide their opinions and insights on the subject matter. The questionnaire focused on two key variables: the independent variable being the classroom environment and the dependent variable being the moral values of students.

Comprising 19 statements, the questionnaire specifically targeted teachers at the secondary level. It was meticulously developed by the

researcher to ensure its relevance to the study objectives and content. To establish the questionnaire's reliability, a pilot testing phase was conducted, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .795, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

By employing this questionnaire, the researcher aimed to gather valuable data on teachers' perceptions of the classroom environment and its implications for students' moral values. The carefully designed and tested instrument ensured that the study could effectively examine the relationship between these variables and provide meaningful insights into the topic of interest.

**Table 3**

*Numbers of Items in the Questionnaire*

| S No. | Variables            |              | Components            | No of items |
|-------|----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| 1     | Independent variable |              | Classroom Environment | 5           |
| 2     | Dependent variable   | Moral values | Trustworthiness       | 5           |
| 3     |                      |              | Respect               | 4           |
| 4     |                      |              | Responsibility        | 5           |
| Total |                      |              |                       | 19          |

### Procedure Adopted for Collection of Data

Prior to data collection, formal permission was obtained from the study's supervisor to ensure adherence to ethical guidelines. The data collection process employed the use of a Google Form survey, which allowed for efficient and convenient data gathering. Participants were

duly informed by the researcher about the confidentiality of their identities, emphasizing that their personal information would be treated with utmost confidentiality and anonymity. This approach aimed to instil a sense of trust and encourage honest responses from the participants.

## Results

**Table 4**

*Descriptive statistics of the school environment*

|                       | N   | Minimum | Maximum | M     | SD    |
|-----------------------|-----|---------|---------|-------|-------|
| Basic Facilities      | 353 | 9       | 32      | 22.65 | 4.123 |
| Classroom Environment | 345 | 5       | 25      | 19.86 | 3.585 |

Analysis: the table stated that in school the basic facilities in school and classroom environment help to develop moral values in students.

**Table 5***Descriptive statistics of moral values*

|                     | <i>N</i> | <i>Minimum</i> | <i>Maximum</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|---------------------|----------|----------------|----------------|----------|-----------|
| Trustworthy         | 1574     | 5              | 50             | 33.48    | 12.677    |
| Respect             | 1598     | 4              | 40             | 27.51    | 10.088    |
| Responsibility      | 1593     | 5              | 50             | 34.27    | 12.614    |
| Valid N (list-wise) | 1507     |                |                |          |           |

The table above showed that means (33.48, 27.51, and 34.27) are near the highest scores accordingly which reveals that the hidden curriculum and teaching strategies have a clear effect on the moral values of the students.

## Discussion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between the classroom environment and the moral values of secondary school students. These results align with prior research conducted by Johnson and Lee (2020), Hassan, McLean, and McDowall Clark (2018), and Bakhshi (2019), which also emphasize the influential role of the classroom environment in shaping students' moral development.

Johnson and Lee (2020) conducted a meta-analysis focusing on social studies education and found a positive association between the classroom environment and students' moral values. Their study emphasized the importance of creating a positive and supportive classroom climate that fosters the development of moral values among students.

The work of Hassan, McLean, and McDowall Clark (2018) further supports the current study's findings. They explored the perceptions of teachers and students regarding classroom interactions and moral atmosphere, highlighting the influence of teacher-student interactions on students' moral reasoning and ethical behavior. Their research underscores the role of the classroom environment in shaping students' moral values.

Additionally, Bakhshi (2019) investigated the impact of classroom design on student

engagement and found significant effects of physical aspects such as seating arrangements, lighting, and decoration on students' attitudes, behaviors, and values. This study provides further evidence that the physical environment of the classroom contributes to the development of students' moral values.

While the present study establishes a significant relationship between the classroom environment and students' moral values, it is important to acknowledge that further research is needed to delve into the underlying mechanisms and potential moderating variables. Future studies should consider factors such as students' age, cultural background, and socio-economic status to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how the classroom environment influences moral development.

In conclusion, this research contributes to the existing body of literature by providing empirical evidence of the significant relationship between the classroom environment and the moral values of secondary school students. The findings underscore the importance of creating a positive, inclusive, and engaging classroom environment to foster the development of students' moral values. These insights hold implications for educators and policymakers, highlighting the need to design educational interventions and policies that prioritize the creation of supportive environments promoting ethical and moral development among secondary school students.

## Conclusion

In light of the above findings, a substantial relationship between classroom environment and moral values was noted. The classroom

environment had a greater impact on students' morality. Rural and urban areas were the same in the level of moral values of secondary school students.

## Recommendations

The findings of the study suggest several recommendations for the Ministry of Education and school administrators to consider in order to foster the development of adolescents' morality. Firstly, it is crucial for the Ministry of Education and school heads to ensure that the classroom environment is supportive and conducive to moral development. This includes creating a positive and nurturing atmosphere that promotes ethical values and behaviors among students. The study highlights the significant role of the classroom environment in shaping the moral development of adolescents. Therefore, it is essential to shift the focus of education from solely imparting intellectual knowledge to actively nurturing children's morality. This implies that educational institutions should prioritize the cultivation of moral values alongside academic achievements.

While this study examined the roles of teachers and students in the classroom environment, it is recommended to explore other factors that contribute to creating an optimal classroom environment. Future research should investigate additional elements such as classroom layout, resources, and teaching methodologies to gain a comprehensive understanding of their influence on students' moral development. Furthermore, conducting comparative studies to assess the classroom environment in the public sector would provide valuable insights. Comparing the classroom environments of different schools within the public sector can help identify best practices and areas for improvement, leading to more effective strategies for promoting moral values among students.

Lastly, it is suggested that future research investigates the effect of the classroom

environment on moral values at the higher education level. Understanding how the college or university classroom environment influences the moral development of students can contribute to the design of interventions and policies that promote ethical behavior and values among young adults. In summary, this study recommends that the Ministry of Education and school administrators prioritize the creation of a supportive classroom environment for the moral development of adolescents. Shifting the educational focus to include moral education is essential. Further research is encouraged to explore additional factors influencing the classroom environment, conduct comparative studies in the public sector, and investigate the impact of the classroom environment on moral values at the higher education level. These recommendations aim to enhance educational practices and facilitate the holistic development of students' moral values.

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