



Investigating The Correlation Between School Culture and Social Behavior Among Students in Punjab's Public Secondary Schools

Muhammad Rafi

PhD Scholar, University of Okara, Punjab, Pakistan

Email: rafigms67eb@gmail.com

Dr. Shehzad Ahmed

Assistant Professor Department of Education, University of Okara, Punjab, Pakistan

Email: dr.shehzad@uo.edu.pk

Dr. Muhammad Tahir Khan Farooqi

Assistant Professor Department of Education, University of Okara, Punjab, Pakistan

Email: drtahirfarooqi@uo.edu.pk

Abstract

This study explores the relationship between school culture and the social behaviour of students in secondary schools in Punjab, Pakistan, with a focus on gender differences. It aims to determine how school culture influences students' social behaviour, particularly in terms of gender variations. A quantitative, descriptive research design was employed, using a multistage random sampling technique. The study involved 270 participants, teachers from secondary schools in Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Multan districts. Data were collected through the School Culture Survey (SCS) and the Social Behaviour Inventory (SBI). Pearson correlation, mean, and percentage analyses were applied to the data. The study revealed a medium-level positive correlation ($r = 0.56$) between school culture and social behaviour. Notably, female students exhibited more positive social behaviours than male students. The results suggest that a positive school culture plays a significant role in shaping student behaviour, with a stronger effect on female students. The findings emphasize the importance of fostering a positive school culture to enhance student behaviour. It is recommended that school leadership focus on professional growth and collaborative leadership practices to improve the school culture. Future research should examine how specific elements of school culture impact other student development factors, such as academic performance and emotional balance.

Keywords: School culture, Social behavior, Teachers' perceptions, Collegial Support



Introduction

Education is a key factor in creating people and also working towards the progress of the society. It enhances individual development, allow people to think critically, and adapt and shape a peaceful society. Creative thinking and effective communication are the main skills that students should develop to make their character strong. Nelson and Low (2005) outline the significance of identification of emotional intelligence in students so that they can make effective decisions and can make positive actions. According to Cornwall and Walter (2006), the sole academic approach to education is not satisfactory in contemporary society, and therefore it has to be supplemented with an understanding of the issues of social and emotional aspects of education. Education is the main instrument to reach national objectives, as well as to form human resources (Olatunji, 2024).

School culture is a very important aspect in determining the outcome of education, and it determines the development of an individual and a group of people. Although culture might be conceptually intricate to define, it includes common assumptions, practices, and beliefs of the school population (Hinde, 2014). The culture not only influences the environment of the schools but also the thinking, performance and social behavior of the members. Alvesson (2002) argues that culture is a product and a process which defines the way people perceive and interpret the world around them. Keyton (2005) further narrates that culture is restrictive because it determines the way we understand the world around us. Organizational culture, on the one hand, is the set of norms, values, and knowledge that defines the behavior in an institution (Supriadi, & Sui Pheng 2017). The positive organizational culture promotes teamwork, free flow of ideas, as well as organizational commitment, which eventually leads to a favorable working environment. This culture influences people to act in a certain way that supports strategic objectives of the institution, which ultimately improves the overall performance (Bratianu, 2015).

Positive school culture in terms of education correlates with better performance of the teachers as well as better student achievement. Good school cultures foster teamwork, objective setting, vision, and free communication among employees, hence resulting in improved learning results (Jones, 2012; Taylor & Fratto, 2012). On the contrary, a negative school culture whereby collegiality is low, there is no experimentation and expectations are low inhibits teaching and learning, which results in low academic achievement, and reduced social interaction among the students (Saphier & King, 1985; Deal & Peterson, 2010). Discipline, especially social behavior of students has been a major consideration in ensuring that educational activities run smoothly. Social competency and other positive social behaviors such as conformity to rules and self-reliance are needed to promote inclusion and discourage disruptive behavior (Epps et al., 2003). Nevertheless, lack of social skills may negatively affect the growth of social acceptable behavior, which would result in both academic and social difficulties among students (Jimenez, 2002). It has also been found that there is a strong relationship between negative student behavior and family background, thus family dynamics play a significant role in defining the way adolescents behave (Demaray & Malecki, 2002; Liu, 2003).



While existing literature highlights the importance of school culture in shaping student outcomes, there remains a gap in understanding the specific relationship between school culture and social behavior in the context of Pakistani secondary schools. Most studies have predominantly focused on the impact of school culture on academic performance, with limited attention given to its role in influencing social behavior, particularly in non-Western educational environments. Furthermore, there is a lack of research examining the gender differences in social behavior in relation to school culture, especially in the South Asian context. Theoretical underpinnings of this study are grounded in organizational culture theory (Alvesson, 2002; Keyton, 2005) and social behavior theory (Saphier & King, 1985; Jimenez, 2002). Organizational culture theory suggests that the norms, values, and beliefs shared within an institution profoundly shape the behaviors and interactions of its members, while social behavior theory emphasizes how environmental factors, such as school culture, influence students' social competencies and behaviors. This study aims to bridge these theoretical perspectives by exploring how school culture influences social behavior among students, with a particular focus on gender differences and the unique cultural context of Pakistan.

Objectives of the Study

- 1 To investigate the relationship between the overall culture of the school and the social behaviour of the students at secondary level in Punjab, Pakistan.
- 2 To investigate the impact of gender on the social behaviour of students at secondary level in Punjab, Pakistan.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to analyze the responses of teachers about social behavior of students:

1. There is no significant relationship among of Males and females teachers about their student's school culture at secondary level in Punjab, Pakistan.
2. There is no significant relationship between Males and females teachers about their student's social behaviour at secondary level in Punjab, Pakistan.

Related Literature Review

Culture plays a vital role in the development and progress of the society. It has great influence in the personal development of people, their socialization, and cultural influences on the educational system. The major tool of nurturing the human resources as well as attaining national objectives is through education. Although scholars and researchers recognize the worth and significance of culture, they lack the agreement on the aspect of school culture and effective guidance and counseling (Seashore Louis, & Lee, 2016; Ahmad, Sewani, & Khoso, 2024). The school culture is a mystery despite its research and frequent reference in North America. School culture like weather is something that cannot be controlled by man. This is why it has not been given a lot of attention as it would be one way of growing the school (Bozhani, Momeni, &



Moradi, 2025; Prosser, 1999). The school culture is now a subject of researches and a potential lever as the school administrators seek new ways of improving the student performance and the effectiveness of their schools (Gruenert, 1998; Ohlson, Swanson, Adams-Manning & Byrd, 2016). The culture of a society is determined by the common values and beliefs, and shifts with each generation. The culture has over the years encountered a continuous change as it reacts to the needs of the society. Culture of society is made up of the values and beliefs that are handed down through generations. Culture is a set of practices; basic modes of thinking that give human experience a context and unknowingly shape its perception, reception and appreciation. Culture makes it easier to understand and identify the hidden and complex forces that work under the surface of the human groups and organizations. Culture has been defined as a continuous set of unwritten rules and customs (Deal & Peterson, 1990, Hellriegel & Slocum, 2011). Alvesson (2002) stated that culture is a system of values, beliefs and how individuals define their environment, express their emotions as well as their opinions. In certain situations, culture can be viewed as a process, whereas in other situations, culture can be considered a product. Culture is not only limited but also empowered. Culture is limiting since it is a system or a outlook that restricts our sights and our understanding of what we see which is what Keyton (2005) argues. It is however facilitated by culture since we are able to know what is going on hence we are able to operate in that environment. The diversity of the culture was different. According to Schein, (2010) there are three levels of culture. The first level of civilization is made up of visible and tactile art effects. This stage is characterized by processes and conduct. This level is however difficult to interpret. The espoused level of culture is the second one which revolves around values and beliefs, objectives, goals, rationalizations and ideals. According to Keyton (2005), everything heard, felt, or seen in the organizational experience constitutes at the cultural level. Employees often see the more tangible aspects of organizational life and practices, norms and standards of the organization when they join a new firm. Though assumptions are tolerable, values are ideal, admirable or desirable concepts, strategies, objectives or qualities which eventually lead to organizational behaviour standards. The employees of a business firm may have an opinion about the business, the job they are performing, other staff, and members, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders outside the company or business (Keyton, 2005; Kolachi et al., 2024). The organizational culture created through employee cooperation and association helps to deal with the challenges and issues with motivation (Hellriegel & Slocum, 2011; Akram, Fatima, & Ahmad, 2024).

Culture and school culture

Culture has been given different definitions by different traditions due to its abstract nature. Many scholars with different views about the culture speak about it. Functionalist theorists hold a different view of culture. Although there is the idea of cultural consensus, Durkheim argues that cultural heterogeneity and sharing do lead to the order and structure of the society.



Durkheim got much criticism regarding his opinion. A lot of individuals are the representatives of a particular social culture, be it communal, national, or tribal (Lincoln, & Tierney, 2004). To overcome this cultural disorder, Vaisey (2009) has come up with a two-step process that sought to bring together diverse perspectives and applies the rider on an elephant metaphor to refer to the fact that the rider is our knowledge about culture and how this knowledge may affect our behavior. The fear of external forces is not something one can manage and has no complete knowledge about.

Several traditions and definitions add complexity and difficulty to the culture, and scholars and theorists cannot agree on one and precise definition of the school culture. This situation has led to the efforts of several scholars to categorize civilizations either in terms of language, geography or theme (Baldwin, 2006). Some of the examples of the subcategories of culture include the local, community, national, school, and organizational cultures. They further divide into smaller groups although these groups are the most important cultural groups. These tribes have numerous cultures within. Deal & Peterson (1990) have considered school cultures as the mishmash of conventions and customs which have been cultivated over time as the students, parents, teachers, and executives collaborate and cope with the crises and successes. They have a special and outstanding role in shaping the thought of people in a specific circumstance, i.e. teachers, parents, students, communities and numerous others.

The influence of school culture on academic performance is a topic which has been investigated by researchers over the course of many years (Hoy, & Herrmann, 2008). It is the leader of the building who plays a significant role in the development and encouragement of the school culture and school culture is among the key determinants of the outcomes of the educational efforts. The transference and school cultures of the type and features of these cultures are passed onto the next generation, who consist of parents, students, teachers, and communities, by the employees of the organization. Examples of stakeholders involved in addressing and solving the problems of the organization include teachers, parents, students and the administrative staff. According to Deal and Peterson (1990), organizational barriers have to be surmounted and current ones fulfilled with the involvement of parents, educators, students, and communities that have to set the main components that are values and traditions.

Cultures in schools are unique and worth mentioning. They are created and remodeled by people who are concerned about individuals in a given circumstance; such as teachers, students, parents, and communities. According to Deal and Peterson (1990), school cultures are amalgamation of conventions and norms that have been developed with time in which instructors, students, parents, and executives collaborate in an effort to handle emergencies and achievements. The cultures in schools play a significant role in achieving the goal. It never stops transforming the way people think, feel and act (Hongboontri, 2003), Hongboontri and Chaokongjakra, 2011; Schien, 2010). School culture was an important component, as found in many other researches (Beaudoin & Taylor, 2004; Jurasaitė-Harbinson & Rex, 2010), which determined that school



culture covered the feelings, thoughts, and actions of people and worked and changed their thoughts.

Collegial support

Collegiality is the term that describes professional collaboration and constructive relationships between the teachers (Marzano, 2005). It improves good and positive working relationships which were the main key to getting a favorable working environment. Successful schools utilize a variety of collegial practices, which can be classified into four primary categories, which include collaborative creation, design, review and preparation of teaching materials, peer instructional process teaching as well as sustained focused discussion of instructional practice (Marzano, 2003). The practices also form part of the continuous development of schools since they foster a high sense of community within the staff, lay down norms of action and allow teachers to participate in the governance and decision making.

Building an organizational culture of collaboration helps to decrease the isolation of the teachers and opens up more opportunities of teaching strategies and support. Studies conducted by Fullan (2016) indicate that teamwork increases teacher enthusiasm, effectiveness and being willing to a new idea. Another point brought out by Barth (1990) is that the benefits of professional relationships between teachers are quite numerous such as increased satisfaction with their career and their greater dedication to the implementation of new ideas. Collegial relationships among teachers also lead to increased morale and levels of trust which is beneficial in the growth of a teacher and further participation in education. Also, these relationships may contribute to improved student motivation and performance because students perform well when they are exposed to an environment where the adults collaborate and work side by side with each other.

Marzano (2005) also adds that collegiality at the workplace is characterized by professionalism and honesty. Teachers that are willing to discuss their problems, appreciate each other, and engage in a critical analysis of instructional practices in a positive way have higher chances of succeeding (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2000). Teachers need to be given ample chances to engage in meaningful partnerships which can only be achieved by giving them chances to work on important projects. The social interaction with colleagues is a very significant factor to the professional development since this is where social learning occurs and where new skills and behaviors are acquired. As Fullan (2014) points out, the capability of teachers to adopt new practices is strongly associated with the quality of the collaboration with peers and their professional pleasure.

Deal and Kennedy (1983) argue that collegial relationships create the openness to change because people strive to establish a personal relationship with others. Without collegiality, though, the likelihood of helping to sustain change is low in teachers because they tend to sabotage the success of school reform efforts (Corbett, Dawson, and Firestone, 1984). The administrators should therefore focus on building collegial relationships in school. According to Schlechty and Cole (1991), the process of introducing changes may affect teacher competition



and that school leaders must therefore encourage teachers to feel collegiality as a part of their leader role (Wong, 2013).

Research Methodology

The main purpose of the research was to evaluate the school culture of the Pakistani Punjab province school network and to analyze their linkage with the social behavior of the students. The study was quantitative in nature with descriptive survey design where it used a survey questionnaire as a data collection tool. The population that was targeted was all the public secondary schools in the geographical area of Punjab. Multi-stage random sample sampling was used to identify a sample of 270 teachers. Two five-point Likert scale responses, the School Culture Survey (SCS) and the Social Behavior Inventory (SBI) were used to collect data and these two questionnaires were pilot-tested to verify their validity and reliability. The coefficients of reliability of the SCS and SBI were also derived and they were found to be satisfactory which validates the consistency of the instruments.

The researcher used personal visits to the sampled teachers and presented the questionnaires to them to assist in data collection. In these visits, the researcher provided clarification on any query and also addressed any concerns brought up by the participants. High response rate was achieved through this personal interaction where 270 teachers filled the surveys with 157 male and 113 female respondents. Some of the instruments were based on expert evaluation to determine their reliability and validity. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaires and this was carried out using the latest version of SPSS. The validation was performed by using expert feedback. Different statistical tests were done to check the reliability of the instruments. In this study factor analysis of the School Culture Survey, nine items were eliminated as they were low-reliability items and twenty-six items were used in the study. On the same note, in the factor analysis of the Social Behavior Inventory, thirty-two items were rejected because of low levels of reliability, and nineteen items were incorporated in the study. The final pilot study reliability of both instruments is below:

Table 1
Cronbach's Alpha

Instruments	Cronbach's Alpha
School Culture Survey (SCS)	0.725
Social Behavior Inventory (SBI)	0.743

Findings

The study's findings have been presented from various perspectives, as outlined below.



Demographic Details of Respondents

The demographic details of the respondents are given in Table 1: Gender (Male = 58.1%, Female = 41.9%), Academic Qualification (BA/BSc = 6.7%, MA/MSc/BS = 80.4%, M. Phil./MS = 12.2, PhD = 0.7) and Professional Qualification (B. Ed = 52.2, M. Ed = 47, and Others = 0.7%).

Table 2
Demographic Details of the Respondents

Factors	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male_	157	58.1%
Female_	113	41.9%
Total	270	100%
Academic Qualification		
BA/B.Sc_	18	6.7%
M.A/M.Sc_	217	80.4%
M.Phil.	33	12.2%
PhD_	02	0.7%
Total	270	100%
Professional Qualification		
B.Ed.	141	52.2
M.Ed.	127	47.0
Other	2	0.8
Total	270	100

Table 4
Comparison of School Culture on a Gender Basis

Factor	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t- value	p- value	Effect Size
School Culture	Male	157	4.3366	0.284	- 2.131	0.034	0.263
	Female	113	4.4100	0.271			
Total		270					

Based on table 2, the mean does not follow the same value in males and females because the p-value is.000. The standard deviation (S.D.) of males (.360) is lower than the female (1.086).



Thus, the organizational climate of the male teacher is superior because it is apparent in the mean values. The d value of Cohen is .606 hence a medium effect size.

Table 5
Comparison Students Social Behavior on a Gender Basis

Factor	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Effect Size
Social Behavior of Students	Male	157	4.0235	0.411	-1.122	0.137
	Female	113	4.0823	0.441		
Total				270		

Table 5 clearly shows that the mean differs between males and females, with a p-value of .000. Males have a lower standard deviation (SD) (.360) than females (1.086). As a result, the organizational climate of male teachers is better, as seen by the mean values. Cohen's d value is 0.606, indicating a medium impact size.

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

The results of this research indicate that two of the null hypotheses have been rejected, revealing a significant positive correlation between school culture and student social behavior in the public secondary schools of the Punjab province of Pakistan. The findings suggest that a robust school culture is intricately linked to the development of constructive social behavior among students. Positive school culture can be explained as a context in which teachers and administrators do not hold divergent interests in terms of their vision, values, and practices. Teachers and administrators working in such settings have higher chances of collectively operating, appreciating the efforts of each other and commemorating the achievements, a factor that, in its turn, boosts the overall school performance (Peterson, & Deal, 2009; Ahmad, Sewani, & Ali, 2024). This is a sign of the significance of a cohesive school culture in the attainment of academic and behavioral achievement (Wuletu, Hussein, & Bareke, 2024).

This study demonstrates a significant relationship between school culture and social behavior, aligning with McKinney (2022), who identified substantial connections between school cultures and improved educational outcomes. The research conducted by Kraft has emphasized on the role played by the school environment such as safety and academic performance which is the key element that most people think of as the essence of school culture and effective feedback (Ahmad, Noorani, & Sewani, 2025). It is because of the positive school culture that enables these environments to develop better relationships between teachers, students, and the administration that result in improved social behavior and overall educational performance. The research



confirms the fact that school culture can be structured in a way that it is correlated to positive values and students will tend to exhibit proper social behavior and become more active in academic works.

Another interesting finding related to gender difference in male and female schools is the school culture of the schools. A significant difference was achieved between the school culture present in male and female schools whereby female schools had stronger and positive school culture. This is consistent with the prior studies that female-oriented schools are more likely to have more supportive, nurturing, and collaborative environments that lead to having positive school culture through job satisfaction (Denson, 2021; Ahmad, Noorani, & Ali, 2024). Conversely, male schools can occasionally have a more competitive or individualistic environment and this can influence the general school culture.

It is nonetheless noteworthy that the study did not identify any significant difference in social behavior between male and female students in public secondary institutions. There were no observable differences in the social behavior of male and female students, suggesting that despite variations in school culture, the social competencies of students in male and female institutions are comparable. This observation could be an indication of the larger societal situation within which these schools exist that social behavioral norms are not necessarily shaped only by the school setting but rather by the community and family set up. Denson (2021) also noted that school culture can influence the behavior of the students, but other external factors, including family set up and societal norms are also important to develop the social behavior.

The modest yet significant link identified between school culture and student social behavior in this study indicates that while school culture influences student behavior, it is not the sole determinant of learners' conduct. Additional elements that may influence pupils' social behavior include familial environments, peer relationships, and community norms. Past studies have confirmed this idea asserting that the behavior of students is influenced by a multi-factor interaction of both internal and external factors (Demaray and Malecki, 2002; Ochoa, 2007).

The research supports the notion that healthy school culture plays an important role in the growth of desirable social behavior among students. It, however, also highlights the necessity of putting into consideration other issues that can form the behavior of students. Future studies ought to cover the contribution of other external factors like family background, community culture, and peer interactions to the social behavior of students. These dynamics can be more effectively understood, which will help educators and policymakers implement interventions that ensure the provision of desirable social behavior among students.

Conclusion

The findings of this research indicate a robustly affirmative school culture within the public secondary schools of the Punjab province in Pakistan. Moreover, a notable disparity existed in the school culture between the institutions for males and females, with the latter exhibiting a superior overall environment. The study further demonstrated that students attending these



institutions exhibit commendable social behavior, with no notable distinctions observed between male and female students regarding their social conduct. The results suggest that the culture within educational institutions plays a significant role in shaping the social behaviors of students, regardless of gender.

Recommendations

- School leadership bodies should be keen on promoting positive school culture through giving importance to teacher professional growth so that there is a continuous development in their teaching.
- The administration and headmasters are to foster learning alliances amongst the staff members to enhance teamwork and exchange best teaching methods.
- Collegial support among school members should be encouraged to establish a group atmosphere where the teachers respect each other and collaborate.
- Team leadership is to be stressed. The school leaders are supposed to engage teachers in the decision making and create a sense of responsibility in improving the school.
- The culture of schools should also be evaluated regularly in order to trace the progress made and how the culture can be improved further in order to keep the school culture in a manner that supports the academic and social growth of the schools.
- The schools must also provide avenues of free communication and feedback among employees to enhance the school culture and constantly work on the arising challenges.

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