Social Environment At University: Investigating The Impact On Students' Motivation And Engagement

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Abstract

This was a quantitative study that investigated the impact of social environment on the university students' motivation and engagement. The sample for the study has been selected from five universities of the Punjab. The sample for the study comprising 500 BS Honors students from Education departments have been selected with the help of the Cluster sampling. The data have been collected with the help of a close-ended questionnaire adopted from Mamoona (2022) for investigating the students' perspectives regarding social environment of the university. This instrument comprised of 10 items. Whereas the students' motivation and engagement have been measured with the help of a questionnaire adopted from Mamoona (2022) comprising 20 items. The data has been analyzed with the help of Pearson's r and Regression analysis. The results revealed that a statistically significant and moderate positive effect of the social environment has been found on the university students' motivation and engagement.

Introduction

There is a famous saying that "A man who is shaped by his environment will be conscious and knowledgeable in creating a better environment". It means that environment has a direct impact on the learning of students that can be negative or positive (Yang et al., 2017). Studies (Lippman, 2010; Kuuskorpi & González, 2011) have shown that the improved physical and social conditions enhance the achievement of students.

This research study aimed at highlighting the factors of school environment that impact the motivation and engagement of students. The 21st Century is the age of innovations and modifications. Now is the era of new dimensions that have opened new ways of learning. The relationship between school environment and learners in both social and physical aspects directly contributes to the learners' development and learning (Ali & Hassan, 2018).

It is a fact that comfortable and peaceful school environment is very crucial to students in ensuring their effective learning. Students use to spend most of their day time in schools. It is very important for them to have a social and physical school environment that guarantees their development and creativities. The research study highlighted the physical factors associated with school environment and social factors associated with school environment. Moreover, the perceptions of students regarding their motivation and engagement will also be assessed (Akomolafe & Adesua, 2018). Physical and social environment in a school has a direct impact on the learning of students. A healthy and suitable environment of school becomes an important factor in supporting the learning of students. School environment

includes learning programs, a healthy, comfortable and safe environment, space, social participation and teaching that is diversified. School environment has a strong impact on learners. Physical environment in which students learn can have a direct impact on the learning conditions of students (Hassan et al., 2018). Many researchers (Chan, 1996; Kuuskorpi & González, 2011) have been set to debate the concept of whether the learner should adapt to the environment or whether the environment should adapt to students. But the only answer that suits to the question is that the learning environment shapes and influences the learner.

The concept of school space highlights furniture solutions, technology and working methods. Physical environment is linked with proper reflective teaching, creative learning and interactive learning environment. Modified and flexible learning spaces enhance learning and development in all dimensions (Malik & Rizvi, 2018). Social environment reflects positive student-teacher interaction and positive relationship in school. Teachers are considered to be the best persons to assess, shape and mold the behaviors of students. They can also shape the flexible school environments that are comfortable for students to learn in a better way (Kidger et al., 2012).

Social environment of school includes student-teacher interaction and student's interaction with school environment help to stimulate senses of students and they are more encouraged to learn in a creative and innovative style. Interesting learning experiences also ensure active participation and involvement of students' process (Lee, 2012).

Instructional techniques and innovations also require the positive physical environment of school because it helps in class and space utilization, extra-curricular activities and technological use. It helps in better understanding and learning of students when they take interest in difficult concepts. Educational planning process works smoothly if there are adequate facilities and positive physical environment (Kweon et al., 2017).

It was a quantitative research in which researcher aimed to identify and highlight environmental factors associated with students' motivation and engagement. For conducting the research, researcher used quantitative survey. It provided a way forward for school administrators to open new dimensions and facilitate learning by upgrading environment (Opdenakker & Minnaert, 2011). Secondary school students are grown up kids and they prefer to learn in an environment that is free and secure for them. An environment that enables students to learn through social interaction is preferred by the students at secondary level. Secondary school students love to be the speakers, listeners, readers, writers and thinkers (Lawrence & Vimala, 2012).

Therefore, the need of the hour was to get the perceptions of students regarding their preferred school environment. Secondary level students need physical facilities such as labs, grounds, technological resources and various gadgets. Moreover, social environment of classroom that is flexible and maintains the social and psychological structure of the classroom helps students in academic achievement. The research study aimed at studying the factors that are more contributing to students' learning (Akiri, 2013). The factors which are associated with physical and social environment of secondary schools were explored by the researcher. Moreover, the researcher intended to assess the impact of physical and social environment of school on the motivation and engagement of students. This research study examined the factors related to physical environment of school as well social environment of school that impact the motivation and engagement of secondary school students (Yang et al., 2017).

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Social environment of school includes student-teacher interaction and student's interaction with learning environment help to stimulate senses of students and they are more encouraged to learn in a creative and innovative style. Interesting learning experiences also ensure active participation and involvement of students' process (Purkait, 2019).

The learners learning through social interaction are considered to be active and engaged learners. Secondary school students love to be the speakers, listeners, readers, writers and thinkers. Social interaction is needed not only in students but teachers as well (Brooks, 2011). It helps to create a positive social school environment in which teachers cooperate with each other regarding students' learning and activities. The most accepted school environment that is social is constructive learning environment. Socially accepted school environment helps teachers and learners to create an environment that is dynamic, interactive, according to students' needs and learning pace (Chuang, 2014).

Learning environment that is more collaborative and teachers work in cooperation with other teachers in planning activities enhance student engagement. Teachers share ideas, plan lesson, improve teaching strategies and hence help students to be active learners. Social factors of school environment also involve effective teaching strategies adopted by the teachers' to produce well performing students (Hill & Epps, 2010). Akiri (2013) conducted a descriptive study in public secondary schools of Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to highlight the impact of teachers' effectiveness on students' academic achievement at secondary level in public schools of Nigeria. A sample of 300 teachers was selected for data collection. The findings of the study concluded that teachers' effectiveness and qualification contributes to create a positive social environment that is a predictor of students' academic qualification. The study recommendations highlighted that government should provide adequate facilities for teachers such as instructional materials, staff rooms,

professional training, and an adequate provision of seats for creating a better teaching environment (Hurst et al., 2013).

Classroom environment that is more social and accepted is preferred by the students and teachers to have more academic achievement, engagement and motivation. Raviv, Raviv, & Reisel (1990) conducted a study to get the perceptions of teachers and students regarding their preferred classroom environment in Israel. A sample of 2,347 students was selected from 78 classes in 43 public schools and 78 teachers who were all female teachers with 12 years of teaching experience (Matthews et al., 2011). The study scale measured the responses of teachers and students regarding school environment. The social factors of school environment included in the survey scale were affiliation, involvement, teacher support, competition, task orientation, order, organization, rule clarity, innovation, and teacher control (Akiri, 2013). The study findings concluded that teachers and students perceive social environment of classroom differently. Both have different perceptions regarding the ideal classroom environment as well. The findings highlighted the perceptions of teachers regarding teacher support as more than students. Teachers found themselves more supportive and establish self-reliance among students. Moreover, the findings have implications for policy makers to provide suitable conditions for a preferred school environment that is ideal for teachers as well as students as highlighted by the perceptions of students and teachers (Ryan & Patrick, 2011).

Social factors of school environment also involve effective teaching strategies adopted by the teachers' to create an effective learning environment and produce well performing students. Akiri & Ugborugbo (2009) conducted a descriptive study in public secondary schools of Delta State in Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to highlight the impact of teachers' effectiveness on students' academic achievement at secondary level in 361 public schools of Nigeria. A sample of 979 teachers including 450 male teachers and 519 female

teachers was selected for data collection. The findings of the study concluded that teachers' effectiveness and qualification contributes to create a positive social environment that is a predictor of students' academic qualification. The study recommendations highlighted that government should provide adequate facilities for teachers such as instructional materials, staff rooms, professional training, and an adequate provision of seats for creating a better teaching environment (Ahmad, 2017).

Classrooms are social places and students learn collaboratively and cooperatively in a social environment. As compared to traditional classrooms, students in a collaborative environment are more organized. Teachers take care of students needs and social interaction helps students to create a learning environment that is conducive to more engagement (Brooks, 2011). Positive social environment of classroom is created more with the help of teachers. Teachers support students and motivated them to achieve academic efficacy. Social environment helps students to be self-regulated, confident and have self-control that enables them to have good relationships with teacher and other students (Hurst et al., 2013).

Many efforts have been made to provide students and environment that can be helpful in their learning and achievement. Social learning environment enhances students experience and engagement more towards the achievement of goals. Social learning, social interaction and social belongingness help students to maintain good relations with others because classroom is a mini social system (Lawrence & Vimala, 2012). Students get fed up by daily attending lecture. It is the need and demand of child psychology to learn in a social and interactive environment. Children learn better when they engage in social interaction. A study was conducted by Hurst, Wallace and Nixon (2013) to get perceptions of students regarding social interaction and learning by cooperating with one another. The study findings concluded that social interaction improves student learning and knowledge. It was also discovered that it also

enhanced students' critical thinking skill and problem solving ability (Akiri, 2013).

Meaningful environment can contribute to the success of students. At the same time, the failure of students is also attributed with the school environment. A research study was conducted by Anderson et al. (2004) to measure 3 factors that are associated with school environment. Participation, engagement and task completion of students are directly associated with school environment. The purpose of the study was to find out relationship between school environmental factors and motivation and engagement of students of grade 12. The results concluded that social environment of schools impact students' motivation and behavior (Lee, 2012).

Most of the schools are based on a one-way interactive process where teacher just deliver a lecture irrespective of the fact that children learn according to their own pace. One-way communication from the teacher to student makes it very ambiguous for students to learn difficult concepts. The teacher is there to read, write and think for students' learning. But with the passage of time, the schools' social environment is changing. Now students prefer to learn by cooperating with other students and learn by interacting with teacher. The social environment of schools is changing from one-way communication to a two-way communicative process where students and teachers learn by sharing ideas (Hassan et al., 2018).

Classroom participation is very important for students to learn. Teachers are changing their pedagogical ways and teaching styles to make school environment more socially accepted and engaging for students. The research Chuang (2014) conducted a study to highlight the importance of technology-supported schools in enhancing the motivation and engagement of students and teachers. It was an experimental research study and the researcher participated as an instructor (Yang, 2017). The aim of the researcher was to highlight the fact that learning environment helps to promote learning and motivation of students. The study concluded

and explained that technologically advanced school environments increase collaboration and participation of students to support learning. It was found that school activities and feedback was a great help to students to learn difficult concepts easily. Students come from different backgrounds and have different learning styles. The teaching methods can improve the motivation and engagement of students. Moreover, the study results concluded that pedagogical change and environmental impact can create a better school environment for learners (Ali & Hassan, 2018).

A study was conducted by Ahmad et al., (2017) to identify the student teacher interaction and learning environment towards the learning of students. It was a quantitative study that used a survey method to measure the concepts. The basic purpose behind the research was that Malaysian students' interest in science was declining. So, the researchers set out to investigate the reasons behind that problem. The researchers used four questionnaires to collect data from a sample of 400 biology students. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze data. The results of the study showed that certain factors contribute to the learning of students such as physical environment and teacher characteristics. There was found a significant relationship between students-teacher interaction and suitable learning environment with learning of students. Moreover, the multiple regression results revealed that learning environment strongly and significantly contributes to students' learning (Ahmad et al., 2017). As far as the literature is concerned related to the Pakistani context, there

was a grey area due to which the current study has been conducted to update the existed domain of knowledge.

Methodology

This was a quantitative study that investigated the impact of social environment on the university students' motivation and engagement. The sample for the study has been selected from five universities of the Punjab. The sample for the study comprising 500 BS Honors students from Education departments have been selected with the help of the Cluster sampling. The data have been collected with the help of a close-ended questionnaire adopted from Mamoona (2022) for investigating the students' perspectives regarding social environment of the university. This instrument comprised of 10 items. Whereas the students' motivation and engagement have been measured with the help of a questionnaire adopted from Mamoona (2022) comprising 20 items.

Results

The data has been analyzed with the help of Pearson's r and Regression analysis. The detail is as under:

RQ 1   Is there any significant impact of social environment on the university students' motivation and engagement?

Ho: There is no significant impact of social environment on the university students' motivation and engagement.

Table 1 Correlation of social environment with the students' motivation and engagement

	Physical environment	Motivation & Engagement
Physical environment	1	.511
Motivation & Engagement		1

Note: N=500; $p < 0.05$; Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The results of the Pearson's r show a positively significant and moderate relationship of social environment with the students' motivation and engagement as $r = .511$ with $p = .000$ which is less than 0.05.

Table 2 Regression Analysis to measure impact of social environment of on the motivation and engagement of students

	B	Standardized Beta	R Square	df	F	Sig.
(Constant)	2.07					
		.45	.206	498	129.3	.000
Social Environment	.385					

Predictor (constant): Social Environment
Dependent Variable: Motivation & Engagement

After the confirmation of the relationship shown in Table 1, the Linear regression was run on the data. The results can be seen that 45% variance has been depicted in social environment about the variation with students' motivation and engagement. Furthermore, the F= 129.3 with p=.000 which is less than 0.05 show the fitness of the model. The results depicts the significant moderate effect of social environment on the students' motivation and engagement as the $\beta^\wedge$ =.45 with p =.000 which is less than 0.05. That means the "Ho: There is no significant impact of social environment on the university students' motivation and engagement." was statistically rejected based on the results.

Conclusion
This was a quantitative study that investigated the impact of social environment on the university students' motivation and engagement. The sample for the study has been selected from five universities of the Punjab. The sample for the study comprising 500 BS Honors students from Education departments have been selected with the help of the Cluster sampling. The data have been collected with the help of a close-ended questionnaire adopted from Mamoona (2022) for investigating the students' perspectives regarding social environment of the university. This instrument comprised of 10 items. Whereas the students' motivation and engagement have been measured with the help of a questionnaire adopted from Mamoona (2022) comprising 20 items. The results revealed that a statistically significant and moderate positive effect of the social environment has been found on the university students' motivation and engagement. Based on the results, it has been recommended that the universities should provide the conducive social environment for the students learning so that they may remain motivated and engaged in learning to the maximum extent.

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