

Higher Secondary School Students' Perceived School Environment

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Abstract

The school environment significantly influences the academic achievements, psychological well-being, and overall development of higher secondary students. This study examines students' perceptions of their school environment, focusing on key factors such as gender, locality, type of institution, place of stay, medium of instruction, parental education, and parental occupation. Data were collected from 753 students in Villupuram and Cuddalore districts using the School Environment Scale developed by Kulkarni Ramesh Keshavarao (2010). The results indicate that female and urban students perceive a better school environment compared to their male and rural counterparts. However, no significant differences were observed based on the type of institution (government vs. private), place of stay (home vs. hostel), or medium of instruction (Tamil vs. English). Students with college-educated parents and those whose parents are engaged in business report a more positive school environment. These findings underscore the importance of creating inclusive and supportive school environments to enhance student experiences and outcomes.

Keywords: School Environment, Higher Secondary Students, Gender Differences, Educational Context, Student Perceptions.

Introduction

The school environment plays a crucial role in shaping students' academic achievements, psychological well-being, and overall development. For higher secondary school students, who are at a transitional stage of adolescence and preparing for pivotal academic milestones, the school environment significantly influences their learning experiences and future aspirations. A supportive and positive school environment fosters academic engagement, promotes social interaction, and enhances emotional resilience, whereas a hostile or unsupportive environment can lead to stress, anxiety, and disengagement from academic activities (Eccles & Roeser, 2011).

The perception of the school environment is subjective and varies among students based on factors such as teacher-student relationships, peer interactions, infrastructure, and the availability of resources. Understanding students' perceptions of their school environment is essential for educators, administrators, and policymakers to create nurturing spaces that enhance learning outcomes and well-being. This study seeks to explore the perceived school environment among higher secondary students, focusing on factors that contribute to positive and negative perceptions, and its implications for academic and psychological outcomes.

Literature Review

The school environment has been extensively studied as a determinant of students' academic success and emotional well-being. Research suggests that students' perceptions of their school environment are shaped by multiple dimensions, including teacher support, peer relationships, physical infrastructure, and school policies. For instance, teacher-student relationships characterized by warmth, encouragement, and fairness

significantly enhance students’ motivation and academic performance (Wentzel, 1998). Similarly, supportive peer relationships contribute to a sense of belonging and reduce the likelihood of academic and social anxiety (Ryan, 2000).

A positive school climate, defined by safety, inclusivity, and respect, is associated with higher levels of student engagement and lower incidences of behavioral problems. Cohen et al. (2009) emphasize that schools with a nurturing climate promote not only academic success but also the development of social and emotional competencies. On the other hand, negative perceptions of the school environment, such as experiences of bullying, lack of teacher support, or inadequate facilities, have been linked to poor academic outcomes and mental health issues (Thapa et al., 2013).

The role of infrastructure in shaping students’ perceptions of their school environment has also been highlighted in various studies. Adequate classroom space, availability of learning materials, and recreational facilities contribute to a conducive learning environment (Uline & Tschannen-Moran, 2008). Conversely, overcrowded classrooms, lack of basic amenities, and poorly maintained facilities can negatively impact students’ attitudes toward school.

Cultural and contextual factors also play a role in shaping students’ perceptions of their school environment. In collectivist cultures, such as India, the emphasis on community and social relationships may influence how students perceive peer and teacher interactions (Hofstede, 1986). Understanding these cultural nuances is critical for designing interventions that address specific needs and challenges within the school context.

Efforts to improve the school environment have focused on fostering positive relationships, enhancing infrastructure, and implementing policies that promote inclusivity and student well-being. Studies suggest that interventions aimed at improving teacher training, peer mediation programs, and student counseling services can significantly enhance students’ perceptions of their school environment and their overall school experience (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009).

Methodology

Normative Survey Method has been used, for collection of data from Higher Secondary Students of Villupuram and Cuddalore districts of Tamilnadu state.

Tools used in the Study

School Environment Scale, developed and validated by Kulkarni Ramesh Keshavarao (2010).

Table No. 1

Mean and SD scores of School Environment of students of Higher Secondary Schools

Sample and its sub-samples		N	Mean	SD
Entire sample		753	30.82	7.204
Gender	Male	338	29.80	7.857
	Female	415	31.65	6.517
Locality	Rural	390	30.33	7.724
	Urban	363	31.35	6.569
Type of School	Govt. school	396	30.78	6.811
	Private school	357	30.86	7.625
Place of Stay	Stayed at-Hostel	105	29.73	7.788
	Stayed at-Home	648	30.99	7.095
Medium of Instruction	Tamil	438	31.09	6.942
	English	315	30.44	7.548
Parental Education	Secondary level	154	31.25	7.129
	Higher Secondary level	428	29.76	7.471
	College level	171	33.07	5.960

Parental Occupation	Cooley	236	30.52	7.631
	Agriculture	164	30.35	6.835
	Business	186	31.81	6.490
	Employee	167	30.59	7.637

The School Environment of Higher Secondary Students is good (M=30.82).

The mean value for the sub sample of :

Gender of students of Higher Secondary Schools indicates that Female students are having better School Environment than Male students.

Locality of students of Higher Secondary Schools indicates that urban students are having better School Environment than Rural students.

Institutional Type of students of Higher Secondary Schools indicates that Private school students are having better School Environment than Govt. school students.

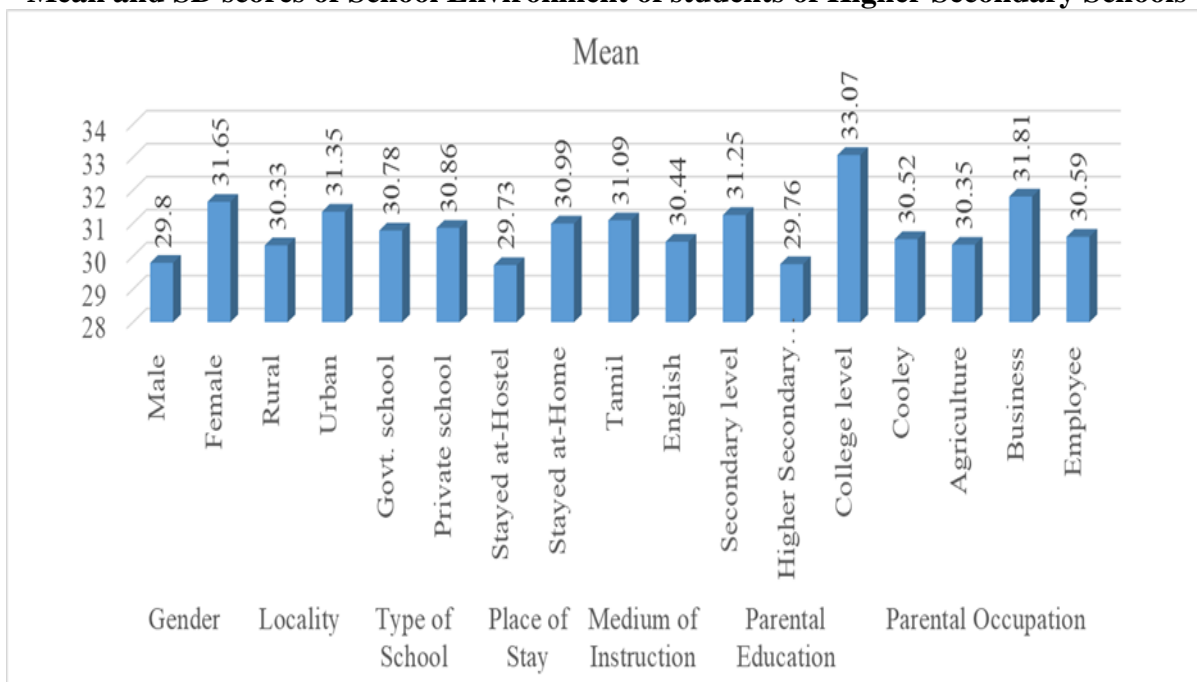
Place of stay of students of Higher Secondary Schools indicates that Home stayed students are having better School Environment than Hostel stayed students.

Medium of students of Higher Secondary Schools indicates that Tamil medium students are having better School Environment than English medium students.

Parental Education of students of Higher Secondary Schools indicates that students with College level Educated Parents are having better School Environment than students with parents of School level Education and Secondary level education.

Parental Occupation of students of Higher Secondary Schools indicates that students whose Parents are doing Business are having better School Environment than students whose parents are in other occupations like Employee, Cooley and Agriculture.

Figure No.1
Mean and SD scores of School Environment of students of Higher Secondary Schools



Null hypothesis

There is no significance in difference between Male and Female students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their School Environment.

The "t" value is computed to test the proposed Null hypothesis.

Table No.2
Variation in School Environment scores of students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their Gender

Sub-Samples	N	Mean	SD	Calculated t-value	State of Significance at 0.05 level
Male	338	29.80	7.857	3.464	Significant
Female	415	31.65	6.517		

As the 't' value is found to be significant , the framed null hypothesis is rejected.

Null hypothesis

There is no significance in difference between Rural and Urban students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their School Environment.

The "t" value is computed to test the proposed Null hypothesis.

Table No.3
Variation in School Environment scores of students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their Locality

Sub-Samples	N	Mean	S D	Calculate d t-value	Significance
Rural	390	30.33	7.724	1.971	Significant
Urban	363	31.35	6.569		

As the 't' value is found to be significant , the framed null hypothesis-23 is rejected.

Null hypothesis

There is no significance in difference between Government and Private Higher Secondary Students related with their School Environment.

The "t" value is computed to test the proposed Null hypothesis.

Table No. 4
Variation in School Environment scores of students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their Type of Institution

Sub-Samples	N	Mean	SD	Calculated t-value	State of Significance at 0.05 level
Govt.	396	30.78	6.811	1.40	Not significant
Private	357	30.86	7.625		

As the 't' value is not found to be significant , the framed null hypothesis is accepted.

Null hypothesis

There is no significance in difference between Day scholar and Hostel staying students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their School Environment.

The "t" value is computed to test the proposed Null hypothesis.

Table No. 5

Variation in School Environment scores of students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their place of stay

Sub-Samples	N	Mean	SD	Calculate d t-value	State of Significance at 0.05 level
Hostel	105	29.73	7.788	1.557	Not significant
Home	648	30.99	7.095		

As the 't' value is not found to be significant , the framed null hypothesis-25 is accepted.

Null hypothesis

There is no significance in difference between Tamil and English Medium of Higher Secondary Schools related with their School Environment.

The "t" value is computed to test the proposed Null hypothesis.

Table No. 6

Variation in School Environment scores of students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their Medium of study

Sub-Samples	N	Mean	S D	Calculated t-value	State of Significance at 0.05 level
Tamil	438	31.09	6.942	1.201	Not significant
English	315	30.44	7.548		

As the 't' value is not found to be significant , the framed null hypothesis-26 is accepted.

Findings of the Deferential analysis

There is significance in difference between Male and Female students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their School Environment.

There is significance in difference between Rural and Urban students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their School Environment.

There is no significance in difference between Government and Private Higher Secondary Students related with their School Environment.

There is no significance in difference between Day scholar and Hostel staying students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their School Environment.

There is no significance in difference between Tamil and English Medium of Higher Secondary Schools related with their School Environment.

Conclusion



This study highlights the multifaceted nature of higher secondary students' perceptions of their school environment and its influence on their academic and emotional well-being. The findings reveal that female and urban students perceive a better school environment compared to their male and rural counterparts, emphasizing the role of gender and locality in shaping these perceptions. Moreover, students with college-educated parents and those whose parents are involved in business report a more positive school environment, underscoring the impact of parental education and occupation on students' experiences. Interestingly, no significant differences were observed in perceptions based on the type of institution (government vs. private), place of stay (home vs. hostel), or medium of instruction (Tamil vs. English), suggesting that certain structural and demographic factors may not play as significant a role as previously assumed.

These results underscore the need for targeted interventions to improve school environments, particularly for male and rural students. Schools should prioritize fostering positive teacher-student relationships, enhancing peer support systems, and ensuring adequate infrastructure. Additionally, efforts to involve parents and address socio-economic disparities can further enrich the school environment and support student well-being.

Future research should explore the longitudinal effects of school environment perceptions on students' academic and psychological outcomes, as well as the interplay between cultural and contextual factors in shaping these perceptions. Creating inclusive, supportive, and resourceful school environments is essential for nurturing holistic student development and achieving educational equity.

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