



## EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL AMBIANCE AND TEACHERS' ENTHUSIASM AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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### **Abstract**

*The ambiance of a school significantly shapes teachers' enthusiasm, motivation, and effectiveness, ultimately influencing students' engagement and academic performance. This qualitative study explored how environmental, social, and administrative factors within secondary schools affect teachers' enthusiasm in Lahore, Pakistan. Using a phenomenological research design, data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 30 experienced secondary school teachers selected via purposive sampling. An interview guide was developed to elicit rich descriptions of teachers' lived experiences regarding the school's physical environment, social climate, administrative support, and academic culture. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework, which involved coding, identifying patterns, and generating themes. Findings revealed that a supportive school ambiance—characterized by well-maintained infrastructure, collaborative staff relationships, and strong administrative support—fosters higher teacher enthusiasm, motivation, and emotional connection with students. Conversely, inadequate facilities, unsupportive leadership, and negative social climates contributed to teacher burnout and disengagement. The study underscores the importance of cultivating a positive school ambiance to enhance teacher well-being, effectiveness, and job satisfaction. School leaders and policymakers should prioritize strategies such as improving physical infrastructure, promoting supportive leadership, and fostering collaborative professional cultures to sustain teachers' enthusiasm and ultimately improve student outcomes.*

**Keywords:** *School ambiance, teachers enthusiasm, qualitative research, thematic analysis*

### **Introduction**

The school environment has great influence on the performance and the well being of children. Good school cultures with good relationships, well-established behavioral norms, and a sense of belonging are associated with increased engagement and performance (Smith, 2018; Cemaloglu and Tekkaya, 2006). On the other hand, adverse or non-conducive conditions can affect academic performance and interest. Emotional and cognitive wellbeing of students are influenced by the physical nature of a school such as natural lighting, level of noise, and classroom arrangement (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2009). Schools that attach great significance to inviting and stimulating physical spaces end up producing positive learning environments that increase the concentration and satisfaction of the students. Also, the cultural environment of the school, including its



convictions, values and social processes, influence ambiance greatly. Schools can also provide students with a full experience in their learning in safe places where feelings of tolerance, respect, and community engagement are part of the learning process (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Inayat et al., 2025).

Teacher enthusiasm has a favorable correlation with student involvement, motivation, and academic performance (Wang & Eccles, 2012; Johnson et al., 2016). Enthusiastic teachers are viewed as more capable and supportive, creating dynamic learning settings that inspire students to succeed academically. However, a lack of enthusiasm on the part of teachers may unwittingly create dull learning settings that hinder students' advancement.

School ambiance (or school climate) encompasses the physical, social, and organizational environment in which teaching and learning take place — including infrastructure, leadership practices, interpersonal relationships, academic culture, and resource availability (Kouhsari, Huang, & Wang, 2024; Zhang, Fathi, & Mohammaddockht, 2023). Teacher enthusiasm is understood as both affective (e.g., passion, emotional energy) and behavioral (e.g., engagement, committed teaching, vivid delivery) components of teaching, which relate to motivational states and classroom performance (Kouhsari et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023).

Recent studies indicate a strong, positive relationship between supportive school climate and teacher enthusiasm. For example, Kouhsari, Huang, and Wang (2024) found in a large sample of primary school teachers in China that dimensions of school climate significantly predicted teacher enthusiasm, with collective efficacy acting as a stronger mediator than self-efficacy in that relationship. Similarly, studies on school climate and teacher motivation in Pakistan show that positive perceptions of leadership, resource availability, and social climate are associated with higher teacher motivation and job satisfaction (Hamid, Ahmed, & Rashid, 2020; Khan et al., 2024). Collective and self-efficacy act as mediators between ambiance/school climate and teacher enthusiasm or motivation. Kouhsari et al. (2024) provide evidence that collective efficacy especially mediates this link. Democratic or supportive leadership styles tend to foster climates where teachers feel valued, trusted, and supported, which in turn enhances their motivation and commitment (Khan, 2024; Zakariya, 2020). A social climate that includes collegiality, peer support, and collaboration helps buffer negative stress and sustain enthusiasm (Zhang et al., 2023; also seen in qualitative work in Pakistan where lack of social status or professional recognition reduced teacher enthusiasm) (Kanwal & Habib, 2022). Adequate facilities, infrastructure, and teaching resources are repeatedly shown to influence teacher morale and their perceived ability to engage students effectively (Hamid, Ahmed, & Rashid, 2020; Kouhsari et al., 2024).

In Pakistan, there is substantial evidence (mostly quantitative, some qualitative) showing that school climate influences teacher motivation, self-esteem, job satisfaction, and professional commitment. For example: Hamid, Ahmed, and Rashid (2020) examining school climate with teachers' motivation and self-esteem in Gujranwala found positive and significant associations. Kanwal & Habib (2022) in a qualitative study in Karachi report that intrinsic motivators (professional growth, status, participation in decision-making) and extrinsic motivators (salary, security) are affected by school ambiance, including environment, leadership, and social climate. Khan (2024) found that democratic leadership and school climate together are important predictors of teachers' professional commitment.

Despite strong empirical evidence, several gaps remain: Many studies are surveys, correlational, or statistical designs. Fewer capture in-depth lived experiences of teachers about how ambiance is felt day-to-day. How changes over time in ambiance (e.g. an infrastructural upgrade or change of leadership) affect teacher enthusiasm is underexplored. There's less work on how cultural, gender, policy, or community factors mediate or moderate the ambiance-enthusiasm link in Pakistan's secondary schools.

From these literatures, a qualitative design is well justified: to capture detailed teacher perceptions, to uncover meanings, and to explore the processes through which ambiance shapes enthusiasm. Data collection should probe physical conditions, leadership relations, teacher autonomy, social support, and resource availability. Analysis methods such as thematic analysis, phenomenology, or grounded theory would allow emergent themes to surface. The findings could inform policy: improving infrastructure, revising leadership practices, fostering collaboration, and recognizing teachers' contributions.

### **Research objective**

1. To explore the impact of school ambiance on teacher's enthusiasm.
2. To identify the strategies for enhancing school ambiance and fostering teacher enthusiasm.

### **Research Methodology**

A qualitative research design was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of how school ambiance influences teachers' enthusiasm at the secondary level. This approach allowed the researchers to explore teachers' lived experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of their school environment in Lahore, Pakistan. Through qualitative inquiry, rich narratives were collected to complement and deepen understanding beyond numerical trends

### **Population and Sampling**

The population for the qualitative phase comprised all secondary school teachers in Lahore District. Teachers were drawn from public secondary schools and other educational institutions within the district, representing diverse professional backgrounds, years of experience, and subject specializations. For the qualitative phase, a purposive sampling technique was used to select information-rich participants. Thirty (30) secondary school teachers with more than fifteen years of teaching experience were chosen, as their extensive experience enabled them to provide deeper insight into how school ambiance affects teacher enthusiasm.

A semi-structured interview guide was developed based on an extensive review of the literature on school ambiance and teacher enthusiasm. The guide included open-ended questions covering four key dimensions of school ambiance (physical environment, social environment, administrative support, and academic environment) and four key aspects of teacher enthusiasm (passion for teaching, classroom engagement, commitment to professional improvement, and emotional connection with students). In-depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted with each participant. Interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and later transcribed verbatim. This process allowed the researchers to capture detailed, authentic accounts of teachers' perceptions and experiences of school ambiance and its impact on their enthusiasm.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-step framework: (1) familiarization with data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. Codes and



themes were derived inductively to ensure that the findings reflected participants' lived experiences. To ensure credibility and dependability, the researchers employed member checking, peer debriefing, and kept an audit trail of coding and theme development. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study.

**Results**

**Table 1**

*Comprehensive Thematic Analysis Table*

Categories	Theme	Codes
Perception of School Ambiance	Overall School Environment	Atmosphere, climate, general feel of the school
	Physical Space	Classroom design, space, resources, comfort
	External Environment	Outdoor spaces, playgrounds, open areas
Impact of Ambiance on Teacher Enthusiasm	Motivational Effect	Increased enthusiasm, work motivation, energy, positive feelings
	Work Satisfaction	Job satisfaction, fulfillment, personal commitment
Physical Environment	Classroom Conditions	Cleanliness, lighting, temperature, resources
	Resource Availability	Books, technology, teaching materials
	Comfort and Ergonomics	Furniture, classroom layout, seating comfort
Teacher Morale and Motivation	Teacher Job Satisfaction	Job enjoyment, enthusiasm, pride in teaching
	Emotional Energy	Motivation, energy levels, emotional connection to students and work
Negative Impacts of Ambiance	Stress Factors	Noise, poor lighting, overcrowding, distractions
	Discomfort and Frustration	Poor facilities, uncomfortable environments, lack of resources
Support and Role of Administration	Administrative Support	Leadership support, recognition, school administration involvement
	Policy and Communication	Clear policies, transparency, communication with staff
	Professional Development	Training, workshops, career growth opportunities
Teacher Collaboration	Teamwork and Peer Support	Collaboration among teachers, supportive colleagues, shared goals
	Collaborative Opportunities	Joint projects, collective teaching strategies
Suggestions for Improvement	Facility Enhancements	Building upgrades, additional resources, classroom redesigns



	Cultural Improvements	School culture, respect, inclusivity, creating a supportive and nurturing environment
	Community Involvement	Parent involvement, collaboration with the local community
Comparative Views	Comparison with Other Schools	Differences in ambiance, resources, facilities between schools
	Strengths and Weaknesses	Strengths of current school compared to others, areas for improvement
Long-Term Impact	Teacher Retention	Retaining teachers, job satisfaction, career longevity
	Student Outcomes	Student performance, engagement, learning environment
Personal Experiences and Stories	Teacher Experience	Personal accounts of working conditions, interactions with the school environment
	Emotion and Enthusiasm	Emotional connections to work, motivation levels, teacher satisfaction

The thematic analysis categorizes teachers' responses into various themes that highlight the influence of school ambiance on their enthusiasm, motivation, and overall morale. The responses provide valuable insights into how different aspects of the school environment shape their teaching experience.

### 1. School Ambiance Perception

The teachers in general have a positive view of their school setting as it is reported to be very welcoming, quiet and conducive. The majority of respondents stated that the general atmosphere is an important aspect of their routine at the workplace. According to one of the teachers, the school is friendly and it is something to look forward to going to work. One of the teachers said, the school is supportive and very relaxed and thus it helps in keeping the teaching atmosphere focused.

### 2. Influence on Teacher Enthusiasm

Positive school climate has a great impact on the enthusiasm of teachers, their motivation, morale and job satisfaction. A lot of teachers have admitted that the atmosphere has a direct influence on their energy and classroom attention. One of the teachers said, a good school atmosphere makes me more energetic and committed to my teaching. The second participant mentioned, "The atmosphere makes me stay motivated and concentrate on my students without any distractions.

### 3. Physical Environment

The physical aspect of the school such as the classroom cleanliness, lighting, air ventilation, and facilities have been deemed to be vital in ensuring teacher motivation. Teachers stressed on the fact that Well-lit classrooms are beneficial in teaching and learning. The other general reaction was, the physical environment is essential due to the fact that it determines the level of comfort of the students and teachers in the classroom.

### 4. Negative Impact of Ambiance

Although a certain number of teachers mentioned about the good environment in their school, some of them mentioned about the things that adversely affected their interest in the schools like



poor lighting systems, too much noise, and inadequate infrastructure. One of the teachers complained and said that, it is difficult to teach in a low-light environment, and I am occasionally exhausted at the end of the day. The other one added, that noise factor affects concentration and it is quite distracting to teachers and students.

### **5. Administrative Backing**

Good system of administration support is also a crucial factor that influences the school environment and consequently teacher motivation. Teachers value such leadership that listens, communicates with, and offers resources needed. One of the teachers mentioned, good working environment that is provided by the principal is that they have their needs met. The other one stated, “Administration support makes teachers feel motivated and concentrated in their teaching duties.

### **6. Teacher Collaboration**

Teamwork and peer support are greatly achieved through a collaborative work environment which also results in high enthusiasm among the teachers. It was noted by teachers, that they work together very much, and it is important to make a good atmosphere. The next teacher emphasized, “Collaboration also helps to make the atmosphere better since when we help one another the level of stress reduces.

### **7. Recommendations on How to Improve**

Educators offered many it suggestions to make the school environment better, such as bettering facilities, adding more greenery, and more teacher facilitating facilities. One of the recommendations, which were common, was, More green spaces will help provide a more relaxing and calm environment. One more teacher mentioned that, better facilities to teachers like better staff rooms and facilities would lift morale.

### **8. Professional Development**

Ability to train, workshop, and career develop was seen as one of the major motivational factors among teachers. One of the teachers told me, that frequent training sessions are beneficial as they boost morale as we feel appreciated, and are able to develop professionally. Another one observed, “The school provides us with very good workshops that help in maintaining us and abreast of the new teaching strategies.

### **9. Comparative Views**

Most of the teachers described the school atmosphere in comparison to the rest of the schools pointing out the strong and weak sides. One of the teachers was categorical saying that the school they were in had a better ambiance compared to others within the district, particularly regarding the support offered by the administration. Someone has noted, though, that other schools are more well equipped, and I would like to have the same.

### **10. Long-Term Impact**

An attractive school culture leads to a retention of the teachers in the long run and an increase in student performance. One of the teaching staff responded that a favorable environment will ensure teachers stay due to the fact that once the environment remains favorable, the teachers stand a chance of remaining. Another teacher associated ambiance with student performance and stated that, it has a long term effect on the student learning, as inspired teachers make the classroom more interesting to the students.



### **11. Motivation and Morale**

When a school is well arranged and supportive, the teachers become motivated thus being more eager to work. One educator said that when everything is in place and the school is organized he feels motivated. One of them said, a friendly atmosphere makes me passionate and makes me remain dedicated to my career.

### **12. Personal Experiences**

Individual experiences by teachers were used to bring out the importance of good school ambiance. In response, one teacher explained, that when the classrooms were refurbished the teachers felt more motivated and that there has been a slight difference in the experience of teaching. One of them said, The atmosphere helped me like teaching since I felt relaxed and encouraged.

### **13. Physical Space and Comfort**

Classroom size and room layout are very important in ensuring that teachers are enthusiastic and motivated. One teacher cited that comfortable classrooms were the main ingredient to enthusiasm as it enables the teachers and students to concentrate. Nevertheless, there have been issues identified including but not limited to: Classrooms are too small and it is difficult to maneuver around and to be able to engage them.

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

This paper indicates how the school atmosphere is having a significant impact on the motivation of teachers in secondary level. The results of the thematic analysis show that physical, social, and administrative environment of schools is closely connected with the motivation, job satisfaction, and emotional energy levels of teachers. The positive atmosphere of a school, which is provided by a supportive leadership, properly developed infrastructure, team spirit, and resources, supports the enthusiasm of teachers, their retention, and better student performance. On the contrary, bad physical conditions, absence of administrative support and poor social climates are stressors, frustrating and de-motivating. According to teachers, there was a need to improve on facilities, professional development and leadership practices to improve their working environment.

The findings support the previous studies in emphasizing the significance of school environment in defining teacher motivation and teacher effectiveness (Day and Gu, 2014; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2018). The teachers interviewed in this research complain that their enthusiasm and emotional energy are influenced by the conditions of the classroom (lights, Ventilation, and Seats). This is consistent with other past studies which emphasize the importance of learning physical environments in teacher and student well-being (Barrett et al., 2015).

The role of the administrative support became one of the crucial points in sustaining the morale of the teacher. Respondents often cited that recognition, communicated well and resource provision by leadership has a positive effect on engagement. The results are similar with other studies that have reported that supportive leadership and professional autonomy are associated with higher levels of teacher satisfaction and retention (Collie et al., 2012).

There was also teacher collaboration. An organizational culture of cooperation minimized the stress, boosted morale, and enhanced teaching commitment. This is echoed in the research about collective teacher efficacy as it is associated with better teaching practices and climate in schools (Tschannen-Moran and Barr, 2004).



Remarkably, there were also disparities regarding schools that were revealed in the study. Educators who made comparisons with other schools found that in certain schools that had better facilities, and administrative practices, there was a lot of motivation. This is an indicator of the systemic inequalities in education resources in Pakistan and this is where policy interventions are necessary to promote equity in schools.

Lastly, professional development was identified as one of the recommendations of teachers. Training and career development opportunities made them feel valued, revitalized their teaching regime, and strengthened their motivation, which research on teacher motivation and ongoing professional learning found supported (OECD, 2020).

### Recommendations

The thematic analysis and findings lead to the following suggestions:

1. Make the classrooms well lit, well ventilated and have ergonomic designs that can accommodate the comfort of the teacher and the student. Improve facilities like staff rooms, rest areas and teaching facilities to minimize stress and increase teacher morale. Plant more green areas and open spaces to make it a more comfortable and relaxed environment.
2. Give frequent feedback, appreciation, and effective communication between school administrators and educators. Engagement Second, teachers should be included in decision-making processes so as to develop a feeling of ownership and motivation. Have budgets on resources and technology to facilitate teaching requirements. Arrange frequent meetings of the staff aimed at the collective discussion of the best practices and solving typical problems.
3. Provide frequent training, workshops and seminars to enable teachers to develop professionally and feel important. Offer career development opportunities, such as leadership development and a chance to attend educational conferences.
4. Keep the number of students in classes to a minimal. Offer psychological counseling or wellness trainings to teachers to deal with work-stress.
- 5 Engage parents and the community stakeholders in the enhancement of school conditions and teacher classroom needs. Make evidence-based changes to the school environment with the help of the feedback.

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