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IMPACT OF SCHOOL CLIMATE ON VIOLENCE AMONG PRIMARY LEVEL STUDENTS IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT:

This study was conducted to explore the impact of school climate on violence among primary level students in Pakistan. The nature of this study was casual comparative. Survey method was used to conduct this study. There were two variables in the study. School climate was independent variable of the study whereas students' violence was dependent variable of the study. Population of the study was consisted of all five grade students enrolled in public schools of tehsil Gujrat. Two stage simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample of the study. Total number of 1302 five grade students of public schools in tehsil Gujrat participated in this study. Two questionnaires 'school climate questionnaire (SCQ)' and 'students' violence questionnaire (SVQ)' were used as an instrument of the study. Collected data were analyzed through statistical measures of mean, standard deviation, independent sample t-test, two way ANOVA, simple correlation 'r' and standardized multiple regression 'β'. Results of the study indicated that there was strong impact of school climate on students' violence at primary level. Among all school climate factors, Teacher-student relationship was found most contributing factor in minimizing violence among students. Moreover, school safety was another significant factor contributing in students' violence reduction in public schools at primary level.

INTRODUCTION:

Violence is one of the emerging issues now a day. It has become a serious problem in homes, offices, educational institutions regardless to the areas. The World Health Organization (1996) defined violence as deliberate acts by an individual or group of people to harm a child physically or psychologically that would be destructive for his well-being and self-esteem. Violence among students has become a serious problem in Pakistan but little attention has been given on this issue.

Children are exposed to many types of violent activities. Therefore, they accept and considered it as a part of life. These days, violent activities of juveniles such as fighting, quarreling, bullying and victimization are very common news in media (Heem&Chongrak, 2012). In the World Report on violence against children, the main kinds of violence are found physical and psychological punishment, bullying, sexual and external violence like effects of gangs, conflicting situation, weapons and fighting (Tinio, 2014).

According to Scheckner and Rollin (2003), violence in schools is a substantial educational problem prevailing all over the country. Many students are the victim of violence and who are not victimized have seen their peers suffered by this problem (Astor, Benbenishty, Zeira, &Vinokur, 2002). Our schools are facing different issues like vandalism, theft, grab, assault, verbal harassment and physical harassment. In 2012 from January till December total 6444 cases of violence against children have been reported in Pakistan (Awan, 2013).

Studies showed that an effective school climate is prerequisite to reduce violent activities in schools and in promoting positive student behavior and learning (Cohen &Geier, 2010). Different researches showed that there was a strong impact of school climate on violence. A favorable and positive school climate may help to reduce violence related events in schools and helps to execute teaching and learning process smoothly. Now schools are striving to develop more comprehensive and effective strategies to stop violent behavior and violence related incidents in schools. For this, they are trying to develop a positive school climate (Cohen &Pickerall, 2007).

A positive school climate has been found as an important aspect to reduce violence and development of teaching and learning in schools (Cohen &Pickerall, 2007). Researches showed that a positive school climate promotes less usage of drugs (LaRusso, 2008), victimization (Meyer-Adams & Conner, 2008; Bradshaw, 2009), and intimidation (Attar-Schwartz, 2009). While reducing students' exposure to violent activities a positive school climate is also linked with increased students' academic achievement, motivation, psychological health and development (Ruus, 2007; Shochet, 2006).It can be helpful in improving students' behavior and learning (Cohen &Geier, 2010; Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, &Pickeral, 2009).

According to researches cited above, if the issue of violence is not addressed properly it could be difficult to maintain a positive school climate as well as schools will not be considered as safe place anymore. Moreover, Squelch (2001) pointed out that since 1994 a number of studies have been done by the National and Provincial Departments of Education in South Africa to address violence by creating a positive school climate. It seems that researchers take a positive school climate as a key factor to build school a safe place. On the other hand, if school climate is not safe then there are more chances of occurrence of violence.

Like other countries violence is also prevailing in Pakistani schools and other educational institutions as well and this issue needs more attention. Researchers being school teachers observed many violence related incidents among students in schools.

Different researches have been done on violence at elementary and secondary level in schools, but the primary level is being neglected by the researchers in this area. Early years of life are the most significant in building a foundation for all future development as acquisition of positive sense of self and the ability to trust others. So, there is need to predict and prevent violence at this stage by taking preventive measures in schools. So, there is need to draw the attention of researchers, school authorities and policy makers to rectify this problem at earlier stages of a child's life so they could refuse to adopt violent behavior at any stage in life. Therefore, the researcher planned this study to explore the impact of school climate on violence among students at primary level.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:

The prominent personalities of the world acclaim that education is a key to solve all the social evils upsetting many countries in the world. School is the place considered as safest for the learners but unluckily the situation is totally contrary to it. Due to these violent activities schools are now considered as an insecure place for learners, they cannot enjoy the feeling of being safe and protected in schools (Van Jaarsveld, 2008). According to the Human Rights Commission (2006) school violence has destabilized the environment needed for the effective teaching-learning process. Due to this, it has become a national problem in many countries.

School violence is defined as a series of violent and harmful acts done by any individual that happens in school settings. These acts include victimization, physical violence, verbal violence, aggressive behavior toward others, using of drugs and harmful weapons, theft, destruction of someone's property and sexual violence (Kellam, Prinz, &Sheley, 2000).PrinslooandNeser (2007) defined school violence as "the use of any physical or verbal act by an individual aim to harm another individual physically or psychologically within school boundaries". According to Crawage (2005) school violence is the use of authority by an individual, organization or any social course.

Many types of research show that the problem of school violence is rising despite of taking measures to control it by schools and education department themselves (Fishbaugh, Berkeley &Schroth, 2003; Human Rights Commission, 2006). According to a world report on violence against children corporal and psychological punishment, victimization, sexual and external violence are the major types of violence which can be found among children (Tinio, 2014). It has a negative and enduring effect on children's physical and psychological health (Norman, 2012). Debarbieux (2006) declared violence at school as an imperative social problem worldwide. Large numbers of pupils within schools are negatively influenced (Gottfredson, 2001). Conceptually, school violence is a very diverse happening (Smith, Ananiadou& Cowie, 2003). Violence in schools comprises an extensive series of behaviours that emotionally and physically threaten and hurt others, including deliberate physical attacks, by using weapons, mass violence, and sexual violence, to minor attacks, such as sudden behaviour and beating, to comparatively innocent kicks and hits. Concisely, violence (at school) can be defined as a specific form of risky behaviour as intentional mutilation in form of a physical or emotional action against oneself (Steffgen, 2009). On the contrary, bullying is identified as another type of violence as organized and repetitive intimidation of the most vulnerable. Olweus (2004) and Smith (2000) labelled it as

collective event. In short, research into school violence differs considerably in the use of definitions and concepts.

According to Benbenishty, Astor, Zeira and Vinokur (2002) Extensive research has been conducted over the past 20 years to identify factors contributing in school violence. In this regard, the notion of school climate has got special consideration (Freiberg, 1999). That is why various theoretical approaches were considered. The theory of environmental change describes the impact of school climate on school violence (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). Violence at school is defined as a representation of behaviour in the microcosm but is affected by the average system (interpretation of the school climate). Violence at school is defined as an action or behaviour against the school climate (cognitive and emotional interpretation) as a personal and objective reality of the school system. By combining the two concepts, the psychological process of interpreting the school climate plays a chief role in violence at school. Continued efforts have been made to identify the most important components of the school environment. Existing school classifications offer different options for classifying different dimensions (Moos, 1979). Some classifications define climatic variables as effective when related to personal and social relationships such as school composition and student involvement, cognitive or active, with psychological processes, school attachment, fear of school and organization to refer to some school variables, school management (Fraser, 1994).

Researchers generally agree that the school environment is a vital factor that deserves a thorough investigation into violence (Carra, 2009). But, unclear descriptions, classifications, and experimental climatic parameters and procedures tested by schools has led to many results that are often hard to understand. The objective of meta-analysis mentioned here, however, is to study the impact of school climate on school violence. Given a large number of climate concepts and violence in schools, a comprehensive quantitative assessment is still needed to better illustrate the association between school climate and violence.

Objectives of the study:

The research objectives formulated for study at hand were to**:**
A) Determine the level of climate in public schools at primary level.
B) Measure the level of violence among primary students enrolled in public schools.
C) Find out relationship between school climate and violence among primary students enrolled in public schools.
D) Find factors of school climate contributing to violence among students at primary level in public schools.

Research Questions of the study:

Following research questions were developed to achieve the set objectives of present study.
  i. What is the level of school climate in public primary schools?
 ii. What is the level of violence in public primary schools?
iii. Is there any significant relationship between school climate and violence among students in public schools at primary level?
iv. How well do the school climate predict violence among primary students in public schools?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This research study was aim to find out the impact of school climate on students' violence at primary level. There were two variables of the study i.e., school climate and students' violence. Both variables exist in natural settings so researcher was unable to manipulate them. Hence, the nature of the study was causal comparative. The population of the study included all students of fifth grade enrolled in public schools situated in tehsil Gujrat. There were 751 public schools in tehsil Gujrat in which 2 schools were mosques schools. These schools did not have primary level students so these were excluded from the population. Hence, the population was all fifth graders enrolled in 749 public schools of tehsil Gujrat. Two stage simple random sample technique was used. At first stage 10% schools of the population was randomly selected. Selected schools were 78 in numbers. Later on 30% of fifth graders were taken randomly as sample of study from each selected school. Total sample size was consisted of 1302 students of 5th grade.

Data Analysis:

In order to get this information, two types of questionnaires viz. 'School climate questionnaire' (SCQ) and 'Students' violence questionnaire' (SVQ) were used for this study, researchers prepared both questionnaires by themselves after rigorous literature review. Both the questionnaires were prepared in Urdu language because it is our national language. The reason of development of questionnaires in Urdu language to facilitate fifth grade students to understand and respond the questionnaires effectively and efficiently. Both the questionnaires were validated through expert opinion. CVI of SCQ was 0.82 and CVI of SVQ was 0.81. Later on these questionnaire were pilot tested to determine reliability of the questionnaires.

Table-1: Detail of School Climate Questionnaire

Factors	No of items	Mean	S.D.	Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient
Safety	6	28.48	2.40	0.575
Belongingness	6	28.79	2.24	0.64
Teacher-student relationship	5	23.89	2.08	0.57
Peer-relationship	7	31.31	4.39	0.68
Fairness	5	21.42	3.37	0.58
Overall reliability	29	121.77	8.85	0.83

School Climate questionnaire consists of five factors. These factors were safety, belongingness, teacher-student relationship, peer relationship and fairness. Total number of statements in the questionnaire were 29. Factor wise Alpha reliability coefficient and the school climate questionnaireare reported in table 1.

Moreover reliability of Students' violence questionnaireSVQ is also reported in table 2.

Table-2: Detail of Students' Violence Questionnaire

Students' Violence Scale	No. of items	Mean	S.D.	Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient
Overall reliability	10	13.35	4.45	.85

School climate questionnaire was developed on five point Likert scale ranges from **غلط بالکل**to **بالکل صحیح.** On the other hand students' violence questionnaire was developed on four points Likert scale ranges from کبھی نہیں to چار یا اس سے زیادہ بار.

Descriptive and inferential statistics was used to answer the research questions. Mean and standard deviation was used to measure the level of school climate and violence among students in public schools at primary level.To find out relationship between school climate and students' violence simple Pearson r correlation was applied. Strengths of the correlation was decided in the light of the criterion describe by Cohen (1988). According to the criterion relationship is weak if value of correlation lies between 0.10 and 0.29, relationship is moderate if value of correlation ranges between 0.30 to 0.49 and relationship is strong if value of correlation exists between 0.50 and 1.0. To explore the major predictor of school climate contributing to violence among students simple multiple regression was applied.

Results & Findings::

Research Question-01: What is the level of school climate in public schools at primary level?

Table-3: Level of school climate in public schools at Primary Level

School Climate	N	Mean	S.D.
Safety	1302	4.54	.54
Belongingness	1302	4.57	.64
Teacher-student relationship	1302	4.62	.64
Peer relationship	1302	4.28	.77
Fairness	1302	4.13	.66

Table 3 shows that school climate of public schools at primary level is conducive in terms of safety (Mean=4.54, S.D.=.54), belongingness (Mean=4.57, S.D.=.64), teacher-student relationship (Mean=4.62, S.D.=.64), peer relationship (Mean=4.28, S.D.=.77) and fairness (Mean=4.13, S.D.=.66).

Research Question 02: What is the level of students' violence at primary level in public schools?

Table-4: Level of Violence among Primary Students

	N	Mean	S.D.
Students' Violence	1302	1.43	.51

Table 4 shows that the level of violence among primary level students is very low in public schools with Mean score 1.43 and S.D. 0.51.

Research Question-03: Is there any significant relationship between school climate and violence among students in public schools at primary level?

Table-5: Relationship between School Climate and Violence among Students

School Climate	N	Mean	S.D.	Students' Violence	
				Pearson-r	Sig. value
Safety	1302	4.54	0.54	-.589	.000
Belongingness	1302	4.57	0.64	-.675	.000
Teacher-Student Relationship	1302	4.62	0.64	-.683	.000
Peer Relationship	1302	4.28	0.77	-.513	.000
Fairness	1302	4.13	0.66	-.406	.000

Table 5 shows the analysis of data about correlation among factors of school climate and violence among students in public schools. The value of simple correlation 'r' reflects that school safety (r=-.589,p=.000), belongingness (r=-.675, p=.000), teacher student relationship (r=-.683,p=.000), peer relationship (r=-.513,p=.000) and fairness (r=-.406,p=.000) are significantly and negatively correlated with violence among students. These findings show significant relationship of safety, belongingness, teacher student relationship, peer relationship and fairness with students' violence. Hence it is concluded that there was a strong and negative correlation of safety, belongingness, teacher student relationship, peer relationship and fairness with students' violence in public schools at primary level.

Research Question-4: How well do the school climate predict violence among primary students in public schools?

Table-6: Prediction of School Climate on Primary level Students' Violence

School Climate Factors	Students' Violence		
	r	β	Sig.
Safety	-.589	-.234	.000
Belongingness	-.675	-.166	.000
Teacher-student relationship	-.683	-.261	.000
Peer Relationship	-.513	-.172	.000
Fairness	-.406	-.115	.000
Multiple Correlation		0.75	
Regression		0.56	.000

**p<0.01(2-tailed) **p<0.05

Table 4.18 demonstrate the model followed in this study, that includes contribution of school climate factor explains 56% variance in students' violence at primary level. Standardized regression coefficients was used to determine the best predictor (safety, belongingness, teacher-student relationship, peer relationship or fairness) contributing towards students' violence in public schools at primary level. The values of standardized regression "β" weights showed that teacher students relationship (β=-261., p<0.01), makes the largest contribution in reducing students' violence although safety (β=-.234, p<0.01), belongingness (β=-.234, p<0.01), teacher-student relationship (β=-.234, p<0.01), peer relationship (β=-.234, p<0.01) and fairness (β=-.234, p<0.01) also significantly contributing in reducing students' violence at primary level.

Discussion:

In this section the results of the study are discussed with the support of other researchers' studies. The major objective of the study was to measure the impact of school climate on students' violence at primary level. This study demonstrates interesting impact of different school climate factors on students' violence at primary level. A sample of 1302 students participated in this study, responded to the school climate questionnaire and students' violence questionnaire at primary level. As showed in the section of the results, teacher-students' relationship has largest contribution in reducing students' violence. Other school climate factors like safety, belongingness, peer relationship and fairness have also significant contribution in reducing violence among students. Moreover, results of the study revealed that school climate has explained 56% variance in students' violence. Moreover, there was significant and negative correlation found between school climate factors and students' violence. The above findings of the study support the previous researches that was conducted by Dwyer, Osher (2000) concluded that when students feel safe both socially and physically in school environment, they tend to adopt more appropriate behavior. School rules and norms are part of school's social environment which enables students to behave properly in school setting, on the other hand physical environment includes school building and practices enables to prevent any problem in school. Cohen&Pickerall(2007); Najaka, Gottfredson& Wilson(2002) considers that positive school climate plays a key role in reducing violence in schools and development of teaching and learning. Another study by Brookmeyer(2006) and Karcher(2004) concluded that if students have strong relationship with their teachers i.e. they feel that they can trust and rely on their teachers, their thoughts and feelings are understood by them, they will be less exposed to the violent related activities. McEvoy & Welker (2000) concluded that a positive school climate in which students have strong interpersonal relationships (with teachers and peers) can enhance students' achievement level and decrease violent conduct among students. Gini et al., (2008) and Caravita, Blasio and Salmivalli(2009) stated that If a student have low ability to understand other's feelings, he will more likely to involve in violent behavior toward his peers, but students with high level of understanding other's feeling will have more anti-violent behavior according to Jolliffe and Farrington(2004).

Current study also supported previous study by Cohen, & McCabe(2009) which concluded that there is significant role of students' belongingness in reducing violence among students. Crandall (1981) concluded that a student feels more confident and respected if his sense of belonging to school is high. School belonging has a strong effect on students' absenteeism as explored by Fine (1991). Many studies also found that school belongingness effects students' attendance, accomplishment of home tasks, and active participation in social activities (Voelkl, 1995).Wang, Selman, Dishion, &Stormshak(2010) highlighted in their study that fair attitude of teachers toward their students also promote teacher-student relationship and a positive school climate. Besides these factors school safety is also a main factor of school climate for promoting a positive school climate.

Conclusions & Recommendations:

This study was designed to explore the impact of school climate on violence among students. Based on the findings of the study it was concluded that school climate plays a significant role in reducing violence among students. Results of the study showed that overall school climate at primary level was conducive for learners in public schools in tehsil Gujrat. Finding showed that

among all school climate factors fairness factor is reported as low in all public schools at primary level. For this purpose workshops should be arranged for teachers about importance of teacher's role in reducing violence among students. Finding showed that Students' violence at primary level is very low in public schools in tehsil Gujrat. It was concluded in the light of findings that school climate contribute 56% variance in students' violence, while teacher- student relationship is the best predictor for reducing students' violence in public schools at primary level. It is suggested to work on making the school climate more conducive so that the violence among primary level students may be reduced.

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