

A COMPARATIVE-CORRELATIONAL STUDY OF PERCEIVED SCHOOL CLIMATE AND SCHOOL LIFE SATISFACTION OF MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AT KING MONGKUT'S INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY LADKRABANG INTERNATIONAL DEMONSTRATION SCHOOL

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Abstract: The purpose of this research was to explore the difference in and the relationship between perceived school climate and school life satisfaction of middle and high school students at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology International Demonstration School. The sample of this study consisted of all the middle and high school students who were enrolled in the target school during the academic year 2020-2021. The School Climate Survey was used to measure students' level of perceived school climate, while the School Life Satisfaction Survey was employed to measure the level of students' school life satisfaction. After data collection was done, descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and statistical hypothesis testing (one-way ANOVA and correlational analysis using Pearson's correlation coefficient) were carried out to address the objectives and hypotheses of this study. On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being "very positive," no significant difference was found in middle school students' level of perceived school climate (which ranged from a low of 3.33 for Grade 6 to a high of 3.54 for Grade 7). Similarly, on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being "very high," no significant difference was found in middle school students' level of school life satisfaction (which ranged from a low of 3.46 for Grade 6 to a high of 3.73 for Grade 8). There was no significant difference in high school students' level of perceived school climate (which ranged from a low of 3.45 for Grade 9 to a high of 3.64 for Grade 11); however, a significant difference was found in high school students' level of school life satisfaction (which ranged from a low of 3.60 for Grade 9, to a high of 4.03 for Grade 12). A significant, strong, and positive relationship was found between the

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perceived school climate and the school life satisfaction for middle and high school students. Based on the findings of this study, recommendations are provided for students, teachers, school administrators, and future researchers.

Keywords: Perceived School Climate; School Life Satisfaction; Middle School; High School

Introduction

Perceived school climate refers to the students' feelings and attitudes toward school regarding relationships among students and staff/teachers, order and discipline, fairness, parent involvement, sharing of resources, and learning and teaching emphasis (Anderson, 1982; Thapa et al., 2013). Among other factors, empirical evidence (e.g., Brand et al., 2008; Chen & Weikart, 2008; Collins & Parson, 2010) has confirmed that the perceived school climate is influential in affecting students' school life satisfaction (i.e., the level of gratification that students obtain in response to how their needs are met in the school environment), as well as students' school effectiveness and academic success.

School life satisfaction refers to the students' overall school experiences, which includes meeting their needs in the school environment regarding safety, fair treatment, interpersonal relationship, and parent involvement in their academic achievement (Huebner, 1994). Various school characteristics have been recognized as important determinants of students' school life satisfaction, such as a positive and active learning experience and teacher's support in learning (Kong, 2008), a positive perceived school climate (Mok & Flynn, 2002), and personality factors such as school self-esteem and positive affectivity (Karatzias et al., 2002).

Han and Lynch (2014) found a significant relationship between school climate and achievement motivation, with the perceived school climate being one of the top influences driving student achievement. Osterman (2000) stated that students' perceived school climate is a significant key in nourishing their sense of belonging in the school community, positively impacting their school life satisfaction, academic performance, and social development.

A positively perceived school climate is associated with higher student achievement and fewer discipline problems (Chiu & Chow, 2011), leads to a decrease in the rate of developmental stress in early adolescence, and enlarges the level of achievement motivation (Barber & Olsen, 2004). Also, a positive school climate has been found to significantly impact the health of the learning environment for students to flourish emotionally, socially, and academically

(Kutsyuruba et al., 2015). In contrast, a negative school climate, in which students may feel insecure and unpleasant, has a detrimental effect on student satisfaction and achievement (Watson, 2001) and can be a significant barrier to learning (Freiberg, 1998). Therefore, the researchers decided to carry out the current investigation due to the highlighted importance of students' perceived school climate and school life satisfaction for their overall cognitive, social, and psychological development.

Research Objectives

The following research objectives were addressed in this study.

1. To determine the levels of perceived school climate of middle school students at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang International Demonstration School.
2. To determine the levels of perceived school climate of high school students at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang International Demonstration School.
3. To determine the levels of school life satisfaction of middle school students at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang International Demonstration School.
4. To determine the levels of school life satisfaction of high school students at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang International Demonstration School.
5. To determine whether there is a significant difference in perceived school climate and school life satisfaction of middle school students at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang International Demonstration School.
6. To determine whether there is a significant difference in perceived school climate and school life satisfaction of high school students at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang International Demonstration School.
7. To determine whether there is a significant relationship between perceived school climate and school life satisfaction of middle school students at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang International Demonstration School.
8. To determine whether there is a significant relationship between perceived school climate and school life satisfaction of high school students at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang International Demonstration School.

Theoretical Framework

This study was conducted based on the following supporting theories: the concept of school climate (Emmons et al., 2002) and Maslow's (1987)

hierarchy of needs theory.

The Concept of School Climate (Emmons et al., 2002)

Emmons et al. (2002) defines school climate according to six dimensions: order and discipline, fairness, parent involvement, sharing of resources, student interpersonal relations, and student-teacher relations.

Order and Discipline. This refers to the students' proper behavior in the school and the rules and regulations that the school requires students to follow.

Fairness. This refers to the equal treatment of students without discrimination because of some aspect of their identity (e.g., race, family status, sexual orientation, and religion).

Parent Involvement. This refers to the frequency of students' parent's participation in different school functions.

Sharing of Resources. This refers to having equal student opportunities and conditions to attend school activities and receive materials and other educational equipment.

Student Interpersonal Relations. This refers to the level of care, concern, respect, and trust among students in the school.

Student-Teacher Relations. This refers to the level of care, respect, and trust between the school's students and teachers.

Maslow's (1987) Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Maslow acknowledged the relationship between need satisfaction and the context in his understanding of human motivation analysis. Only the desire to satisfy needs make humans pursue their passions and dreams. Maslow (1987) hierarchically identified five basic categories of human needs: physiological needs, safety needs, social/belongingness needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs.

Physiological Needs. This refers to essential biological requirements for survival, such as food, water, shelter, oxygen, sleep, and clothing.

Safety Needs. This refers to security requirements such as protection, freedom from fear, anxiety, rules, laws, order, and structures.

Social/Belongingness Needs. This refers to the desire for freedom from

loneliness, ostracism, from rejection. It includes intimacy and receiving and giving affection and love.

Esteem Needs. This refers to the desire for independence, freedom, self-respect, appreciation, respect, and recognition from others.

Self-Actualization Needs. This refers to the desire for self-fulfillment and attempting to achieve personal growth and transcendence.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 below depicts the schematic diagram of the current study.

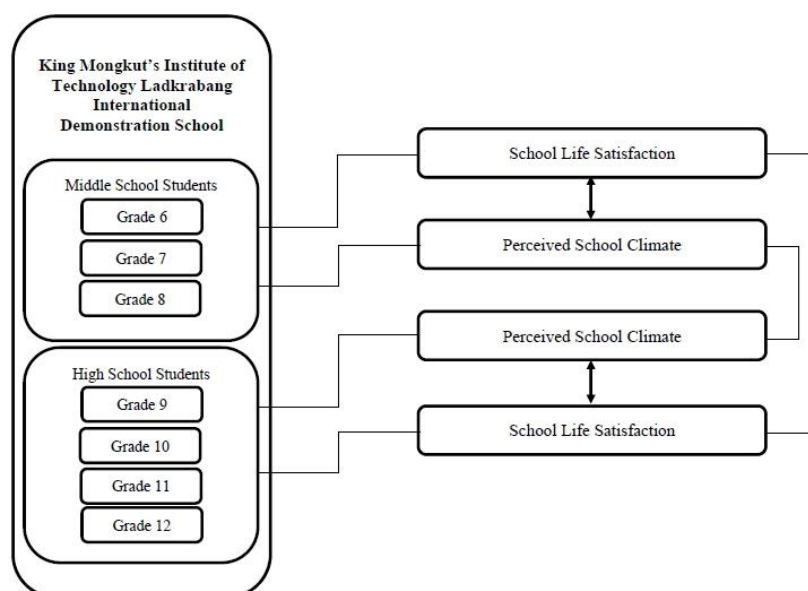


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for the Present Study.

Literature Review

In this section, some previous studies related to the research variables addressed in this study are reviewed and summarized.

Long and Eamoraphan (2015) studied the relationship between students' perceived school climate and school life satisfaction in a sample of 125 A-Level students from Wuhan-Britain International School, China. The study's findings indicated a significantly positive relationship between the perceived school climate and the school life satisfaction of the participants and that the perceived school climate can be used as a significant predictor of the level of the students' school life satisfaction.

Han and Lynch (2014) studied the relationship between the perception of school climate and achievement motivation in Grade 6 to 12 Korean students at a selected international school in Bangkok. The study was conducted primarily to determine whether there was a significant relationship between Korean students' level of perceived school climate and their achievement motivation level. The findings indicated that the participants perceived school climate at a relatively high level and a relatively high level of achievement motivation. Moreover, a significant and positive relationship was found between the Korean students' level of perceived school climate and their achievement motivation level.

Aung and Ye (2016) studied the relationship between the students' school life satisfaction level and their academic achievement. The participants of this study were 65 students at Kant Kaw Education Center in Yangon, Myanmar. The study's results identified varying levels of school life satisfaction among the participants. Moreover, the results showed that there was a significant relationship between the students' school life satisfaction at Kant Kaw Education Center and their academic achievement at this institution.

Samdal et al. (1998) studied the importance of the school climate on students' school life satisfaction, targeting 16,374 participants from Finland, Latvia, Norway, and Slovakia. The survey was carried out in Latvia and Slovakia from November-December 1993, Norway in December 1993, and Finland from March-May 1994. The findings showed that students' perceived school climate could positively affect school life satisfaction and success. Thus, according to this study, the more positive the school climate is perceived by a student, the more he/she is satisfied with his/her school life, and hence the higher his/her motivation to make more effort to accomplish his/her school-related goals.

Methodology/Procedure

This section provides details on the study's population and sample, as well as on the research instruments.

Population and Sample

This research was conducted on a population sample comprised of all the 108 middle and 208 high school students from King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang International Demonstration School in the academic year 2020-2021. There was a total of 316 students distributed as follows: 12 from Grade 6, 50 from Grade 7, 46 from Grade 8, 62 from Grade 9, 85 from Grade 10, 23 from Grade 11, and 38 from Grade 12. During the data collection process, 104 out of 108 (96%) middle school students and 204 out of 208

(98%) high school students were present during the questionnaire administration.

Research Instruments

This study was conducted using the following two research instruments: the School Climate Survey and the School Life Satisfaction Survey. For both of them, a 5-point Likert scale was used (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *unsure*, 4 = *agree*, 5 = *strongly agree*).

School Climate Survey. The School Climate Survey was the result of the adoption of 30 items from the 37-item questionnaire used by Long and Eamoraphan (2015) in a previous study. The questionnaire items were categorized into six parts (see Table 1) based on the six dimensions of school climate identified by Emmons et al. (2002).

Table 1. *Items Comprising the School Climate Survey*

Item No.	Item Statement
Order and discipline	
1	Students are nice and do not fight each other at my school
2	My school is usually very noisy
3	My school is usually clean and tidy
4	Students often insult each other, and teachers talk to them
5	Students at my school call each other bad names
Fairness	
6	At my school, every student is treated the same even if their parents are rich or poor
7	Every student is treated equally well at my school
8	At my school, students of all races are treated the same
9	At my school, boys and girls are treated equally well
10	At my school, teachers are fair to everyone
Parent involvement	
11	At my school, parents often come to help in the classroom
12	My parents often attend parent meetings at school
13	My parents visit my school often
14	Parents often come to my school to help with special activities
15	My parents often come to my school to meet with my teachers
Sharing resources	
16	When having fun games at my school, the same students are always put in charge
17	At my school, every student always gets help from the teachers.
18	Every student always gets to use things, like a computer, a

Item No.	Item Statement
	ball, or a piano, when needed
19	At my school, every student gets chosen every time to take part in after-school or special activities
20	School tries its best to fulfill the students' needs in every field
	Student interpersonal relations
21	At my school, students like one another
22	At my school, students help one another
23	At my school, students respect the teachers
24	At my school, students respect one another
25	Students enjoy sharing with each other
	Student-teacher relations
26	My teachers work hard to get me to do well on tests
27	Teachers help me when I have problems at school
28	My teachers care about me
29	I feel free to talk with my teachers about my problems
30	My teachers make me feel good about myself

School Life Satisfaction Survey. The School Life Satisfaction Survey was comprised of 25 out of the 50 items used by Taormina and Gao (2013) to measure the level of students' school life satisfaction. The items were arranged into five parts (see Table 2), based on the five basic categories of human needs identified by Maslow's (1987) hierarchy of needs theory.

Table 2. *Items Comprising the School Life Satisfaction Survey*

Item No.	Item Statement
	Physiological needs
1	I am completely satisfied with the quality and amount of the food I eat at school
2	I am completely satisfied with every aspect of my physical health is good
3	I am completely satisfied with the quality and amount of sleep I get to feel thoroughly relaxed
4	I am completely satisfied with the amount of exercise to keep me healthy
5	I am completely satisfied with my overall physical strength
	Safety needs
6	I am completely satisfied with the facilitation of safe travel within the school (able to move independently and be assisted when needed)
7	I am completely satisfied with the medical support that I get

Item No.	Item Statement
	from the school
8	I am completely satisfied with how safe I am from being physically attacked
9	I am completely satisfied with how protected I am from natural disasters in the school environment (earthquakes, tornados, and storms)
10	I am completely satisfied with the school's engagement in maintaining students' personal hygiene
	Social/belongingness needs
11	I am completely satisfied with the relationships I have with my classmates and teachers
12	I am completely satisfied with the number of friends I can talk with when I have problems
13	I am completely satisfied with the appreciation shown to me by my friends when I help them
14	I am completely satisfied with the amount of time I have to spend with my friends
15	My teachers care about me a lot
	Esteem needs
16	I am completely satisfied with the admiration given to me by my classmates
17	I am completely satisfied with how much school community members respect me as a person
18	I am completely satisfied with the recognition I receive from school community members
19	I am completely satisfied with how much respect I have for myself
20	I am completely satisfied with how positive I feel about myself as a person
	Self-actualization needs
21	I look for solutions rather than playing the victim or surrendering to difficulty
22	I enjoy and appreciate ethnic and individual diversity
23	I am now being the person I always wanted to be
24	I do not care much about what other people think of me (appearance, skills, and abilities)
25	I am living my life the way I want

Summary of Findings

This section summarizes the findings obtained from the data analysis

performed on the collected data. The findings are organized by research objectives.

Findings From Research Objective 1

The overall level of perceived school climate of middle school students at the target school was found to be neutral (on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being "very positive"), $M = 3.50$, $SD = .96$.

Findings From Research Objective 2

The overall level of perceived school climate of high school students at the target school was found to be positive (on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being "very positive"), $M = 3.56$, $SD = .98$.

Findings From Research Objective 3

It was revealed that the overall level of school life satisfaction of middle school students at the target school was high (on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being "very high"), $M = 3.66$, $SD = .93$.

Findings From Research Objective 4

It was revealed that the overall level of school life satisfaction of high school students at the target school was high (on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being "very high"), $M = 4.03$, $SD = .84$.

Findings From Research Objective 5

Regarding this research objective, the following results were obtained.

- There was no significant difference in middle school students' level of perceived school climate at the target school, $F(2, 101) = 1.05$, $p = .354$.
- That there was no significant difference in middle school students' level of school life satisfaction at the target school, $F(2, 101) = 1.14$, $p = .325$.

Findings From Research Objective 6

Regarding this research objective, the following results were obtained.

- There was no significant difference in high school students' level of perceived school climate at the target school, $F(3, 200) = 2.10$, $p = .102$.
- That there was a significant difference in high school students' level of school life satisfaction at the target school, $F(3, 200) = 5.94$, $p = .001$.
 - Scheffe's post hoc multiple comparison test showed that Grade 9 students' level of school life satisfaction was significantly different from that of Grade 12 students ($p = .001$). Therefore, the overall level of school life satisfaction was significantly higher for students in Grade 12 ($M = 4.03$, $SD = .45$) than for those in Grade 9 ($M = 3.60$, $SD = .51$).

Findings From Research Objective 7

It was found that there was a significant, strong, and positive relationship between the perceived school climate level and the school life satisfaction held by middle school students at the target school, $r = .74$, $r^2 = .55$, $p < .001$.

Findings From Research Objective 8

It was found that there was a significant, strong, and positive relationship between the level of perceived school climate and the level of school life satisfaction held by high school students at the target school, $r = .65$, $r^2 = .42$, $p < .001$.

Discussion

This section presents a discussion of the findings obtained in this research, mainly by relating them with the findings of previous research studies. The discussion is organized by research objective.

Research Objective 1

The findings from this study showed that the middle school students' overall level of perceived school climate was neutral. This result is similar to Long and Eamoraphan (2015), who also got a neutral level of Chinese students' perceived school climate in an international school. Also, the level of four out of six of the dimensions of school climate (i.e., fairness, sharing resources, student interpersonal relations, and student-teacher relations) were found to be positive, while the two remaining dimensions (i.e., order and discipline, and parent involvement) were neutral. This means that the middle school students' level of perceived school climate could further be enhanced in all its related dimensions.

Research Objective 2

The findings from this study showed that the high school students' overall level of perceived school climate was positive. If the students had a positive perception of their school climate, they would be more likely to be more motivated to achieve their personal academic goals (Fraser et al., 1998; Han & Lynch, 2014). This result is different from that reported by Long and Eamoraphan (2015), who got a neutral level of perceived school climate in Chinese students attending an international school in China. In the present study, it was found that four out of six of the dimensions of school climate (i.e., order and discipline, fairness, student interpersonal relations, and student-teacher relations) were found to be positive, while the remaining two dimensions (i.e., parent involvement and sharing resources) were neutral. This means that the participants' level of perceived school climate could further be enhanced in all its related dimensions.

Research Objective 3

The findings from this study showed that the middle school students' overall level of school life satisfaction was high, indicating that students felt highly pleased and gratified with their school. The level of school life satisfaction held by the students affects the students' psychological well-being, as well as their school engagement, absence rate, and some behavioral problems (Ainley, 1991). High school life satisfaction can also lead to high academic achievement (Aung & Ye, 2016). In the current study, four out of five of the categories of school life satisfaction (i.e., safety needs, social/belongingness needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs) were found to be high, and only one category (i.e., physiological needs) was moderate. This means that the level of middle school students' school life satisfaction could be further enhanced, particularly the level of satisfaction with their physiological needs in the target school.

Research Objective 4

The findings from this study show that the high school students' overall level of school life satisfaction was high, indicating that students felt highly pleased and gratified with their school. Similar to the case of middle school students, it was found that four out of five of the categories of school life satisfaction (i.e., safety needs, social/belongingness needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs) were high, and only one category (i.e., physiological needs) was moderate. This means that the level of middle school students' school life satisfaction could be further enhanced, particularly the level of satisfaction with their physiological needs in the target school.

Research Objective 5

No significant difference was found in the level of perceived school climate held by middle school students at the target school. This can be due to the fact that students in Grades 6 through 8 are similar in a lot of ways, exhibit characteristics and behaviors unique to early adolescence, and have a unique set of desires and needs that separate them from the childhood years of elementary school but do not find them ready for the late adolescence of high school (Georgiady & Romano, 1977).

This research also found no significant difference in middle school students' level of school life satisfaction. The reason could probably be related to Grade 6 through 8 students' maturity level not being optimal and developed enough to understand and critically assess the different dimensions of their school life and school climate.

Research Objective 6

No significant difference was found in high school students' level of perceived school climate. This also means that Grade 9, 10, 11, and 12 students have a similar understanding and opinion of their school climate throughout the whole high school years. In addition, it is possible that having small sample sizes for each high school grade is one of the reasons why no significant difference in students' level of perceived school climate was found.

However, this research also found that there was a significant difference in high school students' level of school life satisfaction. The researchers found that Grade 9 students' level of school life satisfaction was significantly different and higher than one of Grade 12 students. This could be the result of the emotional maturity of a high school freshman (Grade 9) being very different from that of a graduating senior (Grade 12) due to the huge changes in social and emotional skills that occur between ages 14 and 18 (Snowman et al., 2009).

Research Objective 7

A significant, strong, positive relationship was found between middle school students' perceived school climate and school life satisfaction. The current findings agreed with previous results reported by Long and Eamoraphan (2015) and Samdal et al. (1998). They also found that students' perceived school climate and school life satisfaction point in the same direction, and participants' perceived school climate had a strong explanatory and predictive power for their level of school life satisfaction, and vice versa.

Research Objective 8

A significant, strong, and positive relationship was found between high school students' perceived school climate and their school life satisfaction. Similar to Research Objective 7, this finding agreed with previous study results obtained by Long and Eamoraphan (2015) and Samdal et al. (1998), who also found that students' perceived school climate had a strong explanatory and predictive power for their level of school life satisfaction, and vice versa.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers provide some recommendations for students, teachers, school administrators, and future researchers.

Recommendations for Students

In relation to order and discipline, students should be aware of the school rules and regulations in order to contribute to a better school climate. Students at

the target school are given the "Student-Parent Handbook" at the beginning of the school year, so they should read and understand the contents of the handbook to avoid any academic or behavioral consequences.

In relation to parent involvement, students should also encourage their parents to participate in different activities to enhance the school climate. Students should understand the benefits of their parents being actively involved in their education and school life.

Recommendations for Teachers

Teachers are recommended to create an atmosphere of respect in a learning environment and continue to consistently reinforce the classroom rules. They need to ensure that school rules and regulations are applied fairly and consistently to everyone, despite personal or emotional attachment. This will also prevent undesirable behavioral problems among students. Teachers also need to ensure that all students know the consequences of breaking school rules.

Recommendations for School Administrators

School administrators are recommended to create a more positive school climate that supports family involvement since very low levels of perceived school climate in relation to parent involvement were obtained in this study. Inviting parents to provide classroom enrichment activities by presenting their special knowledge and talents should be encouraged. School administrators should also provide parental training sessions in areas such as child development, health and safety, and special education and promote a bigger involvement of parents in the parents-teachers conference, which could be conducive to a school climate that will be perceived more positively by the students.

Recommendations for Future Researchers

Future researchers are recommended to utilize more dimensions of school climate to understand this variable more in-depth. Also, future researchers may use larger sample sizes to have more robust results in the future. Moreover, studies comparing different schools could also be conducted. While this study encourages future researchers to continue studying different dimensions of school climate to satisfy the diverse needs of students in the school, it is also important for future researchers to consider the participants' differences in demographics and how these differences may impact their perception of school climate and school life satisfaction.

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