

Predominant School Climate Patterns in Algerian Educational Institutions in Light of the Gender Variable

Boutra Faiza ¹, Bernaoui Bia ²

¹Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Martyr Hama Lakhdar El Oued

²Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Martyr Hama Lakhdar El Oued

Laboratory of Neuropsychology, Cognitive and Social

Email : b.faiza.78@hotmail.com ¹, bernaoui-bia@univ-eloued.dz ²

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Abstract:

The study aimed to identify the predominant school climate patterns in educational institutions among middle school teachers in El Oued during the 2023–2024 academic year, from their perspective. Utilizing the descriptive method in both its exploratory and comparative forms, the study was conducted on a sample of **132** teachers using a data collection tool based on the School Climate Questionnaire by Khalifi (2018), with certain psychometric properties (validity and reliability) established.

After data collection and statistical processing using the following statistical methods, including the *t-test* for independent and paired samples to determine differences between means, the study arrived at the following conclusions:

- The school climate level in educational institutions, from the perspective of the teachers, is high, with a pattern of administrative leadership.
- No statistically significant differences were found between the sample's mean estimates of the prevailing school climate level in educational institutions based on the gender variable.

Keywords: climate - family climate - family climate patterns - school environment - educational institution.

▪ Problem Statement:

School administration is a fundamental pillar in the educational process. The responsibilities of the school principal require an understanding of the school's needs, thereby striving to enhance

educational services efficiently and effectively. Negative school administration often faces various problems and challenges that hinder its functions. These challenges differ from one administration to another and from one educational level to another, depending on the conditions of the schools and the nature of the personnel involved. They can be classified as problems directly related to the educational process, such as a lack of equipment and facilities, insufficient provision of technical and administrative staff, and administrative difficulties such as inadequate school buildings and insufficient resources necessary for the educational process. Other issues include a lack of creativity within the administrative staff (Atwi, 2014).

Accordingly, there are numerous requirements for a safe school environment that must be considered to ensure an appropriate academic atmosphere. Among these requirements is the school climate, which refers to the general impression formed by the school staff, shaped by the principal's approach to dealing with them, the philosophy of school administration, work conditions, the nature of objectives, relationships among staff within the school, the morale of teachers, and the standards used to measure the progress and development of the teaching and learning process. It also encompasses the aspirations and hopes held by teachers, students, and parents regarding achievement, excellence, and development across all fields, all within an atmosphere filled with positive sentiments of fraternity and cooperation among all school staff (Al-Omari & Shahi, 2017).

Therefore, the school climate impacts the school's progress and the effectiveness of its personnel, including teachers, counselors, and administrators, and serves as an indicator of its success in achieving its goals. A supportive school climate must be provided by balancing the achievement of work objectives with the professional needs of the educational staff within the school. This relationship has been evidenced in previous studies such as Mohamedou Saleh (2013), Al-Karraawi (2019), and Suleiman (2021).

This study thus seeks to identify the prevailing school climate patterns in educational institutions from the perspective of middle school teachers in El Oued, by answering the following questions:

1. What are the predominant school climate patterns in educational institutions from the perspective of the teachers working there?
2. Are there statistically significant differences between the sample's mean estimates of the prevailing school climate patterns in educational institutions attributable to the gender variable?

▪ **Study Hypothesis:**

Based on the study's problem statement and theoretical framework, the following hypothesis can be formulated: There are no statistically significant differences between the sample's mean estimates of the prevailing school climate in educational institutions attributed to the gender variable.

▪ **Significance of the Study:**

- This study focuses on the concept of school climate according to scientific theoretical approaches, offering a conceptual framework of concepts and information on the topic. It may

serve as a theoretical foundation for new studies with other variables, contributing modestly to enriching the academic library.

- The results of this study will reveal the degree of prevailing school climate in educational institutions among teachers, highlighting the importance of school climate in school environments.

▪ **Objectives of the Study:**

The current study aims to:

- Identify the patterns of prevailing school climate in educational institutions.
- Examine differences in the estimates of the study sample regarding the degree of prevailing school climate in educational institutions attributed to the gender variable.

▪ **Operational Definition of School Climate:**

School climate is the set of characteristics of the internal environment within middle schools, as perceived by teachers, which influences their behavior and performance. It is represented by the score obtained by the study participants on the school climate questionnaire used in the current study. This questionnaire encompasses the following dimensions: organizational structure, administrative leadership style, communication patterns, incentives, and participation in decision-making.

▪ **Definition of School Climate:**

School climate refers to the set of characteristics that define the work environment within an organization, prompting employees to adopt specific behavioral patterns, whether within the same administrative level or across different levels. These characteristics can be identified through employees' perceptions and awareness within the organization, shaping their attitudes, orientations, and paths that determine their behavior and impact their performance (Al-Shanti, 2006).

Owens (1981) viewed school climate as the result of the interaction between individuals and their environment. School climate is the set of stable characteristics in an organization's internal environment that individuals experience and which affects their behavior, describable in terms of a set of values associated with organizational characteristics (Ben Safia, 2013, p. 156).

From these definitions of school climate, it can be inferred that school climate characterizes the life within schools, built upon the patterns and dimensions of staff experiences in school life, reflecting organizational structure, leadership practices, communication style, provided incentives, and participation in decision-making.

Patterns of School Climate:

Researchers have varied in their classification of school climate patterns, with each researcher relying on their perspective to develop a unique classification. Consequently, several models have emerged, including:

1- Halpin and Croft's Classification:

Halpin and Croft's model was one of the earliest attempts to identify school climate patterns. In 1962, the researchers developed a tool with eight dimensions, identifying six types of school climate as follows:

1.1 Open Climate:

This type of school climate is characterized by high morale among its members, where strong social relationships prevail. The school administration strives to meet the social needs of both staff and students. An open climate includes appropriate incentives, continuous training, participation in planning and organizing work, and a conducive environment for teaching and learning.

1.2 Autonomous Climate:

In this climate, there is almost complete freedom granted by the principal to staff in performing their duties. This environment fosters leadership emergence from within the school community, with performance and achievement marked by humaneness and simplicity. High morale exists, though slightly less than in an open climate.

1.3 Controlled Climate:

This climate prioritizes work performance over social needs, focusing on task completion even if it comes at the expense of fulfilling the staff's needs. The emphasis on work and duty completion leaves little room for nurturing interpersonal relationships.

1.4 Familiar Climate:

This type of climate is characterized by a familial or close-knit atmosphere, where there is a focus on social relationships and meeting social needs rather than solely on work.

1.5 Paternal Climate:

In this climate, authority is centralized with the school principal, limiting the emergence of leaders among school members. Consequently, control takes precedence over guidance and supervision, and divisions and disruptions among school members often lead to low morale due to reduced performance and attention to needs.

1.6 Closed Climate:

The opposite of an open climate, a closed climate offers minimal opportunity for teachers and staff to develop social relationships. Work performance and completion are generally low, and staff satisfaction is lacking (Hajji, 2000).

2- Lewin and Stringer's Classification:

Lewin and Stringer proposed three types of school climate:

2.1 Authoritarian Climate:

Characterized by centralized decision-making, where staff in the institution are expected only to execute decisions.

2.2 Supportive Climate:

This climate fosters good relationships among staff within the organization, moving beyond formal work relationships.

2.3 Achievement-Oriented Climate:

In this climate, all administrative levels have the opportunity to participate in setting goals to be achieved and making decisions regarding these goals.

3- Sabbagh, Qwaqzeh, and Aldaman's Classification:

In this classification, organizational climate is divided into two types:

3.1 Supportive Organizational Climate:

Problems are resolved, equality is maintained among everyone, and there is a focus on cooperation and equity to achieve desired goals.

3.2 Threatening Climate:

Emphasis is placed on control, surveillance, and inequality among members, with a focus on adherence to work without sufficient attention to needs and desires (Awad, 2007).

4- Lunenburg's Classification:

Lunenburg classifies school climate into two types based on prevailing characteristics in schools:

4.1 Custodial Schools:

This type of school climate is characterized by strict discipline and an emphasis on maintaining order. Students are expected to accept teachers' decisions without question, and teachers do not attempt to understand student behavior. This climate is dominated by distrust and pessimism.

4.2 Humanistic Schools:

These schools provide a positive educational environment where there is open interaction and cooperation between teachers and students. The model emphasizes psychological and social aspects of the educational process and is preferred for its democratic climate, where communication is open between students and teachers. Lunenburg supported this classification with a study conducted on a sample of 1,000 teachers from 53 primary institutions, finding that humanistic attitudes were prevalent in schools with an open climate, while custodial attitudes were more common in schools with a closed climate (Al-Otaibi, 2007).

Factors Affecting School Climate:

The school environment creates a conducive climate for academic success, and these factors include:

1. Respect:

Individuals within the educational institution feel that their opinions and suggestions are valued and respected. In a positive school climate, individuals do not feel oppressed; instead, they

experience care and appreciation, leading to psychological stability within the educational institution.

2.Trust:

This reflects the extent to which students believe that individuals within the educational institution interact with them sincerely and honestly, free from hypocrisy or deception. Such an environment provides them with a sense of security, fostering a feeling of belonging to the school and motivating staff to engage and avoid absenteeism.

3.Opportunities for Participation:

Educational staff should provide all students, including those struggling academically, with opportunities to participate in decision-making, suggest ideas, and offer proposals. The absence of participation negatively impacts students' self-concept and deprives the institution of benefiting from their ideas in improving the educational process.

4.Cohesion:

This refers to the emotional bond that individuals feel toward the educational institution, including their loyalty and willingness to defend it. Behavioral indicators include a sense of community within the institution and a tendency to remain and care for it.

5.Innovation:

A positive school climate resists routine and seeks renewal. To ensure healthy growth within the educational institution and its ability to organize development projects aligned with its needs and goals, innovation stimulates individual interest, fulfills their motivations, and raises their aspirations (Soufi, 2018).

Study Methodology:

Since this study focuses on examining statistically significant differences in school climate patterns based on the gender variable, the adopted methodology is the descriptive approach in both its exploratory and comparative forms.

1- Exploratory Study Sample:

The exploratory study, once implemented in the field, allows for adjustments to the study tool items after calculating its validity and reliability. This phase also facilitates understanding the sample's characteristics more closely.

▪ Temporal Scope:

The study was conducted on Sunday, March 17, 2024, in the evening, on a sample of teachers selected through a comprehensive survey method. The sample consisted of 34 teachers from Mohamed El-Amin Middle School for the 2023/2024 academic year.

▪ Spatial Scope:

The study was conducted at Mohamed El-Amin El-Amoudi Middle School, located in El Oued Municipality, Wilaya of El Oued, Algeria.

Table (1): Distribution of the Exploratory Study Sample by Demographic Variables (Gender, Age, and Professional Experience)

Variable	Categories	Count	Percentage
Gender	Males	10	41.29%
	Females	24	70.58%
Total		34	100%

Table (1) shows that the percentage of male teachers (41.29%) is significantly lower than that of female teachers (70.58%), indicating a notable gender disparity. The ages of the teachers range primarily from 25 to 35 years, comprising 44.11% of the sample, followed by those aged 36 to 45 years, who make up 38.28%. The remaining age groups include those younger than 25 years and those 46 years or older, both at 8.82%. The highest category in terms of professional experience is the 5 to 10 years range, representing 32.35% of the sample, with other experience categories showing relatively close numbers.

2.2. Main Study Sample:

The study population included all teachers from the following middle schools in the central region of El Oued: Mahmoud Al-Sharifi Middle School, Ibn Badis Middle School, and Ahmed Al-Tijani Middle School, totaling 147 teachers. Based on this, a comprehensive selection of teachers was made according to the following criteria:

- Exclusion of sample members if they provided multiple answers to a single item or statement in the questionnaire.
- Exclusion of sample members if they did not adhere to the questionnaire instructions.

The number of teachers became **132**, and the following table shows the distribution of the main study sample according to the variables, as illustrated below:

Table (2): Distribution of the Study Population by Gender

Variable	Categories	Count	Percentage
Gender	Males	42	31.81%
	Females	90	68.18%
Total		132	100%

Table (2) represents the distribution of the sample according to the gender variable, with a total of 132 teachers, consisting of 42 male teachers (31.81%) and 90 female teachers (68.18%).

2- Study Tools:

Researchers in the fields of psychology, education, and social sciences are focused on obtaining accurate information and data about behavioral phenomena. To gather this data, researchers use a variety of psychological tools, including tests, scales, observation lists, self-assessment lists, and rating scales. When using a test to obtain information that assists in decision-making, a primary challenge is selecting the most appropriate test to support that decision. Several alternative tests may be available, but the question arises: which of these tests is most effective in providing useful information, and on what basis should we make our selection? (Abu Hashim, 2006).

In this context, and to collect the necessary data about the sample in the current study, the following tool was utilized:

- **School Climate Questionnaire:**

3.1– Description of the School Climate Questionnaire:

The School Climate Questionnaire by Khalifi (2018) was adopted, consisting of 46 items distributed across the scale dimensions as follows: Organizational Structure: 9 items, Leadership Style: 11 items, Communication Style: 9 items, Provided Incentives: 8 items, Participation in Decision-Making: 9 items. The following table illustrates this distribution:

Table (3): Item Numbers Distributed Across the Dimensions of the School Climate Questionnaire

Dimensions	Item Numbers	Number of Items
Organizational Structure Dimension	1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8.9	9
Administrative Leadership Style Dimension	10.11.12.13.14.15.16.17.18.19.20	11
Communication Style Dimension	21.22.23.24.25.26.27.28.29	9
Provided Incentives Dimension	30.31.32.33.34.35.36.37	8
Participation in Decision-Making Dimension	38.39.40.41.42.43.44.45.46	9
Total		46

- **Distribution of Item Direction in the School Climate Questionnaire:**

The items in the questionnaire are distributed in a positive direction.

3.3 Questionnaire Scoring:

In designing the School Climate Questionnaire, the researcher adopted a closed format, providing predefined response options for each question. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the statements, as it is widely utilized for assessing opinions and attitudes due to its ease of

comprehension and balanced scoring. This scale indicates the degree to which respondents agree with each statement in the questionnaire, with each item offering the following options: (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Each response option was assigned a score for statistical analysis, as shown in the following table.

Table (4): Scoring of Positive Statements for the School Climate Questionnaire

Alternatives	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Positive Items	5	4	3	2	1

The total score range for the questionnaire is between 230 as the maximum and 46 as the minimum. Accordingly, the school climate levels on this questionnaire are classified into five levels as follows:

- Very Low School Climate Level: scores range from 1 to 46.
- Low School Climate Level: scores range from 47 to 93.
- Moderate School Climate Level: scores range from 94 to 140.
- High School Climate Level: scores range from 141 to 187.
- Very High School Climate Level: scores range from 188 to 230.

Table (5): Classification of School Climate Levels in the Overall Questionnaire

Classification	Score
Very Low School Climate Level	1 to 46
Low School Climate Level	47 to 93
Moderate School Climate Level	94 to 140
High School Climate Level	141 to 187
Very High School Climate Level	188 to 230

It is clear from Table (5) that the school climate level ranges from very high when study sample members obtain scores between 188 and 230 to very low when they score between 1 and 46.

Part One of the Questionnaire:

This section includes personal and professional information about the respondent, covering the following elements:

- Gender, with two categories: Male, Female.

1.1. Presentation of Study Question Results:

The study question states:

- What are the predominant school climate patterns in educational institutions from the perspective of the teachers working there?

To answer the study question, the mean and standard deviation of the total scores of the sample members were calculated. The following table presents the obtained results:

Table (6): Mean and Standard Deviation of Predominant School Climate Patterns

Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation	Hypothetical Mean	Rank
Organizational Structure Dimension	32.12	6.27	18	3
Administrative Leadership Style Dimension	42.10	7.96	22	1
Communication Style Dimension	32.36	6.53	18	2
Provided Incentives Dimension	24.30	6.30	16	5
Participation in Decision-Making Dimension	29.72	7.34	18	4
Total	160.6	34.4	92	

The results shown in Table (6) indicate that the predominant school climate pattern in this study achieved a mean of 160.6 and a standard deviation of 34.4. The ranking of the patterns is as follows:

- **Administrative Leadership Style** ranked first.
- **Communication Style** ranked second.
- **Organizational Structure** ranked third.
- **Participation in Decision-Making** ranked fourth.
- **Provided Incentives** ranked fifth.

These results demonstrate that the mean scores for the school climate patterns among the sample members are higher than the hypothetical mean for each pattern, indicating elevated levels of school climate patterns. Therefore, from the perspective of middle school teachers in El Oued, the school climate patterns in educational institutions are perceived as high.

The findings of this study suggest that school principals share leadership responsibilities with teachers, strive to improve their relationships with teachers, regularly inform teachers of decisions and reports, and welcome their opinions and suggestions. The teacher's relationship with the school environment as a whole, including parents, contributes to creating an effective school climate. This is evident from the ranking of Communication Style in second place, aligning with the study by Al-

Otaibi (2007), which found that human relations prevail among teachers when they communicate with one another, especially in a warm climate. Similarly, Smith's study (2009) showed that interaction with teachers fosters a professional sense of support, helping them overcome feelings of isolation and encouraging communication.

The study's results also reflect the nature of Algerian society, characterized by cooperation and mutual assistance in challenging situations. This is especially true in the social structure of the Souf community in southern Algeria, marked by cohesion and social interaction. This environment fosters warmth, friendliness, and harmony among middle school teachers in El Oued, who sometimes participate in activities outside the school framework.

The study's findings align with the following studies that found high levels of school climate patterns: Al-Talhi (2018), Shaib (2014), Mohammed (2017), Al-Shadadi and Al-Haidari (2019), and Al-Tuwaireqi (2014). However, it differs from studies that reported a moderate school climate level, such as Soufi (2018) and Bousetta and Aouarib (2023), and from Al-Samawi's study (2004), which indicated a low school climate level.

1.2 Presentation of Hypothesis Results:

The study hypothesis states: "There are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the sample members regarding the prevailing school climate in educational institutions attributed to the gender variable."

To verify the validity of the hypothesis, a comparison was made between the mean scores of males and females on the School Climate Questionnaire using the t-test for independent samples. After statistical analysis with SPSS, the results are shown in Table (7).

Table (7): T-test for the Significance of Differences Between Male and Female Means on the School Climate Questionnaire

Gender	Sample	Mean	Standard Deviation	T Value	Significance Level (sig)
Males	42	167.07	18.158	0.419	0.676
Females	90	168.90	25.410		

Table (7) shows that the mean score for males on the School Climate Questionnaire is 167.07 with a standard deviation of 18.158, while the mean score for females is 168.90 with a standard deviation of 25.410. The t-test value for the significance of differences is 0.419, which is not significant at the 0.05 level. Consequently, we accept the hypothesis stating, "There are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the sample members regarding the prevailing school climate in educational institutions attributed to the gender variable."

The results indicate that both male and female teachers have a consistent perception of the school climate, likely due to daily interactions, communication, and alignment with the school's environment. This environment is characterized by fairness and equality between genders, with school rules and regulations applied uniformly across all aspects of the school climate. Additionally, the availability of facilities such as coffee lounges, prayer rooms, teachers' lounges, internal

cafeterias, clean restrooms, and air-conditioned classrooms creates a cohesive administrative structure that provides teachers with a sense of security, comfort, and fulfillment of their needs.

The study's results align with those of the following studies: Al-Dihani (2013), Bousetta and Aouarib (2023), and Gul (2008).

However, the findings differ from studies by Masrouriyya (2016), Souli (2014), Khalifi (2018), Al-Zatma (2015), and Ubaidah (2016), which found differences between males and females in their perception of the school climate.

Conclusion:

Based on the findings presented and the statistical analysis of data regarding school climate patterns, and in alignment with the main objective of the study, which aimed to assess the level of school climate patterns, the results indicated the following:

- The level of prevailing school climate patterns in educational institutions, from the perspective of middle school teachers in El Oued, was high.
- There were no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the sample members on the School Climate Questionnaire attributable to the gender variable.

Suggestions:

The following are some proposed research topics:

- Conducting similar studies at different educational levels.
- Studying school climate from the perspective of other elements within the school environment.
- Examining school climate in relation to other academic variables, such as academic achievement, innovation, cognitive motivation, etc., across various educational levels.
 - Exploring the relationship between school climate and locus of control across different educational stages with diverse samples.
 - Investigating the relationship between school climate and conflict management styles in educational institutions across various educational stages.

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