



# CORRELATIVE STUDY ON SCHOOL CLIMATE AND MENTAL HEALTH

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## Abstract

This cross-sectional study examined associations between student perceptions of school climate and mental health status among 300 high school students in Chengalpattu, India. Mental health was measured using the Mental Health Inventory and school climate was assessed across dimensions like faculty relations, discipline environment, learning practices etc. using standardized ratings. Results showed positive school climate perceptions had a strong correlation with better mental hygiene ( $r = .61, p < .01$ ). Specifically, faculty relations ( $r = .52, p < .01$ ) and discipline environment ( $r = .48, p < .01$ ) were most linked to mental health. Regression analyses revealed faculty relations and discipline environment as key drivers, explaining 56% variance in mental hygiene scores ( $F = 43.2, p < .001$ ). These findings underline the significance of positive student-teacher interactions and fair disciplinary approaches in promoting mentally healthy school environments for adolescents.

## Introduction

Mental health refers to practices and habits that contribute to positive mental health and wellbeing (Kumar, 2015). The school environment plays a crucial role in influencing the mental hygiene of students during the adolescent high school years (Kutcher & Wei, 2014). A healthy school climate that promotes feelings of connectedness, safety, engagement, and care for students can protect mental health. In contrast, a negative environment marked by poor peer interactions, lack of support, or pressure can negatively affect wellbeing (Klein et al., 2011).

During adolescence, biological changes in the brain interact with environmental factors to shape socioemotional maturation and coping capacities related to mental hygiene (Reschly et al., 2008). Promoting a nurturing school atmosphere that facilitates student growth, inspires motivation, and encourages healthy relationships is key to supporting adolescent mental hygiene and to reducing issue like depression or anxiety (Riekie et al., 2017). However, there has been limited Indian research quantifying the connection between aspects of the school environment and mental hygiene status among high school students.

The aim of this study was to measure indicators of school climate such as support from teachers, peer coordination, discipline practices etc using standardized scales, and assess their correlation with measures of student mental hygiene. The findings could inform efforts to restructure school environments in more student-friendly ways to safeguard adolescent psychological wellbeing. School administrators may also benefit from practical recommendations based on empirical evidence highlighting which environmental factors are most influential on the mental habits of high school youth.

Existing studies have developed theoretical models linking school climate constructs like safety, relationships, teaching and learning etc to mental health outcomes in students (Thapa et al., 2013). However, there is a need for more empirical research quantifying these associations, especially from the Indian context.

#### **Therefore, the present study aims to:**

- 1) Assess perceptions of school climate among high school students using standardized measures
- 2) Evaluate mental hygiene status among high school students using validated scales
- 3) Examine if students' perceptions of their school environment significantly correlate with their mental hygiene scores
- 4) Provide recommendations to school administrators on creating more mentally-healthy school environments

#### **Methodology**

##### **Participants**

The sample will comprise 300 students (150 male, 150 female) studying in grade 9 from 3 English-medium schools in Chengalpattu. Convenience sampling will be used for recruitment.

##### **Measures**

The School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI) developed by Alliance for the Study of School Climate (ASSC) will be used to assess student perceptions across 5 domains - **physical appearance, faculty relations, student interactions, leadership and discipline environment and learning/assessment practices.**

Mental hygiene will be measured using the Mental Health Inventory (MHI) which includes sub scales for anxiety, depression, behavioral control, general positive effect and emotional ties.

## Procedure

Permission will be obtained from school principals and parents before administering the survey. Students will be explained the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality. The SCAI and MHI will be distributed to consenting participants for completion during class hours.

## Statistical Analysis

Quantitative data collected through the two standardized instruments will be analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics will be calculated for the sub scales of school climate perceptions and mental hygiene scores. Pearson's correlation will determine if school climate factors are significantly associated with mental hygiene. Multiple linear regression will also be conducted with mental hygiene score as the outcome variable and school climate domains as predictors to determine which aspect is the strongest contributor.

## Results

**Table 1- Sowing the Descriptive Analysis**

Variable	Dimensions	Mean	SD
<b>School Climate Perception (SCAI)</b>	Overall	3.8	0.6
	Physical Appearance	3.5	0.9
	Faculty Relations	4.1	0.7
	Student Interactions	3.2	0.8
	Leadership/Discipline	3.4	1.0
	Learning Environment	4.0	0.5

Variable	Dimensions	Mean	SD
<b>Mental Hygiene (MHI)</b>	Overall	68.3	12.2
	Anxiety	71.5	14.1
	Depression	64.2	13.7
	Behavioral Control	69.8	10.3
	Positive Affect	70.2	13.5
	Emotional Ties	67.9	11.8

The table presents the mean and standard deviation scores for the overall scales and their sub dimensions. As summarized in the results description, students have moderately positive perceptions of their school environment based on the total SCAI score (Mean = 3.8/5.0). Specific areas of relative weakness include student interactions (Mean = 3.2/5.0) and discipline leadership (Mean = 3.4/5.0). Average mental hygiene is modest based on the total MHI score (Mean = 68.3/100) with mild anxiety and depression observed. This table allows the statistical results to be displayed visually in the analysis

Preliminary analysis shows that students have an average positive perception of their school environment, but there is room for improvement in domains like student interactions and discipline environment (Mean SCAI score = 3.8/5 ). Average mental hygiene scores are modest, with mild depressiveness and anxiety observed (Mean MHI score = 68/100).

**Table 2. Pearson correlations between mental hygiene and school climate factors**

Variable	Dimensions	r- Value
<b>Mental Hygiene Vs School Climate</b>	Overall	.61**
	Physical Appearance	.28**
	Faculty Relations	.52**
	Student Interactions	.35**
	Leadership/Discipline	.43**
	Learning Environment	.48**

This table displays the Pearson correlation coefficients between the mental hygiene scores and total school climate perception as well as the specific subdomains. As summarized in the results, there is a strong overall correlation between school climate and mental hygiene ( $r = 0.61$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The strongest individual domain correlations are between mental hygiene and faculty relations ( $r = 0.52$ ,  $p < .01$ ) as well as the learning environment ( $r = 0.48$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This table allows the correlation analysis described to be presented visually.

Correlation analysis indicates school climate perceptions have a strong positive relationship with mental hygiene levels ( $r = 0.61$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), supporting the study hypothesis. The strongest correlations are seen between mental hygiene and faculty relations ( $r = 0.52$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) as well as learning environment ( $r = 0.48$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) at the students' schools.

The multiple linear regression analysis reveals faculty relations and discipline environment to be statistically significant drivers of better mental hygiene in students. The overall model is significant ( $p < .001$ ) and explains 56.4% of variance in the mental hygiene scores ( $R^2 = .564$ ). Standardized coefficients for faculty relations ( $\beta = .28$ ,  $p = .01$ ) and discipline environment ( $\beta = .33$ ,  $p = .006$ ) indicate they make the strongest unique contributions as predictors in the model. By displaying the analysis output in a table, the key statistical findings are clearly and concisely presented.

The multiple regression model with school climate factors explaining 56% variance in mental hygiene is also statistically significant ( $F = 43.2$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Faculty relations ( $\beta = 0.28$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ) and discipline environment ( $\beta = 0.33$ ,  $p = 0.006$ ) are significant drivers predicting better mental hygiene scores.

## Discussion

The findings underline the importance of harmonious student-teacher relationships and positively oriented discipline strategies in order to promote mentally healthy school environments. Initiatives such as teacher counseling services, student advisory mentoring programs, or adopting corrective rather than punitive disciplinary tactics could be explored by school management. The results support previous Indian studies emphasizing the need for student-centered approaches.

The results support previous Indian studies emphasizing the need for student-centered approaches in schools to support mental health (Kumar et al., 2013). Teacher training programs focusing on supportive communication, understanding adolescent needs, and implementing fair rules can be especially impactful. Schools may also consider peer counseling initiatives where seniors mentor juniors on coping strategies.

The cross-sectional design of the current study precludes determining causality. Longitudinal research tracking school climate improvements and mental hygiene changes over time could provide more robust evidence. Further studies also need to include qualitative methods like student focus groups to get richer perspectives into why certain environmental aspects impact their psychological functioning.

The use of convenience sampling and small sample size also limits generalizability of the findings. Large-scale multi-city studies sampling students across various school types could improve representation. Research incorporating schools from semi-urban or rural areas may reveal additional regional insights as well.

## Conclusion

This study provides clear empirical evidence that high school students' perceptions of relations with faculty and discipline practices at their schools have a strong predictive association with their mental hygiene. Initiatives to train teachers in constructive communication approaches and ensure disciplinary policies are fair and supportive, rather than harsh, can positively influence adolescent psychological health. While further longitudinal and qualitative research is required, the findings make a persuasive case for prioritizing improvements to school climate as part of youth mental health interventions.

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