



Impact of University Climate on Academic Achievement of Social sciences Students in Azad Jammu And Kashmir

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Article Details:

Received on 23 June 2025

Accepted on 22 July 2025

Published on 24 July 2025

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Abstract

University climate refers to the educational environment whether it creates a positive setting for learning, academic achievements and students' growth. The three main dimensions of climate are the physical, social and academic climate. The university climate and educational resources are crucial for academic success and for giving pupils equal opportunities. Student academic achievement is directly linked with essential university climate and availability of resources. The major objective of the study was to identify the impact of university climate on academic achievement of university students. The study is descriptive in nature and employed a quantitative research design. Population of current study was 1736 undergraduate social sciences students in education department in universities of Azad Kashmir. Sample of 316 students were selected from six universities of Azad Kashmir. Random sampling technique was used in this study. Self-structured questionnaire based on five-point Likert scale was used as an instrument for data collection. The collected data was analyzed by using SPSS Software. The major findings of the study were the majority of the students were 59.6% agreed upon the university climate has a significant impact on their academic achievement. Institution climate play a crucial role in promoting better academic outcomes among students. the predictors, physical and social climate had the strongest and most positive effect, a supportive and engaging social environment contributes positively to academic outcomes with 59.5% agreed and strongly agreed. Major recommendation of the study were Institutions should strengthen the social climate to foster student engagement, improve physical infrastructure to enhance learning conditions, and adopt an integrated approach to environmental support for academic success.

Keywords: Academic achievement, university climate, students.



Introduction

The climate of a university is like an individual's personality unique and shaped by various factors. The climate of a university is not determined by a single thing. The features of students and staff, the norms and procedures governing interactions between staff and students, the attitudes of teachers, peer social attitudes and the physical and material resources all make up the university climate. A positive university climate is one of the fundamental prerequisites for the realization of effective learning. University climate is significant factor in academic achievement and performance. It can also be described as the environment that is produced by shared beliefs, attitudes, sentiments, and social relationships. Based on all of these conceptualizations of university climate, it can be concluded that climate expresses the environment or personality of the university and is associated with the behaviours of the teachers, students, and other members and stakeholders of the educational institutions (Stewart, 2018).

Important facets of university climate include teaching workshops and the interactions between the principal, instructors, parents, and students. As a whole, academic standard, the environment, safety procedures, and institutional rules and regulations within university provide foundation, meanings, and responses in right direction (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2018). The academic environment, which creates a learning system that pushes everyone to succeed, the social environment, which fosters constructive dialogue and engagement between shareholders and physical environment, which offers private and encouraging learning environment, all contribute to the university's overall climate (Tableman 2004). Loukas (2007), stated that university climate is a multifaceted concept with intellectual, social, and physical components, despite the fact that defining it precisely has proven challenging.

Physical aspect involves the way the university building and classrooms are presented, the size of the campus and the student-teacher ratio in each classroom, how lessons are organized at the university, how well the teaching resources and tools work, and security and safety. The social dimension encompasses a student's level of competition and social comparison, the extent to which students, teachers, and university staff take part in decision-making, the extent to which teachers and other staff treat students fairly and equally, and the quality of interpersonal relationships among all staff members, including teacher leaders, teachers, students, and parents.

Academic dimension involves quality of instruction, teachers' expectations for students' accomplishment, tracking of the students' progress and quick communication of results to students and parents. University climate affects student achievement positively (Sakiz, 2017). Academic success depends on a positive campus climate, which is connected to learning, growth, and academic achievement (American Psychological Association, 2013). More precisely, suspension, truancy, absenteeism, and dropout rates are all impacted by the atmosphere at university.

Numerous elements, including university atmosphere including academic support services, appear to have an impact on the success of pupils. Researchers have connected social motivation, academic drive, self-worth, and solving disputes to a positive campus atmosphere (Plalnk et al., 2009).

An improved sense of community is linked to a number of product variables, including students' exam presentation. The atmosphere gives teachers and students the setting they need to be successful in their work. According to university perspectives,



students' sense of belonging at university was associated with their academic success. It was also discovered that creating a classroom community has a major effect on the attitudes and behaviours of the students.

In other words, we need to offer universities concrete services. A well- designed building, a spacious and open classroom with the necessary captivating applications, a well-equipped lab, libraries with relevant book collections, unlock rooms for different activities, enough furniture, technology, a clean environment, a playground and more are all examples of these facilities.

According to the National University Climate Council (2007), standards, objectives, communication between people, instructional strategies, organisational structures, and patterns of people's experiences are the foundation of a healthy and long-lasting environment. A pleasant, long-lasting environment encourages the learning and growth of young people, which is essential for a fulfilling, productive, and democratic existence. Norms, beliefs, and expectations that promote social, emotional, and physical safety are all part of this environment.

Research from all over the world shows that a university's climate has an impact on students' academic achievement, personal growth, and general well-being. Teaching and learning are two of the most important components of the academic setting. Research supports the notion that an encouraging setting improves students' learning capacities. In a supportive university setting, cooperative learning, group cohesion, respect for one another, and trust are all promoted. Additionally, understanding the environment and culture of an institution aids in comprehending the attitudes, behaviours and performance of both individuals and groups.

Academic success and university atmosphere are directly correlated. In addition to immediately boosting student achievement, a favorable campus climate appears to have long-lasting effects. According to studies, pupils' chances of succeeding academically rise when they are encouraged to engage in the learning process. Several studies have found that biased environments have a detrimental impact on students' learning and that how students perceive their campus environment affects both learning and developmental outcomes. It is often acknowledged that university atmosphere is a crucial component of a successful university and a significant indicator of students' academic achievement (Horn, 2003).

According to Sakiz (2017), academic performance depends on a pleasant university climate, which benefits students' achievement. To get better results, agentic students may think back on their educational experiences, act upon them, and modify their academic behaviour accordingly. There is either no relationship or a negative relationship between student academic achievement and institutional atmosphere (Jones & Shindler, 2016).

The most important result of educational institutions is academic accomplishment. It describes academic results that show how well a learner has fulfilled learning goals. The student's cumulative grade point average (CGPA) is typically used to gauge academic success. Academic achievement is crucial because it gets students ready for upcoming jobs, permits students to enter reasonable fields, and supports students avoid poverty (Altameemi et al., 2023).

For a while, education has been viewed as serving a useful function in preparing students to be important contributors to the nation's progress and to society. Learning is



an active change agent that gives students the ability to create information, develop attitudes, and acquire life skills. All levels of the educational system have the facilities and resources required to provide a successful and effective teaching and learning process (Bada, 2015).

Purpose Of The Study

This study aims to identify the impact of university climate on academic achievement of students. Ultimately, current study seeks to provide the understanding to identify specific areas where universities can enhance their support systems, improve resource allocation, and foster a more inclusive and motivating environment. This can lead to better academic achievement, increased student retention, and overall enhancement of higher education's quality in the region, contributing to the socioeconomic development.

Objectives Of The Study

1. To investigate the impact of university climate on students' academic achievement.

Literature Review

The nation's total development, which includes social, economic, and industrial advancement, is greatly influenced by the higher education system. In literature, the terms climate, atmosphere and environment are used interchangeably as synonyms. Furthermore, because of its influence on other organisational phenomena, this intricate and multifaceted construct is regarded as having great significance. The complicated concept of "university climate" refers to the features of interactions between adults and students in universities (Eliot et al., 2010).

All students in an educational setting experienced and be impacted by the same climate if university climate is conceived as a university-level property. Climate can also be thought of as a property of the university context or as a subjective perception of the minimize conflict by giving children the conveniences they require for their university programs and sporting events. Building suitable zones of protection for the different space equipment might be feasible (Hackman & Wageman, 2007).

The teachers' and the students' perspectives have altered if they have access to all the material resources (Cohen et al., 2009). Khan (2017), stated that Learners and the climate are closely related. Students engage with the environment through interaction, which entails utilizing the environment, facilities, resources, and space for learning objectives.

Erwin (2004), reported that the best teachers are those who can fully convey the ideal learning environment to students and aspiring teachers, enabling them to continue working towards creating the best possible university environment for students. Students' accomplishments are positively impacted by the university environment. The reason for this is that the social and psychological effects of the interaction between professors and students increase students' interest in extracurricular and curricular activities, which raises their academic performance.

According to Loukas (2007), despite the challenge of defining university climate in a comprehensive way, scholars agree that it is an umbrella term with the following academic, social and physical dimensions.

Physical Climate

The attractive and well-kept gardens are all manifestations of this. As a result, students who are impacted by the university's facilities develop a greater attitude of excellence.



These are the middlemen in this institution-atmosphere affiliation (Uline & Moran, 2008). A university's physical space consists of its labs, libraries, playgrounds, classroom furnishings, and instructional resources. Additionally, the physical setting consists of playfields, swimming pools, decorative items, machines, as well as audio-visual apparatus. The physical environment comprises the actual site, buildings, furniture, space, equipment, and facilities required for effective teaching and learning (EnObong 2012).

Students' performance is also influenced by the university, the classroom, and the surrounding environment. Students' performance on a variety of educational outcomes is significantly impacted by the classroom environment. Students' attitudes towards learning are generally improved by the physical, emotional, and artistic aspects of the classroom environment. A classroom environment that supports the teaching process and an ordered but non-repressive atmosphere are two elements that have helped to create successful instructional universities. Every student should be able to feel more satisfied, like they belong, like they are identified, and like they have accomplished something in the present and the future. All the factors influencing students' learning and academic achievement, the university atmosphere has the biggest impact (Langston, 2012).

The principal has the power to significantly enhance the university's atmosphere, which also has an impact on the physical layout's safety. Furthermore, a supportive university environment has numerous advantages, such as improving student safety, relationships, and academic performance among community members. Academic results and building quality are closely related in an effective university climate. Human comfort factors such as indoor air quality, lighting, and acoustical management have a major effect on pupils' academic achievement. Physical elements including air, heat and temperature affect students' academic performance. Since daylight has a more beneficial effect on learning, light clearly affect pupils' results.

Social Climate

The standard of each employee's interpersonal relationships (teacher-parents, teacher-teacher, teacher-student, and teacher-student leader) instructors and other staff personnel treating pupils fairly and equally; the level of social comparison and competitiveness among students; the degree to which university employees, instructors, and students take part in the process of making decisions. Relationships between instructors, students, and parents are all part of the university's social climate. Rules and regulations at the institution and the curriculum also have an impact on the social atmosphere.

In secondary university development, where student attitude and disciplinary issues are frequently more severe than in basic learning environments. it is highly important that the university climate be in a decent and balanced physical condition (Kelly, 2013). Students' behaviour and problems are lessened as a result of the university climate. These days, mental health issues like anxiety, depression and antisocial behaviour are more common in youngsters. With time, students who are transferring to their secondary institution also experience a deterioration in academic adjustment; consequently, absenteeism, dropout rates, and failure rates rise, indicating that the university climate has a detrimental impact on students' academic achievement.

Academic Climate



The standard of instruction, the expectations of educators for students' performance, tracking the development of the pupils and promptly informing them of the outcomes. Actually, staff and students' impressions of the university's climate are quantifiable. Learning, development, and academic success are all correlated with university climate (American Psychological Association, 2013).

Researchers have connected social motivation, academic drive, self-esteem, and conflict resolution to a positive campus atmosphere. More specifically, rates of absenteeism, suspension and dropout are all impacted by the atmosphere at university. In universities without supportive norms, structures, and associations, students are more likely to experience assault, peer assault, and punishing disciplinary procedures. Reduced academic achievement and excessive absence rates are often associated with these occurrences (Alessandro, 2013).

Academic support services and the university climate are two factors that seem to have an impact on students' success. Numerous studies have discovered that students' academic achievement is connected to their sense of belonging, and that opinions about the university climate affect students' results. Exam performance is one of the many outcome factors that have been identified to be impacted by the attitudes and behaviours of students as well as the classroom community development. We must offer universities tangible services because the atmosphere provides educators and students with the conditions they require to fulfil their goal.

These facilities include a well-designed building, an open and airy classroom with required exciting applications, a well-equipped lab, libraries with appropriate book collections, open spaces for a range of activities, enough furniture, sound equipment, a playground, an attractive setting and more. Teaching and learning are two of the most important components of the academic setting. Research supports the notion that a nurturing atmosphere improves students' learning capacities. In a welcoming university setting, cooperative learning, group cohesion, respect for one another and trust are all promoted. Additionally, understanding the environment and culture of an institution aids in comprehending the attitudes, behaviours, and performance of both individuals and groups. Numerous studies have showed a clear link between academic achievement and campus atmosphere. In addition to immediately boosting student achievement, a favorable campus climate appears to have long-lasting effects. According to studies, pupils' chances of succeeding academically rise when they are encouraged to engage in the learning process. Several studies have found that biased environments have a detrimental impact on students' learning and that how students perceive their campus environment affects both learning and developmental outcomes. A diverse staff and student body are beneficial for improving learning outcomes, according to research.

Research Methodology

Research methodology referred to the strategy that defined how the researcher planned to understand the study in order to achieve its aims and objectives. It included the population, sample and sampling methods, as well as the research instruments and procedures used to gather data.

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative research design. It was a survey study and descriptive in nature.



Population Of The Study

The population of the study included undergraduate students of Azad Kashmir universities. These universities were: Women University Bagh, University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Muzaffarabad, University of Poonch Rawalakot, University of Kotli, Mohi-ud-Din Islamic University and MUST (Mirpur University of Science and Technology). A total of 1,736 social sciences students in education departments from these universities constituted the population.

Sample And Sampling Technique

Data from the population were gathered using a simple random sampling technique, in which every individual had an equal chance of being selected. The sample for the study comprised 316 undergraduate students from AJ&K universities.

Tool Development

The study employed a questionnaire as the tool for data collection. The researcher designed a self-constructed questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions. **PILOT**

Testing

The research instrument underwent a pilot test to assess its reliability and validity. For this purpose, 30 students who were not part of the study sample were randomly selected. The instrument's validity was confirmed from experts. Its reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha that was 0.875.

Data Collection

The researcher selected universities in Azad Jammu and Kashmir for data collection. The researcher personally visited these universities and distributed the self-constructed questionnaires among students to collect the data.

Results & Data Analysis

After data collection, the information was tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted. SPSS was used for analyzing the data. Data analysis involved gathering and modeling the data to draw conclusions and highlight relevant information for decision-making regarding the study's objectives. Inferential statistics was employed to test the objectives of the study.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.171 ^a	.029	.020		.31613

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social Climate, Academic climate, Physical climate

Above table reflects that model summary output from a regression analysis. The regression model, included Social Climate, Academic Climate, and Physical Climate as predictors, produced a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.171, indicating a weak positive relationship with the dependent variable. The R Square value was 0.029, showing that only 2.9% of the variance was explained by the model. The Adjusted R Square slightly decreased to 0.020, and the standard error of the estimate was 0.31613. These results reflect the model's low explanatory power.

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.944	3	.315	3.149	.025 ^b



Residual	31.181	312	.100
Total	32.125	315	

a. Dependent Variable: CGPA

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Climate, Academic climate, Physical climate

Above table shows that the results of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results for the regression model assessing the impact of Social, Academic, and Physical Climate on CGPA. The regression sum of squares was 0.944 ($df = 3$), and the residual sum of squares was 31.181 ($df = 312$), with a total of 32.125 across 315 observations. The mean square values were 0.315 for regression and 0.100 for residuals. The F-statistic was 3.149 with a p-value of 0.025, indicating the model is statistically significant at the 0.05 level and that the combined predictors significantly influence CGPA.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	3.465	.109		31.87	.000
	Physical climate	-.102	.043	-.173	-2.356	.019
	Academic climate	-.025	.044	-.040	-.582	.561
	Social climate	.126	.044	.213	2.843	.005

a. Dependent Variable: CGPA

Above table presents that the regression coefficients analyzing the impact of university climate on academic achievement. Physical Climate had a negative and significant effect ($B = -0.102$, $\beta = -0.173$, $p = .019$), indicating that poorer physical conditions are linked to lower academic performance. Academic Climate was not significant ($B = -0.025$, $\beta = -0.040$, $p = .561$), suggesting minimal influence. Social Climate showed a positive and significant effect ($B = 0.126$, $\beta = 0.213$, $p = .005$), with the strongest standardized coefficient. The constant was also significant ($B = 3.465$, $p < .001$). Overall, Social and Physical Climates significantly predicted academic achievement, while Academic Climate did not.

Findings

1. Model Significance and Explanatory Power: The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 3.149$, $p = .025$) but demonstrated limited explanatory power, accounting for only 2.9% of the variance in students' CGPA ($R^2 = .029$, Adjusted $R^2 = .020$).
2. Significant Predictors: Social Climate had a positive and statistically significant impact on CGPA ($\beta = 0.213$, $p = .005$), making it the strongest predictor, while Physical Climate showed a significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.173$, $p = .019$), indicating that students' perceptions of their social and physical environments are influential to academic performance.
3. Non-significant Predictor: Academic Climate did not have a statistically significant effect on CGPA ($\beta = -0.040$, $p = .561$), suggesting that it does not meaningfully contribute to academic achievement in the presence of the other variables.

Discussions

The findings of this study highlight the multifaceted role of university climate in shaping students' academic outcomes. Although the regression model was statistically significant, suggests that Social Climate, Academic Climate and Physical Climate explain the variation



in CGPA. The strong and statistically significant impact of Social Climate aligns with existing research emphasizing the importance of students' sense of belonging and social integration. Similarly, Hausmann, Schofield, and Woods (2007) found that perceived social support and connectedness on campus significantly improved both student satisfaction and academic performance. These findings are consistent with the results of this study, which indicate that students who perceive the social environment positively tend to perform better academically. The negative impact of Physical Climate on academic achievement also finds support in the literature. Studies such as Earthman (2004) and Higgins et al. (2005) have shown that poor building conditions, inadequate lighting, noise, and lack of resources can hinder student concentration, increase stress and reduce academic engagement. A well-maintained and conducive physical environment not only supports learning but also enhances students' sense of security and comfort, which are essential for academic success. In contrast, the non-significant effect of Academic Climate, it is possible that students interpret academic climate in diverse ways, or that its influence is indirect and moderated by other factors like personal resilience, external academic support, or faculty-student relationships. Moreover, this aligns with Kuh et al. (2008), who suggested that engagement outside the classroom such as co-curricular involvement and peer collaboration often has a greater impact on learning outcomes than classroom experience alone.

Conclusion

The regression analysis revealed that the university climate, as represented by Social Climate, Academic Climate, and Physical Climate, has a statistically significant effect on students' academic performance, specifically their CGPA. While the model was significant, its low explanatory power indicates that only a small portion of the variation in academic achievement is accounted for by these environmental factors. Among the predictors, Social Climate had the most substantial and positive influence, highlighting the importance of a supportive and engaging social environment. Physical Climate also showed a significant effect, though in a negative direction, suggesting that unfavorable physical conditions may hinder academic performance. In contrast, Academic Climate did not emerge as a significant predictor in the presence of the other variables. These results underscore the nuanced role of university climate factors in shaping student outcomes.

Recommendations

1. Foster a supportive and inclusive campus environment through peer programs, student activities and initiatives that strengthen student engagement and belonging.
2. Address poor infrastructure by upgrading classrooms, study spaces and campus facilities to create a more conducive learning environment.
3. Academic support services and teaching strategies should be continuously evaluated and refined to better support student success.
4. Integrate improvements across social, physical, and academic aspects to create a balanced and supportive educational environment.
5. Future research should adopt more comprehensive models that include psychological, behavioral, and socio-economic factors and possibly use mixed-method approaches to gain a deeper understanding of students' lived experience.

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