

# TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE ON SCHOOL CLIMATE

Ioana Emanuela ORZEA<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *Studies show that collaboration affects and improves the interpersonal abilities of students, teachers, managers and, as a consequence, the school efficiency increases (Campo, 1993). The present study intends to analyze the school climate from the perspective of teachers. The teachers' perspective on school climate is analyzed with the help of those variables which aim at their affiliation to school, the discipline climate, the inter-peer climate, the teachers-management relational climate and the professional interest climate, but also with the variables regarding teacher's age, school location and teacher's resilience.*

**Key words:** *school climate, perspective of teachers, resilience, school location, school level.*

## 1. Introduction

In teachers' view, the benefits of a positive school climate include: the rise of satisfaction at work (Ma & MacMillan, 1999), keeping the job/job stability and better relationships between school and families (Brown & Medway, 2007; DiStefano et al., 2007). Young teachers who have less teaching experience feel less supported or less efficient at work. Consequently, they see the environment as being less favourable as compared to older colleagues (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993; Koth et al., 2008). A multinivelar analysis shows that teachers aged 41-50 see the climate more favorable, on the whole, in comparison to teachers who are less than 30. When it comes to results, those who are over the age of 50 have higher scores than their younger colleagues. There are no gender differences when it comes to perceiving the school climate (Mitchell et al., 2010).

Teachers' involvement in taking decisions within the school, school climate and the self-efficacy and satisfaction at work have become more and more important in recent years. Using a national sample, Taylor and Tashakkori (1995) examine carefully these variables and the interrelationships between them. Following the analyses of regression, authors have come to the conclusion that aspects of school climate are better predictors for satisfaction at work than participating in taking school decisions. From the dimensions of school climate, the most important are: the leadership of the manager and the lack of difficulties in teaching. Teachers' perception about their self-efficiency and an efficient leadership from the manager associate with students' results obtained in the standardized tests, but also with their marks all along their school way up to their finish of the high school (Lee & Shute, 2010).

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<sup>1</sup> Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj Napoca, ioana\_orzea@yahoo.com

## 2. The Objectives of the Research, the Hypotheses and the Sample

The objective of this study is the analysis of school climate from teachers' perspective, depending on gender, age, level of education, location of the school and resilience. The hypotheses were made in agreement with the literature in the field, newer or recent. The general hypothesis states that the perception about the atmosphere in the school is associated to age, teaching experience, location of the school and grade level at which teachers teach.

### 2.1. Sample

Teachers taking part in this study belong to 4 schools from a small town. The schools were chosen depending on students' results and on the location of the school (table 1).

Table 1

*Teachers' distribution according to their didactical qualification and location of the school*

<b>Didactical qualification</b>	<b>Non-central school</b>	<b>Central school</b>
Teachers in their beginnings	3(8%)	0 (0%)
Permanent Teacher Certification	9(23%)	6 (13%)
Didactical qualification: level II	6(15 %)	6 (14%)
Didactical qualification: level I	17(44% )	32 (73%)
N	39	44

The 83 teachers work in elementary schools, one of them being central, another one non-central and two high schools, a central and a non-central one. When it comes to the distribution of genders, 14 are males and 69 are females. Seven teachers teach just in the primary school, 27 teach in the elementary school, 23 in the high school; 20 of them teach both in the elementary and in the high school, and from the teachers involved in the sample, four of them teach in all the three levels.

According to marital status, 74% of the teachers involved are married, 13% are not married, 7% are divorced, 2% are widowed, and the remaining of 4% did not mention anything related to their civil state.

Concerning teachers' training, from the whole sample, 3 teachers are at the beginning of their career, 15 have a permanent teacher certification, 12 have didactical qualification: level II and 49 have didactical qualification: level I.

If it were to compare central and non-central schools referring to the level of professional training, seen in getting didactical qualifications, it is noticed that both in central and non-central schools, the majority of teachers have didactical qualification: level I but their percentage is even higher in central schools. Thus, if the percentage of such teachers is 43 % in non-central schools, in central schools, this percentage is of 72 %, which means that almost three quarters of the central school staff consists of teachers with a lot of teaching, didactic and pedagogical experience. In central schools, there are no beginner teachers, and those having a permanent teacher certification constitute 13% of the school staff, as compared to 23% in non-central schools.

When it comes to age, 46 out of the teachers interviewed are less than the age of 45 and 36 of them are over the age of 45. The distribution of teachers according to age and location of the school is synthesized in table 2.

*Teachers' distribution according to age and location of the school* Table 2

Age	Non-central School	Central School
Under the age of 45	66% (26)	45% (20)
Over the age of 45	30% (12)	54% (24)

It can be found the fact that there are more young teachers in non-central schools than in central ones and that there is a certain balance in central schools, even if old teachers slightly surpass the young ones. Consequently, central schools consist of teachers with a lot of professional experience.

## 2.2. Instruments

*The questionnaire for school climate* directed to teachers (SCQ), which was elaborated by us to diagnose school climate. The variables found in the questionnaire about school climate, questionnaire created in order to be applied to teachers, aims at their association with the school, the climate during classes, the climate between colleagues, the relational climate teachers-management professors and the climate of the professional interest. The metric qualities of the instrument are very good; the alpha Cronbach coefficients are placed between .80 and 0.95.

*Resilience Scale*, designed by Oshio and his collaborators (2003) has 21 items. The instrument has three subscales: *The search for challenges* (7 items), *Emotional Control* (9 items) and *Positive Orientation towards Future* (5 items). Resilience Scale has good construct validity and differentiates well resilient groups from non-resilient ones. In the validation study (Oshio and his collaborators, 2003), the internal consistency is all right, achieving 0.85 for the entire scale and for subscales, alpha Cronbach coefficient varies between .77 and .81. In our sample, alpha Cronbach sticks to its acceptable limits: it is .81 for the whole scale, and for the subscales *The search for challenges* (.72), *Emotional Control* (.54) and *Positive Orientation towards Future* (.76) it has the values mentioned. All the instruments have good psychometric qualities, which ensure a good validity of the research.

## 3. Results and Discussion

According with the first hypothesis, the perception of the atmosphere in the school is associated with age, teaching experience, location of the school and level of education at which teachers teach. If we analyze the factors of school climate according to teachers' age, we can see no significant difference in the entire sample, but there is an important difference between teachers under the age of 45 and those over the age of 45 within the central school. In the case of non-central school, there are not enough teachers from both categories to make a statistical comparison. Except for the first factor, that of association with the school, as one can notice in table 3, there is a difference between teachers under the age of 45 and those who are over the age of 45 concerning their perception of school climate. Teachers who are over the age of 45 have a much favorable perception on school climate factors than those who are under the age of 45.

Table 3

*Differences between the averages of school climate factors for teachers from different categories of age in the central school*

<b>Factors of school climate</b>	<b>Age categories</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>
Association with school	Teachers under the age of 45	20	3.89	-1.8	.06
	Teachers over the age of 45	24	4.27		
Relationship teachers-pupils/discipline	Teachers under the age of 45	20	3.88	-2	.04
	Teachers over the age of 45	24	4.21		
Relationship between colleagues	Teachers under the age of 45	20	3.88	-2.3	.02
	Teachers over the age of 45	24	4.29		
Teachers' professional interest	Teachers under the age of 45	20	3.72	-2.8	.001
	Teachers over the age of 45	24	4.15		
Management personnel-teachers relationship	Teachers under the age of 45	20	3.60	-3.9	.001
	Teachers over the age of 45	24	4.23		
Professional support from director	Teachers under the age of 45	20	4.09	-2.4	.01
	Teachers over the age of 45	24	4.47		

Regarding the level of education at which teachers teach, there is a considerable difference between those who teach in the elementary school and those who teach in the high school concerning the relationship teachers-pupils (discipline) and the perception of teachers' involvement (table 4).

Table 4

*Differences between the averages of school climate factors for teachers in the elementary and those in the high school*

<b>School climate factors</b>	<b>Level of teaching</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>
Association with the school	Elementary	27	4.31	.2	.81
	High School	22	4.26		
Teachers-pupils relationship/discipline	Elementary	27	3.74	-3.7	.001
	High School	22	4.33		
Relationship between colleagues	Elementary	27	4.25	0.8	.38
	High School	22	4.09		
Teachers' professional interest	Elementary	27	4.26	2.6	.01
	High School	22	3.80		
Management personnel-teachers relationship	Elementary	27	4.13	0.5	0.57
	High School	22	4.03		
Professional support from director	Elementary	27	4.27	0.6	0.50
	High School	22	4.38		

From the point of view of the discipline, teachers in the high school consider that their relationship with students is better, whereas teachers in the elementary school perceive that teachers' professional interest in the school is more intense than that in the high school.

There are also differences between teachers in central schools and those from non-central schools concerning the association with the school, professional interest and the discipline relationship pupil-teacher. Hence, teachers' association with the school is considered to be bigger in non-central schools than in central schools (table 5). Things are the same when related to teachers' professional interest. But, when it comes to the relationship teacher-pupil (discipline), teachers from central school have advantages. At the same time, central schools are also famous schools; therefore, those who go to such

schools emphasize learning/teaching, school results, the educational and disciplinary climate being a positive one.

Table 5  
*Differences between the averages of school climate factors for teachers from central and non-central schools*

School climate factors	Location of the school	N	Mean	t	p
Association with the school	Central school	44	4.09	<b>-2.8</b>	<b>.01</b>
	Non-central school	38	4.47		
Teachers-pupils relationship/discipline	Central school	44	4.06	<b>2</b>	<b>.04</b>
	Non-central school	38	3.80		
Relationship between colleagues	Central school	44	4.10	-1.5	.13
	Non-central school	38	4.30		
Teachers' professional interest	Central school	44	3.95	<b>-2.1</b>	<b>.03</b>
	Non-central school	38	4.22		
Management personnel-teachers relationship	Central school	44	3.94	-0.8	.40
	Non-central school	38	4.07		
Professional support from director	Central school	44	4.30	-0.5	.57
	Non-central school	38	4.37		

These results strengthen the conclusions from other studies (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993; Koth et al.; 2008; Mitchell et al., 2010) which consider that young teachers see school climate as less favorable, compared to the older ones; the first ones feel less supported or less efficient in their work. Trying to identify the factors which explain teachers' association with the school through a regression equation, it was noticed that socio-demographic data do not explain the association, but the relationship with colleagues and pupils/discipline (auxiliary significance-0,06) and emotional resilience do explain the attachment to school (see table 6).

*Explanation of teachers' association with the school*

Table 6

Significant patterns	B	Beta	t	p	
Pattern 1 R <sup>2</sup> = .264	Relationship with pupils, discipline	.21	.20	1.91	.06
	Relationship between teachers	.44	.41	3.88	.001
Pattern 2 R <sup>2</sup> = .320	Relationship with pupils, discipline	.14	.13	1.27	.21
	Relationship between teachers	.40	.37	3.57	.001
	Emotional control (resilience)	.35	.25	2.46	.02

The other factors do not have a major impact on the association with the school (table 6). Other studies (Hoy & Hannum, 1997) state that when it comes to association with the school, this involves the fact that teachers feel well together, work enthusiastically, they like pupils and are devoted to them, but also to their colleagues.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Related to teachers' association with the school, other studies (Hoy & Hannum, 1997) consider that this involve the fact that teachers feel well together, work enthusiastically, like pupils and are devoted to them and to their colleagues too. This thing is also strengthened by our analysis.

Our results confirm the conclusions of other studies (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993; Koth et al., 2008; Mitchell et al., 2010) which support the fact that for young teachers, school climate is less favorable than for old teachers as the first ones are not supported in their work and see themselves as less efficient. Such a difference of perception can explain the different effect of some school climate factors on pupils' school results. Feeling fine at work, among pupils and colleagues can contribute to a greater satisfaction for teachers concerning school, thing which is seen in their relation with work and pupils.

Research proves that young teachers must be more supported by the senior professors and by management teachers in their educational approach.

Other information may be obtained from the address: ioana\_orzea@yahoo.com

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