

WORK ENVIRONMENT OF COLLEGE TEACHERS*

Syed Sohail Imam
Department of Psychology
Government College
Lahore, Pakistan

This study reveals how older and younger male and female college teachers perceive their work environment. A sample of 110 teachers, (60 males and 50 females) was administered Work Environment Scale (Moos, 1981) as a measure of respondent's perception of their work milieu. Results show that in general, age and gender do not lead to statistically significant differences in college teachers' perception of their work environment. However, male teachers enjoy more autonomy and opportunities for innovation than females teachers. Both the male and female teachers see the college work environment as more controlling and task oriented. As compared to U.S.A general work group (Moos, 1981) the Lahore based college teachers have scored low on most of the work dimensions meaning thereby that the work milieu of these colleges needs to be modified adequately

Work environment is a dynamic system composed of four domains: Physical features, organizational structure and policies, superpersonal and task factors, and social climate. The impact of architectural, organizational, and suprapersonal and task factors stems in part from the social climate they help to promote. In turn, social climate can alter the influence of the three domains on employee morale and performance.

Work environment studies are useful in many ways. First, they are naturally desirable. Secondly, they can be used to describe or contrast the social environments of work settings, to compare employee and manager/supervisor perceptions, to compare actual and preferred work environments, and to assess and facilitate changes in work settings. On the basis of such studies various subgroups of employees or staff members also may be compared with one another. Researches about work environment can help in providing feedback and promoting

* Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Syed Sohail Imam, Department of Psychology, Government College, Lahore, Pakistan.

improvement in work settings, evaluating the impact of intervention programmes, and formulating clinical case descriptions.

Work groups vary widely in the quality of interpersonal relationships, the emphasis on task orientation and work demands, and the level of clarity and organization. Berkeley Planning Associates (1977) found that job formalization, centralization of decision making, and a heavier case load are associated with lack of co-worker and supervisor support, less emphasis on autonomy and clarity, and higher work demands (cited in Moos, 1981). In less well-staffed programmes, there is more employee tension and dissatisfaction. Eaton and Gottseling (1980) studied the effect of a voluntary change from 8 to 12 hours shifts on intensive care unit nurses. These modifications heightened job autonomy and innovation, and reduced supervisor control. However, there was a decrease in work clarity. Seiter (1984) studied work environment of community colleges. The full-time faculty members reported the work environment being relatively low on cohesion, clarity, and innovation. In general, facilitation leadership was linked to more explicit and predictable work milieus, which in turn, promoted educational effectiveness. Better work relationships and more task orientation were related to stronger faculty commitment, whereas, high work demands and control were seen as negative aspects of college work milieu.

Holland's (1985) theory has spawned extensive research on aggregate personal characteristics. He proposed that pupils' vocational choices are expressions of their personalities and that occupations can be categorized into six groups. Thus, Holland described six work settings linked to six personality types: realistic, investigation, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. These type of environment is influenced by the model personality of group members. In this way, a group's average background characteristic, i.e., its dominant vocational performance creates a milieu with unique demands, rewards, and opportunities. It has been found that model personal characteristics can influence work climate. For example, employees in realistic occupations tend to see their work groups as high in control and low in autonomy, innovation, involvement, cohesion, and supervisor support. In contrast, employees in social-type work settings report employees on the relationship areas, clarity, and innovation. Investigative work settings accentuate autonomy and innovation, and are especially low in control.

The primary task performed by an individual can influence the work climate. Mohl, Denny, Mote, and Coldwater (1982) found that both the type of task and social systems factors affect nurses' attitudes and stress levels. Wilkes, Stammerjohn, and Lalich (1981) made assessment of job stressors and resources, and found that varying tasks and demands can lead to different work environments among employees in same general work situation.

Brody, Kinnaird, and Friedrich (1980) studied relationship between work settings and job satisfaction among staff members of a mental health centre and found that employees who saw their work milieu as more oriented toward involvement, cohesion, support, autonomy, and innovation showed greater job satisfaction. Reports of high work demands were related to emotional exhaustion. Hennicutt (1983) found that work support was predictive of more work related coping, whereas, work stressors were associated with less of it. Hoff's (1982) study on school administrators showed that work demands were linked to personal accomplishment in a clear, involved, and task-oriented setting, but to emotional exhaustion and alienation in a setting that lacked these qualities.

Schmitt and Fitzgerald (1982) found that employees who reported high work demands, lack of autonomy and clarity, and poor relationships with their co-workers and supervisors tended to report more physical symptoms. Low levels of co-workers' cohesion, task orientation, and clarity were also associated with reports of more physical symptoms. Roberts (1985) found that employees seeing their work milieu as more involving, cohesive, and task oriented were more accepting of the new technology.

Capell (1981) used adaptations of the Classroom Environment Scale (Moos & Trickett, 1986), and the Work Environment Scale (Moos, 1981) to examine students' and teachers' views of a voucher programme at both the school and classroom level. In general, teachers in voucher school reported more cohesion, autonomy, innovation, work pressure than teachers in regular schools. Schools in which teachers reported more cohesion and less autonomy had students with higher reading achievement. Within schools, however, the classrooms of teachers who saw themselves as having more autonomy and less cohesion than other teachers in their school had the most positive influence on students' reading achievement.

Holahan and Moos (1982) found that a decline in work support (as well as in family support) was related to an increase in psychological dysfunction among both employed women and men. O'Brien (1980) investigated the links between individuals' personal characteristics and their perceptions of their work milieu and found that middle-aged men did not see their work environment differently than younger men.

In Pakistan studies on work environment have caught attention of psychologists very recently and as such a few preliminary researches have been done on industrial work settings. However, work environment of educational institutions have not yet been studied much. Thus, it is important to know how our teachers see different dimensions of their work milieu so that necessary changes may be made in their work settings to make their teaching more effective for the students, in general, and for the welfare of the teachers' physical and psychological being, in particular. This present study is a good start in studying work environment of college teachers in relation to age and sex.

Keeping in view the fact that work groups vary widely in perception of their work environment, the following questions were formulated in the present study: (i) Do male and female college teachers see their work environment differently?, (ii) Are there age differences among college teachers in perception of their work milieu?.

METHOD

Sample

A group of 60 male (30 science and 30 arts) and 50 female (25 science and 25 arts) teachers from the six government colleges situated at Lahore served as respondents. The ages of the lecturers and the assistant professors ranged from 24 to 54 years.

Instrument

Work Environment Scale (WES)

The English version of WES (Moos, 1981) was used for measuring perceptions of existing work environment of college

teachers. Its ten subscales assesses three underlying domains: the Relationship Dimension, the Personal Growth Dimension, and the System Maintenance and System Change Dimension. Each subscale has nine items and the total items are 90. The statements are marked true-false in a separate record sheet. A respondent can obtain a score ranging from 0-9 on each subscale and 0-90 on the aggregate. The WES subscales are Involvement, Peer Cohesion, Supervisor Support, Autonomy, Task Orientation, Work Pressure, Clarity, Control, Innovation, and Physical Comfort. The full scale score refers to the individual's perception of the work environment as a whole which include the ten subscale of WES.

The internal consistencies are all in an acceptable range, varying from moderate for Peer Cohesion to substantial for Involvement, Work Pressure, Innovation, and Physical Comfort. The test-retest reliabilities are all in acceptable ranges, varying from a low of 0.69 for Clarity to a high of 0.83 for Involvement.

Procedure

The data were collected by a post-graduate research student. The WES was self-administered. The booklets and record sheets were handed over to the respondents with the request to read the instructions of the scales before the tester who ascertained that the respondents understood how to record their answers in the record sheet. Most of the respondents returned the filled in record sheets and the booklets within 2-3 days. The record sheets were hand scored.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The subscale and full scale mean scores and standard deviations were computed and significance of gender differences for all the subscale and full scale average scores was checked by computing *t*-test analysis. Age differences in perception of the two work dimensions were also checked in terms of subscale average scores. Rank ordering of subscale mean scores was also examined and compared with those of U.S.A normative sample (Moos, 1981).

Table 1

WES full scale and subscale means, standard deviations, and t-values by gender of college teachers.

Scales	Males (n=60)		Females (n=50)		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
Involvement	4.30	1.68	4.154	1.28	0.61
Peer Cohesion	3.92	1.62	3.90	1.43	0.07
Supervisor Support	4.08	1.72	3.68	1.52	1.42
Autonomy	4.55	1.95	3.62	1.65	2.66*
Task Orientation	4.84	1.91	4.74	1.85	0.31
Work Pressure	4.55	1.80	3.98	2.08	1.72
Clarity	4.10	1.70	4.14	1.49	0.14
Control	5.41	1.89	5.74	1.97	1.00
Innovation	4.31	1.65	3.02	1.21	4.56*
Physical Comfort	4.28	1.34	3.80	1.49	1.76
Full Scale	44.38	9.47	41.56	8.77	1.59

df = 108, **p* < .05

Table 1 presents the comparison between male and female college teachers on subscale as well as full scale mean scores. The *t*-test analysis shows that the male and female college teachers do not see their work environment differently except in terms of Autonomy and Innovation. Male college teachers have reported to have enjoyed significantly more Autonomy and chances for Innovation than the female college teachers. On full scale and subscales such as Involvement, Peer Cohesion, Supervisor Support, Task Orientation, Work Pressure, Physical Comfort there is no significant gender difference. However, on these scales males have obtained apparently higher mean scores as compared to females. On the other hand, females apparently excelled than male counterparts in terms of average scores on Clarity and Control subscales. But in both cases the differences are very small and statistically insignificant. These findings are in line with the actual position of Lahore based colleges for men and women with respect to their work milieu. The government colleges at Lahore do not differ much as far as administrative and academic settings are concerned. The teachers in these colleges have to work in environments which are similar in most respects. There are, of course, certain

obvious differences in the ways these colleges are treated by the government, but such treatments do not have any direct impact on the teachers.

Table 2

Rank ordered subscale mean scores of male college teachers (n=60)

Scales	Ranks	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Control	1	5.41	1.89
Task Orientation	2	4.86	1.91
Autonomy	3.5	4.55	1.95
Work Pressure	3.5	4.55	1.80
Innovation	5	4.31	1.65
Involvement	6	4.30	1.68
Physical Comfort	7	4.28	1.34
Clarity	8	4.10	1.70
Supervisor Support	9	4.08	1.72
Peer Cohesion	10	3.92	1.62

Table 3

Rank ordered subscale mean scores of female college teachers (n = 50)

Scales	Ranks	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Control	1	5.74	1.97
Task Orientation	2	4.74	1.85
Clarity	3.5	4.14	1.49
Involvement	3.5	4.14	1.28
Work Pressure	5	3.98	2.08
Peer Cohesion	6	3.90	1.43
Physical Comfort	7	3.80	1.49
Supervisor Support	8	3.68	1.52
Autonomy	9	3.62	1.65
Innovation	10	3.02	1.21

The Tables 2 and 3 show rank ordering of subscale mean scores of male and female college teachers. The results indicate that both sexes

see their work milieu as having much Control and Task Orientations, the males taking rank 1 and the females taking rank 2. In case of male teachers Peer Cohesion comes on the bottom and Supervisor Support is the second last. Innovation is at the bottom in case of female college teachers and Autonomy is the second last. The only subscale having a mean score (5.74) higher than the potential medium score (5) on any subscale is Control. On the remaining subscales the mean scores are much lower. For females the lowest mean score is 3.02 and that for males it is 3.92.

Table 4

Full scale means, standard deviations, and t-values by age and gender of the respondents

Age (in years)	n	Males		Females			t
		M	SD	n	M	SD	
Under 36	22	45.50	6.37	23	41.22	6.68	2.15
36 to 45	24	41.88	12.04	21	40.05	7.54	0.59
Over 45	14	46.93	7.16	6	48.17	14.81	0.24

d.f.=43, **p*<.05

Tables 4-6 indicate full scale mean scores by age and gender of the respondents. The results in these tables show that the respondents belonging to different age groups do not differ significantly in perception of their overall work environment. This is true for both the scores. Another interesting thing is that in both cases the under 36 years and over 45 years aged groups have obtained apparently higher full scale average scores than the 36 to 45 years aged respondents.

The analysis of variance in Tables 5 and 6 show that older and younger college teachers of both sexes see their work milieu alike. The *F*-ratios are statistically insignificant in both cases. Younger males (under 36 years), however, have obtained significantly higher full scale mean score than their female counter parts of the same age. The finding that older respondents did not see their work environment differently

than younger ones is supported by previous research also (O'Brien, 1980).

Table 5

One-way ANOVA on full scale scores of male respondents belonging to different age groups

Source of Variation	<i>Df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Between groups	2	269.13	134.57	1.51
Within groups	57	5089.06	89.28	
Total	59	5358.19		

* $p < .05$

Table 6

One-way ANOVA of full scale scores of female respondents belonging to different age groups

Source of Variation	<i>Df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Between groups	2	312.62	156.31	2.10
Within groups	47	3505.70	74.58	
Total	49	3818.32		

* $p < .05$

Table 7 presents subscale mean scores of college teachers at Lahore and that of U.S.A. general work group, sample including 1442 employees from commercial and non-commercial radio stations and over 400 people drawn randomly from specified tracts in the San

Francisco area part of the normative sample (Moos, 1981). On most of the scales U.S.A. general work group has obtained higher mean scores.

Table 7

Subscale means of college teachers at Lahore and U.S.A. general work group

Scales	College Teachers at Lahore				U.S.A. General Work Group	
	Males (n= 60)		Females (n= 50)		(n= 1442)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Involvement	4.30	1.68	4.14	1.28	5.95	1.41
Peer Cohesion	3.92	1.62	3.90	1.48	5.70	1.15
Supervisor Support	4.08	1.72	3.68	1.52	5.68	1.38
Autonomy	4.55	1.95	3.62	1.65	5.54	1.22
Task Orientation	4.86	1.91	4.74	1.85	5.90	1.29
Work Pressure	4.55	1.80	3.98	2.08	4.40	1.38
Clarity	4.10	1.70	4.14	1.49	5.60	1.29
Control	5.41	1.89	5.74	1.97	4.88	1.33
Innovation	4.31	1.65	3.02	1.21	4.42	1.54
Physical Comfort	4.28	1.34	3.80	1.49	4.89	1.35

The Lahorite college teachers see their work milieu as more controlling. In general, the U.S.A. general work group see the work environment as more positive in terms of Peer Cohesion, Supervisor Support, Autonomy, Clarity, Involvement and Physical Comfort. The results presented in Table 7 indicate that the work milieu of colleges at Lahore needs a great deal of change so as to make it more conducive for better performance of the teacher and also for their physical and psycho-social health.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show that college teachers of all age groups perceive their work environment alike. Male college teachers enjoy more autonomy and chances for innovation as compared to their female counter parts. There is no significant gender difference in the

perception of such dimensions of college work environment as Involvement, Peer Cohesion, Supervisor Support, Task Orientation, Work Pressure, Clarity, Control, Physical Comfort, and overall work milieu. Peer Cohesion is very low in case of both male and female college teachers. As compared to work environment of U.S.A. general work group, the work milieu of colleges at Lahore needs much modification. This study further indicates that some confounding variables should be held constant so as to have better insight into the matter. A well designed research could lead to useful changes in the college work milieu.

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