

A STUDY ON MENTAL HEALTH AND SCHOOL CLIMATE AMONG HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to found out the relation between Mental Health and School Climate among Higher Secondary School Students. Mental Health is now considered one of the most discussed topics in the Indian education system, particularly among adolescents studying in higher secondary schools. In recent times, stress, anxiety and depression have become prevalent aspects of adolescent life observed in both urban and rural areas of Tamil Nadu, where the issue of mental health support is taken very seriously. School climate has a significant impact on the mental well-being of students. A safe and welcoming environment can provide students with increased confidence to cope better with the challenges they face. Schools in Tamil Nadu are beginning to realize the relevance of a positive relationship between teachers and students in terms of counseling and encouraging activities that promote teamwork and self-expression. This research is a survey type and the sample consists of 1000 higher secondary school students studying in Namakkal district and the data was collected through simple random sampling technique. Mental Health Scale and School Climate Scale was prepared and validated by the investigator. The data were collected and examined with statistical methods such as percentage analysis, mean, standard deviation and F-test and correlation. On the basis of the found results precise interpretation is also given.

Key Words: Mental Health, School Climate and Higher Secondary School Students.

INTRODUCTION

Mental health plays a crucial role in the development and overall academic success of higher secondary school students, who face unique challenges during adolescence, including academic pressures, social expectations, and evolving personal identities (Roeser et al., 2013). The school climate, encompassing the learning environment, relationships with peers and teachers, and institutional support, significantly affects students' emotional well-being and ability to cope with stress (Thapa et al., 2013). Additionally, moral values serve as key foundations for fostering resilience, empathy, and ethical decision-making among adolescents, helping them navigate both social and academic challenges (Lapsley & Yeager, 2013). Examining the interconnected roles of school climate and moral values provides important insights for supporting and enhancing students' mental health, promoting healthy development, and improving educational outcomes (Wang & Degol, 2016).

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The common belief is that a person who is mentally healthy will be efficient in all means. There are people who are efficient in their work and make lots of money yet they may be unhappy, worried and troubled. There are some people who work by utilising all their energies and powers in the pursuit of some goals and ends. Their will power is strong and they pursue their goals with confidence. Such people are ideals with mental health. Mental health professionals and psychological counsellors' view of the concept of mental health is evident in successful living. It is equivalent to absence of stress-related body illness, unimpaired objective functioning, normal behaviour and subjective comfort. If a person lives harmoniously, he/she is said to have good mental health. It is measured as successful life. Over the years, mental health disabilities have significantly increased in number and complexity. They have also affected the physical efficiency of an individual, causing a range of psychosomatic disorders. As a result, mental health has now come to be regarded as an important aspect of an individual's wholesome development. Mental hygiene is accepted as an integral part of the higher secondary school programme. (Aggarwal J.C, 1999).

Higher Secondary School Students should be guided properly to understand their strengths, weaknesses, abilities and deficiencies. The environment in which they operate should facilitate optimum level of functioning. In some cases, they may require continuous counselling and medication. Apart from counselling children, counselling parents and teachers will help to resolve mental health issues quickly and smoothly. Modern schools emphasize

inclusiveness, ensuring that education is accessible to all students regardless of their background. They also incorporate technology to enhance learning experiences, preparing students for a rapidly changing digital world. A school is an institution designed for the teaching of students under the direction of teachers. Schools typically provide a structured environment where students can learn academic subjects, social skills, and personal development (Lawn, 2013). The academic environment encompassing the curriculum, teaching practices, and assessment methods are fundamental to students' intellectual growth. A challenging yet supportive academic environment encourages critical thinking, creativity, and a love for learning. Effective teaching practices, such as differentiated instruction and formative assessment cater to diverse student needs and foster an engaging and dynamic learning experience (Tomlinson, 2014). In addition to these elements, the school climate significantly influences student discipline. A well-structured and nurturing environment establishes clear expectations and consistent behavioural standards, which are crucial for maintaining discipline. Positive behaviour reinforcement and restorative practices have been shown to be more effective in promoting good behaviour and reducing disciplinary issues compared to punitive measures (Gregory et al, 2010).

REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

Sun et al. (2023) investigated how a student's sense of hope influences their mental health through a moderated mediation model involving resilience and gender. Surveying 1,776 secondary school students, the researchers found that students with higher levels of hope reported better mental health, with resilience mediating this relationship. Furthermore, gender played a moderating role, with differences in the strength of the associations. The study concluded that fostering hope and resilience in educational settings may enhance emotional well-being, and that gender-specific approaches might improve intervention effectiveness.

Dewangan et al. (2023) conducted a study on relationship between mental health and academic stress among adolescents to explore the connection between academic stress and mental health issues in adolescents. Now-a-days students are frequently dealing with mental health problems, which cause for serious problems. Academic stress seems to be leading cause of poor mental health, which arise from certain factors such as competitive examinations, academic demands, busy schedules, strict discipline, lack of social skills and parental expectations for academic performance. To look into these characteristics a comprehensive study has been done between the year 2000 to 2022. The finding of this study indicated that academic stress has a significant impact on mental health of adolescent students.

Ansari et al. (2022) examined on mental health among male and female senior secondary level students of Uttarakhand state to identify the status of mental health among male and female senior secondary students of Uttarakhand, through random sampling techniques 400 senior secondary students were selected including males and females from different boards and schools of Uttarakhand state. Only those students were selected whose age range between 14 to 19 years and who were enrolled in 9th to 12th grade at various boards in Uttarakhand state. To analyse the data, mean, standard deviation and 't' test were used. The finding of this study indicated that there was a significant difference in overall mental health status between male and female students. This study also indicated that female students had better mental health than male students.

Podiya et al. (2025) titled the influences of school climate on emotional health and academic achievement among adolescents. Based on systematic reviews of quantitative studies of secondary-school students, they established that positive school climate characteristics, including strong teacher-student relationships, peer support, school connectedness, and supportive teaching practices, were always found to be associated with lower levels of depression and stress, high levels of self-esteem and high levels of achievement outcomes, which in turn makes the authors suggest whole-school climate interventions in Indian secondary schools.

Mothusi and Colleagues (2025) carried out a correlational study to determine the relationship between school climate and academic achievement among the Form Two students in Bobirwa District with the following objectives; (a) to assess how students who were in Form Two perceived school climate and (b) to identify the relationship between the perceptions and their end-of-term academic scores. Based on the School Climate Measure and school examination scores, they sampled 365 Form Two learners in 11 secondary schools, randomly and found that there was a significant positive correlation between overall school climate scores and academic achievement, which led to the conclusion that it was possible to improve performance across the schools within the district through improvements in engagement, safety and instructional support.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out the significant difference among, if any, in the mental health of higher secondary school students in terms of type of school.
2. To find out the significant difference among, if any, in the mental health of higher secondary school students in terms of nature of the school.
3. To find out the significant difference among, if any, in the school climate of higher secondary school students in terms of type of school
4. To find out the significant difference among, if any, in the school climate of higher secondary school students in terms of nature of the school
5. To find out whether there is any significant relationship between school climate and mental health of higher secondary school students.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

H₀ 1: There is no significant difference among the mental health of higher secondary school students in terms of type of school.

H₀ 2: There is no significant difference among the mental health of higher secondary school students in terms of nature of school.

H₀ 3: There is no significant difference among the school climate of higher secondary school students in terms of type of school.

H₀ 4: There is no significant difference among the school climate of higher secondary school students in terms of nature of school.

H₀ 5: There is no significant relationship between mental health and school climate of higher secondary school students.

DELIMITATIONS USED FOR THE STUDY

1. This study was limited to the higher secondary school students in Namakkal district only.
2. The investigator has used five dimensions for the mental health namely Digital-Ego Equilibrium, Techno-Cognitive Resilience, Aspirational Burnout Agency, Relational Authenticity and Intra-Personal Sovereignty and School Climate namely Teaching–Learning Quality, Teacher–Student Relationship and Emotional Support, Peer Relationship, Safety and Inclusivity, Student Voice, Participation and Discipline and Academic Guidance and Future Orientation.
3. The sample size was delimited to 1000 higher secondary school students only.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research methodology is an essential step in research and the present chapter introduces the methodology used in the present study. In the present research work, the descriptive survey research method has been used as the method of research. The descriptive survey research method has been the most popular and widely used in education. It deals with the relationship between variables, the testing of hypotheses, and the development of generalizations, principles or theories that have universal validity.

POPULATION

The population for the present study comprises of higher secondary school students those who are studying in higher secondary schools in government, aided and matriculation higher secondary schools, spread in Namakkal district of Tamil Nadu, India.

SAMPLE

Gupta (1994) states, “A sample consists of a small collection from some larger aggregate about which we wish to collect information”. Simple Random Sampling Technique was adopted in the present investigation. There were 30 higher secondary schools in Namakkal district of Tamil Nadu. Of them, 10 were government higher secondary schools, 10 were aided higher secondary school and the remaining 10 were matriculation higher secondary schools in Namakkal district. The sample consists of 1000 randomly selected teachers from 30 randomly selected higher secondary schools.

TOOLS USED

- Mental Health Scale was constructed and validated by the investigator (2025).

Preliminary Version

The researcher prepared 85 items for MHS. The preliminary version tool has prepared carefully and worded with instructions which indicate briefly the nature and purpose of the tool.

Establishing the Validity

Validity refers to the degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretation of test scores entailed by proposed uses of test. The validity of the tool has been found in different methods. For the present study, the investigator established the face validity for the tool.

Face Validity

The preliminary version tool of the variables namely MHS was given to experts in psychology who examined the different items of the tool and their opinions was highly solicited. After the tools were translated to Tamil by the investigator, it was given to an expert in Tamil for further scrutiny. Their suggestions regarding the suitability and standard of language are considered. Thus, the face validity of the tool was established.

Item Analysis

For selecting the relevant and consistent items to the tools, the investigator administered the tool to 50 subjects of the sample and computed the item Vs whole correlation. The items, which were having value above 0.195 (the table value of correlation co-efficient (γ) is 0.195 for 48df at the 5% level of significance) were selected and other items were deleted.

Establishing the Reliability

“The reliability of the test scores refers to the consistency of scores obtained by the same individual on different occasions with different set of equivalent items” (Best & Khan, 1999).

Test-Retest Method

In the present study, the investigator employed test-retest method for establishing reliability of the tool. The correlation co-efficient of the tool (MHS) is found to be 0.81. Thus, the reliability of Mental Health Scale (MHS) was established.

Scoring Procedure for the Tool

The scoring was done with the key which was prepared by the investigator for the tool. The Mental Health Scale (MHS) is a five point scale. All the items are positive in nature. The respondent has to choose any one from the given five responses, (i) Strongly Agree, (ii) Agree, (iii) Undecided, (iv) Disagree and (v) Strongly Disagree. Thus, the maximum score obtained by a sample was **250** and the minimum score obtained by a sample was **50**.

• School Climate Scale was constructed and validated by the investigator (2025).

Preliminary Version

The researcher prepared 60 items for SCS. The preliminary version tool has prepared carefully and worded with instructions which indicate briefly the nature and purpose of the tool.

Item Writing

After a thorough and careful study of books, articles, e-journals, magazines, old tools, research publications and newspapers related to School Climate Scale the investigator prepared a number of items, consisting of both positive statements covering content of the tool School Climate Scale (SCS).

Establishing the Validity

Validity refers to the degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretation of test scores entailed by proposed uses of test. The validity of the tool has been found in different methods. For the present study, the investigator established the face validity for the tool.

Face Validity

The preliminary version tool of the variables namely SCS was given to experts in psychology who examined the different items of the tool and their opinions was highly solicited. After the tool was translated to Tamil by the investigator, it was given to an expert in Tamil for further scrutiny. Their suggestions regarding the suitability and standard of language are considered. Thus, the face validity of the tool was established.

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Establishing the Reliability

“The reliability of the test scores refers to the consistency of scores obtained by the same individual on different occasions with different set of equivalent items” (Best & Khan, 1999).

Test-Retest Method

In the present study, the investigator employed test-retest method for establishing reliability of the tool. The correlation co-efficient of the tool (SCS) is found to be 0.76. Thus, the reliability of Mental Health Scale (SCS) was established.

Scoring Procedure for the Tool

The scoring was done with the key which was prepared by the investigator for the tool. The School Climate Scale (SCS) is a five-point scale. All the items are positive in nature. The respondent has to choose any one from the given five responses, (i) Strongly Agree, (ii) Agree, (iii) Undecided, (iv) Disagree and (v) Strongly Disagree. Thus, the maximum score obtained by a sample was **200** and the minimum score obtained by a sample was **40**.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

Mean, Standard Deviation, F test and Correlation were used in this study.

ANALYSIS

Hypothesis: 1

There is no significant difference in the mental health of higher secondary school students in terms of type of school.

Table 1. One-Way ANOVA Results for Mental Health Dimensions Based on Type of School

Dimensions	Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F Value	P Value	Remarks at 0.05 Level
	Between Groups	88.98	2	44.49	3.67	0.018	S

Dimensions	Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F Value	P Value	Remarks at 0.05 Level
Digital-Ego Equilibrium	Within Groups	26500.53	997	26.58			
Techno-Cognitive Resilience	Between Groups	146.46	2	73.23	3.76	0.012	S
	Within Groups	41394.62	997	41.52			
Aspirational Burnout Agency	Between Groups	125.51	2	62.75	3.91	0.018	S
	Within Groups	32710.22	997	32.81			
Relational Authenticity	Between Groups	91.97	2	45.98	4.09	0.012	S
	Within Groups	21918.29	997	21.98			
Intra-Personal Sovereignty	Between Groups	71.79	2	35.90	3.94	0.015	S
	Within Groups	18485.77	997	18.54			
Mental Health Total	Between Groups	2359.40	2	1179.70	3.78	0.019	S
	Within Groups	660600.96	997	662.59			

Hypothesis: 2

There is no significant difference among the mental health of higher secondary school students in terms of nature of school.

Table 2. One-Way ANOVA Results for Mental Health Dimensions Based on Nature of School

Dimensions	Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Calculated F Value	P Value	Remarks at 0.05 Level
Digital-Ego Equilibrium	Between Groups	52.78	2	26.39	0.99	0.371	NS
	Within Groups	26536.73	997	26.62			
Techno-Cognitive Resilience	Between Groups	87.96	2	43.98	1.06	0.348	NS
	Within Groups	41453.12	997	41.58			
Aspirational Burnout Agency	Between Groups	61.04	2	30.52	0.93	0.396	NS
	Within Groups	32774.69	997	32.87			
Relational Authenticity	Between Groups	44.32	2	22.16	1.01	0.366	NS

Dimensions	Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Calculated F Value	P Value	Remarks at 0.05 Level
	Within Groups	21965.94	997	22.03			
Intra-Personal Sovereignty	Between Groups	34.69	2	17.35	0.93	0.393	NS
	Within Groups	18522.87	997	18.58			
Mental Health Total	Between Groups	1340.18	2	670.09	1.01	0.365	NS
	Within Groups	661620.19	997	663.61			

Hypothesis: 3

There is no significant difference in the school climate of higher secondary school students in terms of the type of school.

Table 3. One-Way ANOVA Results for School Climate Dimensions Based on Type of School

Dimensions	Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F Value	P Value	Remarks at 0.05 Level
Teaching– Learning Quality	Between Groups	59.77	2	29.88	3.20	0.003	S
	Within Groups	24926.55	997	25.00			
Teaching– Learning	Between Groups	32.97	2	16.49	3.95	0.037	S
	Within Groups	17302.78	997	17.36			
Inter-personal Rel.	Between Groups	32.71	2	16.35	3.12	0.028	S
	Within Groups	14601.63	997	14.65			
Institutional Env.	Between Groups	82.83	2	41.42	3.06	0.046	S
	Within Groups	38861.57	997	38.98			
Academic Guidance & Future Orientation	Between Groups	69.98	2	34.99	3.13	0.023	S
	Within Groups	30823.12	997	30.92			

Dimensions	Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F Value	P Value	Remarks at 0.05 Level
School Climate Total	Between Groups	1408.66	2	704.33	3.13	0.024	S
	Within Groups	622060.53	997	623.93			

Hypothesis: 4

There is no significant difference among the school climate of higher secondary school students in terms of nature of school.

Table 4. One-Way ANOVA Results for School Climate Dimensions Based on Nature of School

Dimensions	Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Calculated F Value	P Value	Remarks at 0.05 Level
Teaching–Learning Quality	Between Groups	47.64	2	23.82	0.95	0.386	NS
	Within Groups	24938.68	997	25.01			
Teaching–Learning	Between Groups	36.39	2	18.20	1.05	0.351	NS
	Within Groups	17299.37	997	17.35			
Interpersonal Rel.	Between Groups	23.30	2	11.65	0.80	0.452	NS
	Within Groups	14611.04	997	14.66			
Institutional Env.	Between Groups	75.72	2	37.86	0.97	0.379	NS
	Within Groups	38868.68	997	38.99			
Academic Guidance & Future Orientation	Between Groups	60.76	2	30.38	0.98	0.375	NS
	Within Groups	30832.34	997	30.93			
School Climate Total	Between Groups	1167.08	2	583.54	0.94	0.393	NS
	Within Groups	622302.11	997	624.18			

Hypothesis: 5

There is no significant relationship between moral values and the mental health of higher secondary school students.

Table 5. Pearson Correlation Matrix for Mental Health and School Climate Dimensions and Totals

Moral Values Mental Health	Inclusive Social Justice	Intellectual Honesty	Ecological Responsibility	Civic Autonomy & Public Ethics	Compassionate Resilience	Moral Values Total
Digital-Ego Equilibrium	0.949**	0.949**	0.948**	0.951**	0.949**	0.951**
Techno-Cognitive Resilience	0.951**	0.951**	0.950**	0.953**	0.951**	0.954**
Aspirational Burnout Agency	0.950**	0.950**	0.949**	0.952**	0.950**	0.953**
Relational Authenticity	0.951**	0.951**	0.950**	0.953**	0.951**	0.953**

Intra-Personal Sovereignty	0.948**	0.948**	0.947**	0.950**	0.948**	0.951**
Mental Health Total	0.952**	0.951**	0.950**	0.954**	0.951**	0.954**

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- Table 1 reveals that the school type (Government, Aided, or Private) plays an influential role in the mental well-being of higher secondary school students. Since the ANOVA just shows that at least two groups are different, post hoc comparisons are needed to determine which two types of schools are different. Mental Health total scores of the three types of schools were statistically different, $F(2, 997) = 3.78$, $p = 0.019$. The p-value is lower than the conventional alpha level of 0.05, which means that the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that the type of school plays an important role in determining the mental health and its dimensions of ($F = 3.67, 3.76, 3.91, 4.09$ and 3.94). The Scheffe test result reveals that higher secondary school students from aided schools are better than higher secondary school students from private and government schools in their Digital-Ego Equilibrium, Techno-Cognitive Resilience, Aspirational Burnout Agency, Relational Authenticity, Intra-Personal Sovereignty and Mental Health total.
- Table 2 reveals that the mental health total scores of the nature of schools shows there was no statistically significant difference in the Mental Health Total scores between the dissimilar types of schools, $F(2, 997) = 1.01$, $p = 0.365$. Since the p-value is larger than the standard alpha of 0.05, the null hypothesis is maintained. This shows that the character of the institution does not have a big impact on the overall mental health of the students.
- Table 3 reveals that the school climate total scores of the three types of schools were statistically different, $F(2, 997) = 3.13$, $p = 0.024$. The p-value is lower than the conventional alpha level of 0.05, which means that the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that the type of school plays an important role in determining the school climate and its dimensions of ($F = 3.20, 3.95, 3.12, 3.13$ and 3.06) Teaching–Learning Quality, Teacher–Student Relationship & Emotional Support, Peer Relationship, Safety & Inclusivity, Student Voice, Participation & Discipline and Academic Guidance & Future Orientation on the whole. The Scheffe test result reveals that higher secondary school students from aided schools are better than higher secondary school students from private and government schools in their Teaching–Learning Quality, Teacher–Student Relationship & Emotional Support, Peer Relationship, Safety & Inclusivity, Student Voice, Participation & Discipline, Academic Guidance & Future Orientation and School Climate Total.
- Table 4 reveals that the school climate total scores of the nature of schools shows there was no statistically significant difference in the School Climate Total and its dimensions of Teaching–Learning Quality, Teacher–Student Relationship & Emotional Support, Peer Relationship, Safety & Inclusivity, Student Voice, Participation & Discipline and Academic Guidance & Future Orientation scores and boys, girls and co-education students. Since the p-value is larger than the standard alpha of 0.05, the null hypothesis is maintained. This shows that the nature of school does not have a big impact on the overall School Climate of the students.
- Table 5 reveals that there is a significant and positive correlation between mental health and moral values, as any aspect of mental health improvement is strongly associated with moral values.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Directorate of School Education should perform a qualitative analysis focused on identifying an administrative or cultural practice within the school, specifically Aided Schools, which allows for a better Teacher-Student Relationship and a better Peer Relationship.
- The Directorate should also create a "School Partnership" program where both Administrators from Government Schools and Administrators from Private Schools can visit those Aided Schools that have been effective at improving Student Voice and Safety & Inclusion so that they can observe how those Aided Schools achieved these outcomes.
- Teachers must change from teaching by rote to teaching by inquiry so that students own their mental processes and reach the "Aspirational Burnout Agency" aspect of mental health.
- Internal audits on Emotional Support in the classroom should be conducted periodically at all types of schools, as this was a key strength of Aided Sector schools.
- Encourage teachers in lower performing sectors to use Aided Sector's "Teacher-Student Relationships" as a basis for professional development and/or recognition.
- Concentrate on the Management Aspect when addressing School Climate; rather than attributing school climate to the gender composition of the students, direct funding and efforts into the Management Type (Government vs. Aiding vs. Private) that your study shows is the responsible party for the school environment.

CONCLUSION

The intersections of Mental Health and School Climate. By promoting Authentic Relationality and reducing Aspirational Burnout to their students and colleagues, teachers and educators help not only improve mental health, but create a solid foundation for ethical behaviour in society. If we hope to create a generation of young people that are virtuous in their behaviours, we must ensure that all students; regardless of gender or location; are located in an environment where their intellectual ability is valued as much as their grades.

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