

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF STUDENTS' PREFERENCES FOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT ON THE BASIS OF SCHOOL TYPES.

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Abstract

Education is a potent force in developing a child into skilled, effective, productive and law-abiding citizen. It is therefore imperative that the environment for the education of the child is conducive and congenial for his growth and development. The aim of the study was to compare students' preferences for learning environment on the basis of School Types. The study adopted the descriptive method of the Casual – Comparative type. The sample comprised of 574 standard VIII English medium students from schools. The tools used for the study were Preferred Learning Environment Scale by Fraser (1996) and Hemisphericity Dominance Test by Venkataraman. ANOVA and 't' test was used to compare students' preference for learning environment on the basis of hemisphericity and gender respectively. The findings are discussed in detail in the paper.

Keywords: Students' Preferences, Learning Environment, School types by Gender, School Types by Management.



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Introduction

Education is a potent force in developing a child into skilled, effective, productive and law-abiding citizen. Education is one of the most vital pillars of the country. It is therefore imperative that the environment for the education of the child is conducive and congenial for his growth and development. There is positive correlation between educational environment and student morale (Sharma, 1983).

There is significant difference in boys and girls on classroom environment scores (Patel, 1987).

Empirical evidence has linked learning environment with the achievement. Openness of Learning Environment has been linked primarily to expressive characteristics in schools. For example, the more open learning environment, the more committed, loyal and satisfied

the teachers are. Similarly the more open the learning environment; the less alienated students tend to be.

(Solanki, 1992) found a relationship between the resource management system and the organizational climate of the schools. Highly resourceful schools were inclined towards the open range climate. Whereas the low-resourceful and very low-resourceful schools were inclined towards the close range climate.

Education system needs to be tuned to the requirements of the nation. It should not only emphasize on learning and memorization but also help the students to acquire the habit of independent and innovative thinking. Education should encourage and help development of creative abilities in educands. Education can help developmental changes to occur by developing the creative abilities in human beings. Creative thinking leads to creative production of substance.

The education system is therefore to function in such a way as to develop the creative abilities of the students. To establish this function the educational system needs to cater the desires and preferences of the students with respect to their learning environment.

If learning environment provided to the students is as per their preferences then it will positively contribute to the overall development of the students. Also the students' preferences may differ on the basis of the type of school they attend, which the researcher found to be an influential variable in determining students' preferences for learning environment.

Aim of the study

To compare students' preferences for learning environment on the basis of School types.

Objectives of the study

- 1) To compare students' total preferences for learning environment and its dimensions on the basis of school types by gender.
- 2) To compare students' total preferences for learning environment and its dimensions on the basis of School types by management

Null hypothesis of the study

- 1) There is no significant difference in the students' total preference for learning environment and its dimensions on the basis of school types by gender.
- 2) There is no significant difference in the students' total preference for learning environment and its dimensions on the basis of school types by management.

Methodology of the Present Study

The present study has adopted the descriptive method of the Causal – Comparative type. This method is adopted as the study aims to compare students' preferences for learning environment on the basis of school types.

Sample

In the present study the population comprised of VIIIth standard students of English medium schools situated in Greater Mumbai, affiliated to the SSC board.

The sample selected for the present study consists of 574 students – both boys and girls from standard VIII of English medium schools situated in Greater Mumbai.

Size and Composition of the Sample

The sample consisted of standard VIII students both boys and girls of schools affiliated to the SSC board and situated in Greater Mumbai. Initially the sample size comprised of 610 students. After editing for completion of the tools, the total sample amounted to 574 students. 36 (5.90 %) forms were discarded on account of incomplete information.

The sample comprised of 183 (31.88 %), 190 (33.10%) and 201 (35.02 %) students from south zone, north zone and central respectively. Also the sample consisted of 324 (56.45 %) boys and 250 (43.55 %) girls.

Tools of Research

The following are a list of tools, which were employed by the researcher for the study:

- 1) **Personal data sheet:** It asked for information such as their name, name of their school, standard and gender.
- 2) **Preferred Learning Environment Scale:** This tool was used to ascertain the students' preferences for Learning Environment. This rating scale was originally developed by Fraser (1996). This scale consists of 10 dimensions.

The dimensions are as follows:

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| i) Student Cohesiveness | (vi) Co-operation |
| ii) Teacher Support | (vii) Equity |
| iii) Involvement | (viii) Differentiation |
| iv) Task Orientation | (ix) Computer usage |
| v) Investigation | (x) Young Adult Ethos |

This tool was prepared and employed for the study in western country. Hence the reliability of the tool in India was established. The internal consistency reliability using Rulon's formula was found to be 0.86

Techniques of data analysis:

In the present study the following parametric techniques have been employed to compare standard VIII students' preferences for learning environment on the basis of their hemisphericity and on the basis of gender of the students.

- 1) ANOVA: In the present study, this technique was used to compare students' total preferences for learning environment and its dimensions on the basis of school types by Gender.
- 2) 't' test: In the present study this technique was used to compare the students' preference for learning environment on the basis of school types by management.
- 3) ω^2_{est} : It was used to ascertain the proportion of variance accounted for by school types by gender and school types by management.

Testing of hypothesis

- 1) There is no significant difference in the students' total preference for learning environment and its dimensions on the basis of school types by gender.

Table showing relevant statistics of Preferred Learning Environment scores of students on the basis of School Types by Gender

Dimensions	Mean			F-Ratio	Level of Significance	100 ω^2
	Boys (N= 91)	Girls (N= 113)	Co-educational (N= 370)			
TPLE	289.40	304.68	291.32	6.69	0.01	1.94 %
SC	30.92	32.67	32.71	5.36	0.01	1.50 %
TSU	26.95	28.88	27.36	3.32	0.05	0.80 %
INVL	27.04	28.53	27.07	3.09	0.05	0.72 %
TO	31.46	33.20	31.26	4.47	0.05	1.19 %
INVG	27.45	30.51	28.25	11	0.01	3.37 %
COOP	30.80	32.99	31.66	4.16	0.05	1.09 %
EQU	30.33	31.54	30.05	2.79	NS	--
DIFF	28.87	31.11	28.71	9.01	0.01	2.72 %
CU	25.56	23.58	24.55	1.74	NS	--
YAE	30.54	31.65	29.74	4.99	0.01	1.37 %

For df = (2, 571), Tabulated F = 3.01 at 0.05 level,
= 4.65 at 0.01 level

Conclusion

There is a significant difference in Total Preferred Learning Environment of students on the basis of school types by gender. The mean Total Preferred Learning Environment of students from girls' schools is the highest and is significantly greater than those from co-educational and boys' schools.

Similarly, there is significant difference in students' preferences for Student Cohesiveness, Teacher Support, Involvement, Task Orientation, Investigation, Co-operation, Differentiation and Young Adult Ethos dimensions of Preferred Learning Environment on the basis of school types by gender. The mean Teacher Support, Involvement, Investigation, Co-operation of students from girls' schools is the highest followed by students from co-educational and boys' schools.

However, the mean Student Cohesiveness of students from co-educational schools is greater than that of students from girls' and boys' schools. The mean Task Orientation, Differentiation, and Young Adult Ethos of students from girls' schools is highest followed by students from boys' and co-educational schools.

There is no significant difference in students' preferences for Equity and Computer Usage dimensions of Preferred Learning Environment on the basis of school types by gender.

- 2) There is no significant difference in the students' total preference for learning environment and its dimensions on the basis of school types by management.

Table showing relevant statistics of Preferred Learning Environment scores of students on the basis of School Types by Management

Dimensions	Private-Aided (N= 285)		Private- Unaided (N= 289)		t-ratio	Level of significance	100 ω^2
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
TPLE	295.82	39.15	291.49	33.44	1.42	NS	--
SC	32.17	4.60	32.66	4.60	1.26	NS	--
TSU	27.36	6.42	27.82	5.76	0.90	NS	--
INVL	27.40	6.25	27.31	4.98	0.19	NS	--
TO	32.08	5.29	31.27	4.59	1.98	0.05	0.51 %
INVG	28.89	5.59	28.25	4.82	1.45	NS	--
COOP	32.08	5.82	31.50	5.36	1.23	NS	--
EQU	30.72	6.12	30.05	5.70	1.37	NS	--
DIFF	29.98	5.61	28.45	5.11	3.40	0.01	1.81 %
CU	24.42	7.83	24.62	7.32	0.32	NS	--
YAE	30.93	5.67	29.56	5.77	2.85	0.01	1.23 %

For $df = 572$, Tabulated t at 0.05 level = 1.96,
0.01 level = 2.59

Conclusion:

There is significant difference in students' preferences for Task Orientation, Differentiation and Young Adult Ethos dimensions of Preferred Learning Environment on the basis of school types by management. The mean Task Orientation, Differentiation and Young Adult Ethos of students from private-aided schools is significantly greater than those from private-unaided schools.

However, there is no significant difference in students' preferences for Total Preferred Learning Environment, Student Cohesiveness, Teacher Support, Involvement, Investigation, Co-operation, Equity and Computer Usage dimensions.

Discussion and findings:

The findings imply that the students from either girls' schools or co-educational schools prefer:

- Student cohesiveness in terms of knowing other students, sharing of ideas and opinions and helping others in difficult times.
- Teacher's help in difficulty and consideration for their feelings.
- Sharing of ideas, involvement in discussion and asking questions
- Co-operating with other students while doing academic work. They prefer sharing their resources with each other.

Students from single sex schools prefer to understand tasks and complete the task on time; Work on differential task as per their own speed and ability preferring being treated like matured, responsible and independent young adults.

This could be perhaps because the nature and upbringing of the girls is such that their preferences from 'significant others' in school regarding, teacher support, involvement, task orientation, investigation, co-operation, differentiation, young adult ethos are likely to be higher than the students coming from co-educational and boys' schools.

The students from private-aided schools prefer to understand tasks and complete the task on time; prefer to work on different task as per their ability and their own speed; and Work at their own speed and ability preferring being treated like matured, responsible and independent young adults.

This could be because students coming from private-aided schools have high aspirations, high parental expectations, peer influence, also their home environment and socio-economic status may influence their preferences. Thus their preferences in the school regarding task orientation, differentiation and young adult ethos are likely to be higher as compared to those from private-unaided schools.

Implications of the study:

Students spend a vast amount of their time in school; they are widely influenced by the various experiences of the learning environment. Thus it is significant for the teacher to take into account their preferences for learning environment in order to provide desirable learning environment in classrooms. The study will help the teachers to design or modify the learning environment according to the type of school students belong to.

Learning environment is such an effective determinant of school outcomes that creating conducive and desirable learning environment will lead to increased effectiveness of the school. If the learning environment is as per the preferences of the students it may not only result in improved academic achievement of the students but also make them regular, curious, committed and responsible in learning.

The present study suggests that:

- Teachers need to cater to the higher preferences of students from girls' school for teacher support, involvement, investigation, cooperation, task orientation, differentiation and young adult ethos
- It also suggests that students from private- aided schools need to be given more opportunities for task orientation, differentiation and young adult ethos.

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