

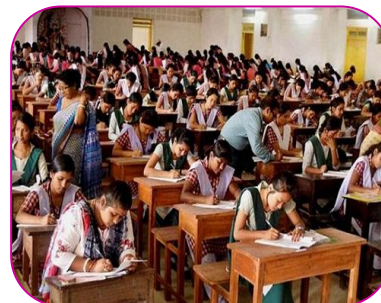


## EXAMINING SCHOOL TEACHER AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF CLASSROOM SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

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### ABSTRACT

*The school education in India is struggling with the challenge of poor learning outcomes as shown in several national reports. The relation between the classrooms' social environment and students learning outcomes is supported by a strong number of researches. This paper examines the perceptions of teachers and students about the social environment of classroom on three dimensions: relationship dimension, personal growth/goal orientation dimensions and system maintenance and change dimensions. Descriptive survey design was used for the study. Findings suggest that there is a similarity in the opinions of teachers and students in regard to the dimensions of affiliation, teacher support and task orientation which shows that peer collaboration and teacher support to students in their psychological aspect is lacking. This lack in the relationship on dimensions of affiliation, teacher support and task orientation between teacher and students presents a critical classroom problem.*

**KEYWORDS:** Classroom social environment, Student's perceptions, Teacher's perceptions.

### INTRODUCTION:

The most sacred space in education is school where the destiny of the nation is crafted by nourishing students in the fertile environment of school. A wholesome school setup provides ample opportunities to students for their physical, cognitive, emotional and social health of an individual. Classroom is a space where the school realizes its vision through healthy interactions and therefore, classroom environment is an aspect which needs attention at the level of school education. The classroom is an essential setting in which students and teachers connect and shape their relationships in school, and are likewise a domain that might be receptive to young people's fundamental and formative needs.

A growing body of research has studied classroom environment in relation to multiple outcomes such as learning (social, cognitive, and behavioral), student engagement, motivation, social relationships, and group dynamics. Classrooms and schools characterized as "disorderly" and reduction in teachers' abilities to efficiently manage the classroom environment and student behaviour have been linked to poor student academic and behavioural outcomes (O'Brennan, Bradshaw, & Furlong, 2014).

Overall, the classroom environment plays a crucial role in keeping students engaged and allowing them to be successful within the classroom. The teacher can modify the environment for the multidimensional growth of students. There is a multitude of ways for doing this. The physical environment of classroom can be modified by bringing change in the furniture setting, decoration, lighting and temperature of classrooms as this can increase the effectiveness of instruction in the classroom. A good teacher is aware of these elements and their importance in student's success. Without giving attention to the environment of a classroom the teacher is setting their students up to be less successful (Hannah, 2013).

Beyond the physical arrangement of a classroom, psychological environment is equally important. Psychological environment is created by the interaction of key players in the classroom, namely students and

teachers (Tisome, 2009). Classroom's psychological environment consists of following dimensions: involvement, affiliation, academic staff support, task orientation, competition, order and organization, rule clarity, academic staff control and innovation (Sadeghia, 2010). In the light of results of researches related to classroom environment, it is understood that the social environment of a classroom is significant for student motivation, cognitive and affective learning, and overall academic performance (Barr, 2016).

In India, school education is attempting to shift from teacher centric to student centric teaching. Student-centered learning (and teaching) has itself been variously defined as a process by which students are given greater autonomy and control over the choice of subject matter, the pace of learning, and the learning methods used. Student centric learning setup promotes use of student-centered techniques which facilitates a strong social context for learning (Barraket, 2005). The shift in the role of learners to creators of knowledge and the role of teacher to facilitator of knowledge creation arises the interest of researchers in the area of social climate of classroom.

The benefits of social environment are extended to teachers by shaping their teaching effectiveness in terms of fostering social environment addressing the unique developmental needs of students and thus helping them to develop positive self-perceptions and engagement. Teachers also play a significant role in fostering the classroom social environment. The classroom social environment and students' perceptions of their teachers and classmates are key factors in shaping teaching effectiveness as well as student learning and engagement. The importance of social environment is also explained in context of the period of adolescence. The adolescence stage is marked by specific needs such as competence, emotional support, autonomy, making a meaningful difference, being a responsible member of one's social group, knowing one's place in one's social context (creating one's own personal identity) and need to have a strong peer group. The adolescent stage sees changes in motivation and socio emotional development. These biological development and maturity are the most often given explanations by psychologists to explain the changes during adolescence. The alternative explanation to be considered is social contextual shifts in the stage environment fit theory given by Eccles and Midgey in 1989. The theory says that the fit between the developmental needs of an individual and the characteristics of the social environment influence students' motivation, behaviour and mental health.

Therefore, the present study attempts to understand the social environment of classroom to get an insight into the present environment of classrooms. The findings will inform administrators, teachers, students, parents and policy makers to take appropriate actions to create a conducive classroom environment to further support students in achieving learning outcomes (cognitive and affective both).

#### **OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF THE SOCIAL CLIMATE OF CLASSROOM**

In the present study, the social climate of classroom is assessed on three dimensions: relationship dimension, personal growth, and or goal orientation dimensions and system maintenance chance dimensions. The three dimensions are further divided in to nine sub dimensions as defined below:

<b>Relationship Dimensions</b>	
<b>Involvement</b>	<b>The</b> extent to which students are attentive and interested in class activities, participate in discussions, and do additional work on their own
<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>The</b> friendship students feel for each other, as expressed by getting to know each other, helping each other work with homework, and enjoying working together
<b>Teacher Support</b>	<b>The</b> help and friendship the teacher shows toward students, how much the teacher talks openly with students, trusts them, and is interested in their ideas
<b>Personal Growth/Goal Orientation dimensions</b>	
<b>Task Orientation</b>	<b>The</b> emphasis on completing planned activities and staying on the subject matter
<b>Competition</b>	<b>How</b> much students compete with each other for grades and recognition and how hard it is to achieve good grades
<b>System maintenance and change Dimensions</b>	
<b>Order and Organization</b>	<b>The</b> emphasis on students behaving in an orderly and polite manner and on the organization of assignment and activities
<b>Rule Clarity</b>	<b>The</b> emphasis on establishing and following a clear set of rules and on students knowing what the consequences will be if they do not follow them; the extent to which the teacher is consistent in dealing with students who break rules
<b>Teacher Control</b>	<b>How</b> strict the teacher is in enforcing the rules, the severity of punishment for rule infractions and how much students get into trouble in the class.
<b>Innovation</b>	<b>How</b> much students contribute to planning classroom activities, and the extent to which the teacher uses new techniques and encourages creative thinking

**Figure:1** Dimensions of social climate of classroom given by: Edison J Trickett and Rudolf H Moos (2012)

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This research aims to study the teachers and students views about nine dimensions of classroom social environment. The outcome of this study will provide useful information about the classroom social environment of secondary schools to the stakeholders. The views of teachers and students collected through a questionnaire related to classroom social environment will provide an important insight into the current

classroom environment. The results of the study will benefit the school teachers and administrators in understanding the social aspects of environment. The results can further be used to design their classroom environment that appropriately matches to the developmental needs of adolescents.

### DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Taking in to consideration the time and the resources available with the investigator the study has been limited into the following aspects: -

- The study is delimited to classrooms' social environment.
- The study is delimited to secondary level teachers and students.
- The study is delimited to Mahendergarh district only.

### OBJECTIVES

- To study the variation in classrooms' social environment profile between school students and teachers.
- To study the dimension wise difference in classrooms' social environment between government and private school teachers.
- To study the dimension wise difference in classrooms' social environment between government and private school students.
- To study the dimension wise difference in classrooms' social environment between school students and teachers.

### Hypotheses

#### 3.3 Hypotheses

There is no variation in classrooms' social environment profile of school teachers and students.

- There is no significant difference in relationship dimensions between private and government school teachers.
- There is no significant difference in Personal growth/Goal orientation dimensions between private and government school teachers.
- There is no significant difference in System maintenance and Change dimension between private and government school teachers.
- There is no significant difference in relationship dimensions between private and government school students.
- There is no significant difference in Personal growth/Goal orientations between private and government school students.
- There is no significant difference in System maintenance and change dimensions between private and government school students
- There is no significant difference in Relationship dimensions between school teachers and students.
- There is no significant difference in Personal growth/goal orientation dimension between school teachers and students
- There is no significant difference in System maintenance and change dimension between school teachers and students

### RESEARCH DESIGN

The descriptive survey method of research was used for this study. The descriptive method of research is to gather information about the present condition. The aim of descriptive research is to verify formulated hypotheses that refer to the present situation in order to elucidate it.

### Population and sample

In the present study, high schools of Mahendergarh have been considered as population.

The sample of the study constitutes of 100 teachers of Mahendergarh among which 50 are government school teachers and 50 are private school teachers. The sample also constitutes of 100 students, 50 students each from government and private schools respectively.

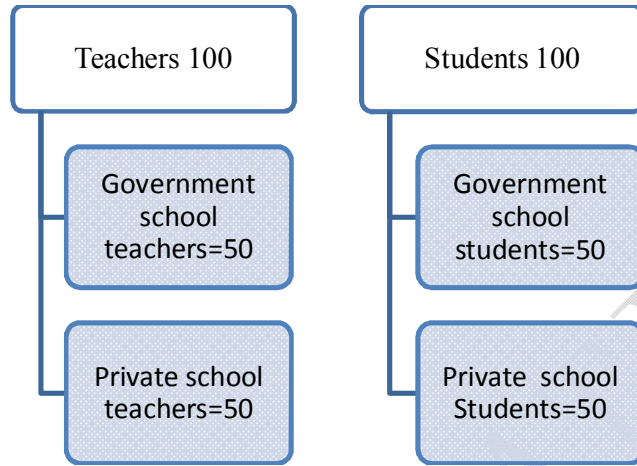


Figure:2 Sample Design

3.6 Tools

The researcher used standardized questionnaire to study the social environment of classrooms. The details of the questionnaire used in the present study are as follows:

**Name of the scale:** Classroom Environment Scale: A Social Climate Scale.

**Prepared by:** Edison J Trickett and Rudolf H Moos.

**Edition of the questionnaire:** Third Edition (2012).

Analysis and Interpretation

**Ho1:** There is no variation in classroom environment profile of school teachers and students.

Table no. 1: Classroom environment profile of school teachers and students.

Dimension	Involvement	Affiliation	Teacher support	Task orientation	Competition	Order	Rule Clarity	Teacher Control	Innovation
Teachers	51.21	50.94	41.88	48.19	52.99	48.49	48.4	53.89	52.88
Students	55.74	45.56	39.97	45.85	55.15	51.55	53.6	59.79	52.09

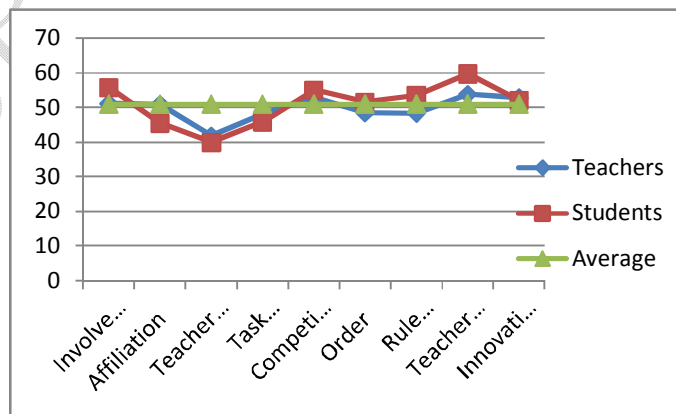


Figure3: Classroom Profile for teachers and students

**INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION:**

The figure no.3 shows the classroom profile for teachers and students. The teacher sees the class as competitive, innovative and high on teacher control. According to the teacher, the class lacks in affiliation, teacher's support, task orientation, order and rule clarity. Involvement is seen as above average. The students also agree with teacher that class is innovative, competitive with clear rules, high in involvement and teacher control. Students further report that class is below average in affiliation, teacher support and task orientation and above average in order and organization.

Overall, students and teachers agree that classroom provides competitive environment, teachers use innovative techniques to teach and teachers also strictly enforces the rules. On the other hand, they also share similar opinion regarding lack of affiliation, teacher support and task orientation. However, they have different opinion about order, organization and rule clarity. Students report average and above average on order and rule clarity while teachers rate these dimensions as below average.

**Objective:** To study the dimension wise difference in classroom environment between government and private school teachers.

**Ho 2:** There is no significant difference in relationship dimensions between private and government school teachers.

**Table no.2: Difference in Relationship dimensions between private and government school teachers**

Relationship Dimension	Mean	N	Std.dev.	t- value
Private teachers	46.69333	50	10.46563	0.26519*
Government teachers	49.32667	50	9.985558	

\*Significant at 0.05 significant level, df= 98

**INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION**

It is evident from table no.2 that the calculated t value (0.26519) is smaller than the critical value (1.98 and 2.62) at 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance respectively. Hence, the difference in mean value is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis, "There is no significant difference in relationship dimensions between private and government school teachers" can't be rejected. It shows that private and government school teachers hold same perception about relationship dimensions. Relationship dimensions include involvement, affiliation and teacher support which evaluates attentiveness of students in class, their interest and participation in class activities, helping peers with their homework and support of teachers towards students and cordial relations between students and teacher. The mean value of teachers as shown in table above is above the average standard score i.e. 44.3 (calculated on the basis of standard scores given in the conversion table in manual) which shows that the government and private school teachers perceive their classroom environment as above average on the dimensions of student indolent, affiliation and teacher support. It shows that the students and teachers of both private and government schools share a cordial relationship.

**Ho 3:** There is no significant difference in Personal growth/Goal orientation dimensions between private and government school teachers.



**Table no.3: Difference in Personal growth/Goal orientation dimensions between private and government school teachers.**

Personal growth dimensions	Mean	N	Std.Dev	t-value
Private teachers	51.45	50	7.953622	0.114689*
Government teachers	49.73	50	7.388026	

\* Significant at 0.05 significant level, df 98

### INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

It is evident from table no.3 that the calculated t value 0.114689 is smaller than the critical value 1.98 and 2.62 at 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance respectively. Hence, the difference in mean value is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis, "There is no significant difference in personal growth orientation dimensions between private and government school teachers can't be rejected. It shows that private and government school teachers hold same perception about personal growth dimensions. Personal growth dimensions include task orientation and competition which evaluates completion of planned activities on time and competition among students for recognition and good grades. The mean value of teachers is above the average standard score i.e. 44.3 (calculated on the basis of standard scores given in the conversion table in manual) which shows that the government and private school teachers perceive their classroom environment as above average on the dimensions of task orientation and competition. It shows that the students and teachers of both private and government schools emphasise on completing planned activities and on student's competition among themselves for good grades.

**Ho 4:** There is no significant difference in System maintenance and Change dimension between private and government school teachers.

**Table no.4: Difference in System Maintenance and Change dimension between private and government school teachers.**

System maintenance change	Mean	N	Std.Dev.	t- Value
Private teachers	51.1	50	6.926027	0.614976
Government teachers	50.725	50	7.9387977	

\* Significant at 0.05 significant level df 98

### INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

It is evident from table no.4 that the calculated t value 0.614976 is smaller than the critical value 1.98 and 2.62 at 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance respectively. Hence, the difference in mean value is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis, "There is no significant difference in System Maintenance and Change dimensions between private and government school teachers" can't be rejected. It shows that government and private school teachers hold same perception about system maintenance and change dimensions. System maintenance and change dimensions include order, organisation, rule clarity, teacher control and innovation. It focuses on student's behaviour in an orderly and polite manner, organization of assignments and activities; clarity of classroom rules and consequences of breaking rules and teachers and student's consistency in following rules; use of innovation and creative thinking in classroom; establishing and following a clear set of rules and the extent to which the teacher is consistent in dealing with students. The mean value of private and government school teachers is above the average standard score i.e. 44.3 (shown in table 1) which shows the private and government school teachers perceive classroom environment as average on order, organization, rule clarity, teacher control, and innovation dimensions.

**H0 5:** There is no significant difference in Relationship dimensions between private and government school students.

**Table no 5: Difference in Relationship dimensions between private and government school students.**

Relationship dimensions	Mean	N	Std. Dev.	t-Value
Government Students	47.6333	50	13.69682	0.465536
Private Students	46.546	50	12.00592	

\* Significant at 0.05 significant level df 98

### INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

It is evident from table no.5 that the calculated t value 0.465536 is smaller than the critical value 1.98 and 2.62 at 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance respectively. Hence, the difference in mean value is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis, "There is no significant difference in relationship dimensions between private and government school students" can't be rejected. It shows that private and government school students hold same perception about relationship dimensions. Relationship dimensions include involvement, affiliation and teacher support which evaluates attentiveness of students in class, their interest and participation in class activities, helping peers with their homework and support of teachers towards students and cordial relations between students and teacher. The mean value of students as shown in table above is above the average standard score i.e. 47.4 (calculated on the basis of standard scores given in the conversion table in manual) which shows that the government and private school students perceive their classroom environment as above average on the dimensions of student involvement, affiliation and teacher support. It shows that the students and teachers of both private and government schools share a cordial relationship.

**Ho:** - 6There is no significant difference in Personal growth/Goal orientations between private and government school students

**Table no: 6 Difference in Personal growth/Goal orientations between private and government school students**

Personal growth/ goal orientations dimensions	Mean	N	Std.Dev.	t-value
Government Students	48.91	50	14.2312	0.547754
Private Students	50.09	50	13.47133	

\* Significant at 0.05 significant levels; df 98

### INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

Hence, the difference in mean value is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis, "There is no significant difference in personal growth orientation dimensions between private and governments chool students" can't be rejected. It shows that private and governments chool students hold same perception about personal growth dimensions. Personal growth dimensions include task orientation and competition which evaluates completion of planned activities on time and competition among students for recognition and good grades. The mean value of students is above the averagest and ardscore i.e. 47.4 (calculated on the basis of standard scores given in the conversion table in manual) which shows that the government and private school students perceive their classroom environment as above average on the dimensions of task



orientation and competition. It shows that the students of both private and government schools emphasise on completing planned activities and on competition among themselves for good grades.

**Ho 7:** There is no significant difference in System Maintenance and Change dimensions between private and government school students

**Table no.7: Difference in System Maintenance and Change dimensions between private and government school students**

System Maintenance and Change dimensions	Mean	N	Std.Dev.	t-value
Government school students	53.69	50	9.0931152	0.237438
Private school students	54.825	50	10.12308	

\* Significant at 0.05 significant level df 98

### INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

It is evident from table no.7 that the calculated t value 0.237438 is smaller than the critical value 1.98 and 2.62 at 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance respectively. Hence, the difference in mean value is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis, "There is no significant difference System maintenance and change dimensions between private and government school students" can't be rejected. The mean value of private and government school students is above the average standard score i.e. 47.4 (shown in table 1) which shows the private and government school students perceive classroom environment as average on order, organization, rule clarity, teacher control and innovation dimensions.

**Objective:** To study the dimension wise difference in classroom environment between school students and teachers.

**Ho 8:** There is no significant difference in Relationship dimensions between school teachers and students.

**Table no 8 Difference in Relationship dimensions between school teachers and students.**

Relationship dimensions	N	Mean	Std.Dev.	t- value
Teachers	50	48.01	10.29611	0.334004
Students	50	47.01	12.86911	

. Significant at 0.05 significant level df 98

### INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

It is evident from table no.8 that the calculated t- value 0.334004 is smaller than the critical value 1.98 and 2.62 at 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance respectively. Hence, the difference in mean value is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis, "There is no significant difference in relationship dimensions between school teachers and school students" can't be rejected. It shows that school teachers and students hold same perception about relationship dimensions. Relationship dimensions include involvement, affiliation and teacher support which evaluates attentiveness of students in class, their interest and participation in class activities, helping peers with their homework and support of teachers towards students and cordial relations between students and teacher.

**Ho 9:** There is no significant difference in Personal growth/Goal orientation dimension private and government school students.

**Table no.9 Difference in Personal growth/Goal orientation dimension between school teachers and students**

Personal growth	N	Mean	Std.Dev.	t- value
Teachers	50	50.59	7.705112	0.330918
Students	50	49.5	13.89617	

Significant at 0.05 significant level df 98

### INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

It is evident from table no.9 that the calculated t value 0.330918 is smaller than the critical value 1.98 and 2.62 at 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance respectively. Hence, the difference in mean value is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis, "There is no significant difference in personal growth orientation dimensions between school teachers and school students is not accepted. It shows that school teachers and students hold same perception about personal growth dimensions. Personal growth dimensions include task orientation and competition which evaluates completion of planned activities on time and competition among students for recognition and good grades.

It shows that private and government school students hold same perception about System maintenance and change dimensions. System maintenance and change dimensions include order, organization, rule clarity, teacher control and innovation. It focuses on student's behaviour in an orderly and polite manner, organization of assignments and activities; clarity of classroom rules and consequences of breaking rules and teachers and students consistency in following rules; use of innovation and creative thinking in classroom; establishing and following a clear set of rules and the extent to which the teacher is consistent in dealing with students between school teachers and students.

**Ho: 10** There is no significant difference in System Maintenance and Change dimension between school teachers and students.

**Table no.10 Difference in System Maintenance and Change dimension between school teachers and students**

System Maintenance and Change dimensions	N	Mean	Std.Dev.	t- value
Teachers	50	54.2575	7.442669	4.88748E-08
Students	50	50.9125	9.597472	

\* Significant at 0.05 significant level

**Table no.11 Difference in sub dimensions of System Maintenance and Change dimension between school teachers and students**

Sub-dimensions	Order Organizations		Rule Clarity		Teacher Control		Innovation	
	Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students
Mean	48.49	51.55	48.4	53.6	53.89	59.79	52.87	52.09
Standard Deviation	7.6190815	7.793560	6.614950	10.6901347	7.403104727	9.7992939	6.442684364	7.529195699
t-value	0.00549		5.2125E-05		3.06531E-06		0.432148	

\*Significant at 0.05 significant level

The table no. 10 depicts that there is significant difference between the system maintenance and change dimension of classroom environment as perceived by school teachers and school students. The t-value 4.88748 is greater than the critical value of t (1.98) at 0.05 level of significance for df 98.

Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. It shows that teachers and students perception from each other about System maintenance and Change dimensions. System maintenance and change dimensions include order, organization, rule clarity, teacher control and innovation. It focuses on student's behaviour in an orderly and polite manner, organization of assignments and activities; clarity of classroom rules and consequences of breaking rules and teachers and student's consistency in following rules; use of innovation and creative thinking in classroom; establishing and following a clear set of rules and the extent to which the teacher is consistent in dealing with students. The detailed analysis of sub dimensions shown in table no. 11 shows that the students and teachers perceptions vary on the rule clarity and teacher control sub dimensions. The mean scores of students are more than the teachers in these sub dimensions which shows that students have stronger opinion related to rule clarity and teacher control.

### DISCUSSION:

According to teachers, class is competitive, innovative and high on teacher control. Teachers believe that the class lacks affiliation, teacher's support, task orientation, order and rule clarity. Involvement is seen as above average. The students also agree with teachers that class is innovative, competitive with clear rules, high in involvement and teacher control. However, students report that class is below average in affiliation, teacher support and task orientation and above average in order and organization. The similarity in the opinions of teachers and students in regard to the dimensions of affiliation, teacher support and task orientation shows that the peer collaboration and teacher support to students in their psychological aspect is lacking. This lack in the peer support and teacher's support to student's psychological development presents a critical classroom problem. Contemporary educational scenario is promoting constructivist approach which is based on the supportive relationship of teachers and student. The results of the present study provide a dreary picture of social environment of classroom. Thus, there is an urgent step should be taken in this direction.

The results also show that teachers and students perception differs from each other about System maintenance and Change dimensions. System maintenance and Change dimensions include order, organization, rule clarity, teacher control and innovation. It focuses on student's behaviour in an orderly and polite manner, organization of assignments and activities; clarity of classroom rules and consequences of breaking rules and teachers and student's consistency in following rules; use of innovation and creative thinking in classroom; establishing and following a clear set of rules and the extent to which the teacher is consistent in dealing with students. The students and teachers perceptions vary on the rule clarity and teacher control. The students are clear with the class rules and the consequences of not following them and they also agree that their classes are highly controlled by teachers. The teachers are strict in enforcing rules and the punishment is severe in case of breaking rules. In Indian classrooms with large number of students, the teachers have no other option than to be high in classroom control. It can be concluded that in our classrooms, there is a need to improve relationship between student and teacher.

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