

## **Examining the Role of School Climate in Promoting Cross-Cultural Emotional Wellness and Psychological Resilience Among Students in Army Schools**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study investigates the influence of school climate on students' emotional well-being and psychological resilience in army schools, which offer cross-cultural dynamics. The unique environment has students from diverse regional and cultural backgrounds due to the mobility of military families. The research explores how supportive leadership, peer relationships, inclusivity, and emotional safety contribute to students' emotional well-being and ability to adapt in challenging situations. The study uses a Likert-scale instrument to collect data from 120 students in secondary classes at 15 Army schools across the northeastern states of India. The findings aim to provide insight into the mechanisms through which school climate can foster emotional balance and resilience, guiding future policies for military-based educational institutions.*

**Keywords:** army schools, cross-cultural, emotional well-being, psychological resilience, school climate, secondary class students

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## INTRODUCTION

School climate has always been pivotal while understanding the importance of the comprehensive development of students, teachers, and all other stakeholders. Research has proven that school climate is a major determinant, apart from the environment at home, for the holistic growth of students in the school (Yu et al., 2022, Santhosh & Flower, 2023). The importance of school climate can be understood by the underdeveloped noncognitive traits of students (Zynuddin et al., 2023). In other words, the achievements and failures of the students and teachers are subject to the climate that the school presents. Academic outcomes are a minuscule part of the development that we can think of (Podiya et al., 2025). Development while traversing teenage, mental wellness, emotional well-being and the turmoil associated with the age group is something that the school climate can not only address but also aid in resolving (Wong et al., 2021). While emotional wellbeing is commonly understood well, psychological resilience, i.e., the ability to adapt to critical situations and challenges of life, is also of utmost concern to teenage students (Afek et al., 2021, Denckla et al., 2020). The school climate is formed by the teaching staff, nonteaching members, community policy makers, leaders from within the school and leaders who are not part of the school yet influence the environment of the school. School climate, a pivotal component of the educational setting, is a key determinant of students' well-being and mental health outcomes (Darling-Hammond & DePaoli, 2020). Students spend a considerable amount of time at school chimes with the need for a positive school climate to reinforce psychological resilience among students (Twum-Antwi et al., 2019). School presents both a way of living culture and a learning culture. Thus, a positive school climate aids the positive mental health and wellbeing of students, thereby enhancing the living culture while aiding the learning culture (Shifali & Maliyakkal, 2024).

School climate refers to the quality and character of school life, and it is shaped by a range of factors, including physical safety, social relationships, and academic support (Lombardi et al., 2019). School climate can be defined as the character of the school, interpersonal relationships between students and teachers and interpersonal relationships among students. It brings out the values that the school stands for, the practices, attitudes, and perspectives. School climate not only shapes students' academics but also fosters positive growth in the principles, mindsets and beliefs of students and communities at large (Biber & Brandenburg, 2021, Maxwell et al., 2017, Olsen et al., 2017). Furthermore, we can safely assume that school climate is a focal point for the complete growth of students. To assess the climate of the school, certain key indicators are brought forth. They not only gauge the environment but also reiterate its importance (Richard, 2021).

School climate has been even more pertinent in schools managed by Indian armed forces, which have students from cross-cultural backgrounds, which is in

turn attributed to the transferrable nature of the jobs of parents. The importance of school climate is enhanced by studies that have demonstrated that various components of school climate in military-connected schools are linked to lower rates of depressive symptoms and suicidal thoughts among students, further emphasizing the vital role of school climate in fostering a positive and supportive educational environment for these adolescents (De Pedro et al., 2015). The gravity of the environment of the school is so immense that issues pertaining to it can invoke official investigations under Army Regulations. This highlights the profundity of Army views on students' emotional well-being, psychological resilience and hence the school climate. Thus, the climate of the school managed by the Indian Army holds an overriding position in ensuring healthy emotional well-being and psychologically resilient learners while studying in such schools (Ruff & Keim, 2014).

Research has also underscored the importance of school climate as a paramount factor in the influence of mental health and wellbeing. Military run schools are basically looked up for leadership. Another, not supported by evidence, theory is that all schools managed by the armed forces follow a stringent discipline and are literally led by the cane. Which, in actuality, is not as bad as it is portrayed to the world (Bronson, 1984).

Routine assessments through observations, interviews, surveys, and other research methods are regularly conducted to evaluate and gauge the environment of the school and the perceptions that are formed among the stakeholders. A positive and conducive school climate is ensured in the educational setting for the upbringing of future leaders (Karre & Perkins, 2022). Such periodic evaluations bring out both the strengths and weakness of the educational setting in schools managed by armed forces (Farley, 2017).

With assessments and regulations in place, what needs to be seen is what pushes students toward adversity from suicide, depression or even inferiority complexes. It is seen that bullying and stress are major factors that cause adverse mental health outcomes. While schools are constantly monitored in terms of school climate, cases of bullying do exist, especially if one comes from a marginalized section away from parents and may take severe turns if unchecked (Liu et al., 2025). Cases of bullying of any kind, race, gender, religion or sexual preference must be dealt with strongly (Robinson & Espelage, 2011). The study also shows that most children of armed force personnel face bullying in other public schools. Thus, they choose Army schools for a larger reason (Atuel et al., 2014).

Defined as the encompassing social and educational atmosphere of a school, school climate serves as a barometer of the quality of students' school life, encompassing both social interactions and academic experiences. With a focus on the school climate perceptions of students in military-connected schools, recent research has illustrated the significance of this factor in shaping the experiences of these individuals within the educational system (Astor et al., 2010). In essence, the

school climate in Army schools not only influences the prevalence of bullying but also significantly impacts the social, emotional, and psychological well-being of military-connected students, highlighting the need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms within these educational settings (Garcia, 2021, Stevens et al., 1994, Younis et al., 2019).

To sum up, one can say that Army schools do have a different set of values and principles that it proudly stands for. With students who are constantly on the move because of their parents' transfer, the school needs perpetual monitoring of the climate it builds and sustains. A positive climate does have a positive impact on emotional wellbeing and aid in psychological resilience. Thus, calling an end to bullying lowers stress and motivation by teachers. The paper examines whether army schools follow the above for students to foster better emotional wellbeing and psychological resilience.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Concept of School Climate**

Thapa et al. (2013) have well defined the century-old concept of school climate in a very concise yet apt manner. The authors, after empirically reviewing the literature on five major aspects of security in terms of physical, mental and emotional, or rather holistically, interrelation with other stakeholders or a sense of congruence, teaching learning experiences, the physical environment of the school and, above all, the constant move toward augmentation. The researchers have enumerated the phrase confrontation with the school surroundings of parents, students, and staff in all aspects, including academics. The musings of school life encompass school climate. Rudasill et al. (2017) laid down a brief enumeration of school climate after studying the concept both theoretically and through verifiable first-hand data. The authors have introduced a system to understand the concept in a better manner. They have suggested a systems view of school climate (SVSC). Through this, the authors have established the term can be understood by the insights provided by pupils, parents and teaching and nonteaching staff about the visceral and logical experiences that they encounter within the campus.

### **School Climate and Emotional Wellness**

Kidger et al. (2012), in their systematic review of more than 3 dozen cohort papers, studied the effect of educational environment on emotional wellness. The literature review has revealed that the school climate has a deep impact on the health of mind and emotion or affective wellbeing. Researchers have also underlined that the relationship between teachers and school leaders has a direct impact. The connectedness of the institution plays a positive role in building positive emotional wellbeing.

Kutsyuruba et al. (2015) systematically reviewed empirical studies on the school climate, emotional health of the learner and the safety of the school on the academic achievements of the student. After carefully and systematically studying technical reports and available literature, the researchers concluded that school climate encompasses the physical and mental safety and wellbeing of the students. They have also deduced that a school in which ragging, bullying and violence are prevalent has a negative impact on the mental and emotional health of learners.

### **Psychological Resilience and Its Educational Correlates**

The literature shows that an unfavorable school climate has an adverse effect on emotional well-being, thereby hindering psychological resilience. It is also vital to how school discipline and motivation or support from teaching and administrative staff, peer relations and inclusivity impact psychological resilience.

ŞahiN and Hepsöğütü (2018) studied the psychological resilience of 229 secondary school students in Turkey. The authors utilized the Child and Teenager Psychological Resilience Scale and the Teenagers' Coping Skills Scale to assess resilience. The study concluded that there is no significant difference in resilience in terms of gender or parental issues. However, the findings show that with the increase in classes, psychological resilience decreased. This called for an enhanced positive school climate. Sakız and Aftab (2018) studied more than 800 students in high school in Turkey on how academic excellence contributes to psychological resilience. The quantitative study collected data from students' records and questionnaires to understand the same. The findings show that there is a positive relationship between psychological resilience and educational excellence. These two variables, however, are influenced by the learner's sociodemographic conditions.

Ebbert and Luthar (2021) studied more than 2500 students from high-achieving schools. The authors have used multivariate analyses to understand the multiple aspects of school climate and adolescent adjustments needed for a resilient learner. The findings shed light on the positive impact of school climate on adolescent adjustments, leading to resilient people. The mediating factor of the relationship between parent and child was apparent. Feeling left out by teachers and bullying also had a significant impact on the psychological resilience of the students.

### **Military-Connected Students and School Support Systems**

Yablon (2015) surveyed 535 secondary school students in Israel. The researcher used a questionnaire to collect data and found that these students who lived in constant war zones due to ethno-political reasons witnessed violence and hence higher PTSD. However, the school environment has played a constructive role and has been instrumental in bringing about a positive decrease in PTG and

PTSD. The author underlines the need for a positive school climate to foster healthy emotional wellbeing and eventually psychological resilience.

Ariyo et al. (2022) conducted a qualitative study on children and adults in a warzone. The authors selected 70 children and 11 adults from a conflicted area in Nigeria. Group discussions using the H diagram tool and structured interviews were used to collect data. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that connectivity between students and teachers, a secure school environment, a welfare package and a supportive home ensure healthy emotional well-being and a psychologically resilient student. The literature review has revealed that a positive school climate is necessary for mental wellness and a violence-free school experience. The review has also stated that discipline laid by principals, warmth of teachers and administrative staff and motivation and support by all other stakeholders, including the community, is key for healthy mental health (Jayusi, 2025).

### **Gaps in Literature**

While the broader literature supports the relationship between school climate and student well-being, there is limited empirical research focusing specifically on army schools or military-connected students in diverse cultural contexts. Most studies have been conducted in Western settings and may not fully capture the dynamics of army schools in countries such as India, where cultural plurality and military norms intersect uniquely. Moreover, few studies have integrated the cross-cultural, emotional, and resilience-building dimensions of school climate within a single framework. This gap indicates the need for localized, context-sensitive research that addresses how army schools can cultivate inclusive, emotionally supportive, and resilience-oriented climates.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Participants**

There are 137 Army schools privately managed by the Army Welfare Education Society or AWES, a branch under the Indian Army. In these 137 Army Public Schools, nearly two and a half lakhs students are enrolled. These numbers form the population of the study. The sample for the study included 120 students from 15 Army Schools across the northeastern states of India. A stratified random sampling of 8 students per army school was chosen. All these students were from senior secondary classes. These students have passed class 10<sup>th</sup> and are in class 11<sup>th</sup> or given their class 10<sup>th</sup> board exams and awaiting their results. The mean age of the students was 15.6 years. The sample has an equal distribution between the genders. A total of 60 girls and 60 boys participated in the survey.

## **Instrument**

The researcher used a questionnaire called the SCS, “school climate scale”, developed by Dr. Shivendra Pratap Singh and Dr. Ali Imam in 2015. This 5-point Likert scale tool is divided into 7 dimensions with 18 questions. The dimensions are mentioned as follows:

- Freedom & cooperation
- Motivation & enjoyment in school
- Discipline
- Support of Faculty & administration
- Health & hygiene
- Fee structure
- Equal opportunity

The school climate in relation to emotional wellbeing and psychological resilience is measured under the first four dimensions, i.e., freedom & cooperation, motivation & enjoyment in school, discipline, and support of faculty & administration. Freedom and cooperation tell us about the amount of stress the students undergo in the school. The dimension of motivation and enjoyment in school helps us to understand the level of belongingness that the student feels about the school. The third dimension of discipline spells out racial discrimination, bullying or harassment and reporting of all or some of these. Finally, support from the faculty and administration tells us how comfortable the students are interacting with teachers and other administrative staff. These dimensions give us an idea of the existing bullying, harassment or discrimination faced by the students. It also gives us a picture of how safe and motivated the students feel in the school. The researcher validated the tool and the individual content before administering it to the principals.

## **Data collection**

After choosing the study sample from the population, the researcher administered the tool of the SCS (5-point Likert scale) questionnaire to collect data. This would gather data to study the school climate and existence of violence, emotional wellness, psychological resilience and motivation to talk freely. The instrument was administered to the students of 15 schools consisting of the chosen sample after obtaining due permission and explaining the questions in the tool. The 15 schools are comprised of army schools managed by AWES of the Indian Army spanning across the northeastern states of India.

### **Hypothesis**

The following null hypothesis was proposed.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relation between school climate and emotional wellness and psychological resilience.

## RESULTS

For the results, the data were collected from the 40 schools and were statistically measured descriptively and inferentially.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Individual Dimensions of School Climate (N=120)**

Dimensions	M	SD	SEM
Freedom & cooperation	3.638	0.3615	0.033
Motivation & enjoyment in school	3.382	0.3224	0.030
Discipline	4.210	0.4820	0.044
Support of faculty & administration	4.668	0.3210	0.029

*Note.* *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation, *SEM* = Standard Error of Mean

Individually speaking, freedom and cooperation are given high priority and highly practiced, as the mean = 3.64 (closer to the 5-point Likert scale). The low standard deviation score of 0.3615 also indicates that most schools are clustered around the mean. This also indicates that most schools practice freedom and cooperation as a necessary component to maintain a positive school climate. The standard error of the mean in the first dimension is  $SE = 0.033$ , which is also very low and is indicative of schools practicing freedom and cooperation to maintain a positive school climate. This also underlines the fact that Army schools create an environment for reinforced psychological resilience.

Motivation and enjoyment in school is also high on the priority list of all army schools. The mean of this dimension is Mean = 3.382, suggests so. The  $SD = 0.3224$  and  $SE$  of Mean = 0.030. Both are quite low, which again proves that motivation and enjoyment in school always exist to foster a positive school climate. Such motivation and enjoyment in schools foster psychological resilience as well.

The third dimension of discipline, which reflects bullying, racial discrimination and harassment and reporting of the same, seems to be high in the priority list practiced by army schools. The high mean = 4.210 (closer to the 5-point Likert scale) suggests this. The standard deviation and  $SE$  mean with scores  $SD = 0.4820$  and  $SE = 0.044$ , respectively, suggest that most schools adhere to the code of conduct and discipline is high in priority. Bullying of any sorts, racial discrimination and harassment are also dealt with strongly, thereby ensuring better emotional wellness.

Support for faculty and administration is also high in practice, as Mean = 4.668 suggests. The standard deviation SD = 0.3210 is low, and the SE of Mean = 0.029 also proves that faculty and administration support is adequate to maintain the positive climate of the school and to strengthen psychological resilience. Having analyzed the results descriptively, one can conclude that the practice of violence, racial discrimination or harassment based on race, caste, culture or creed are strictly dealt with in army schools. The analysis also sheds light on how teachers and administrative staff work closely with students to lower stress and foster a sense of belonging among students. This helps in the positive growth of mental health and hence fosters psychological resilience.

### Inferential Analysis

To inferentially prove that school climate in army schools across the country is positive and does not entertain bullying, racial discrimination, and harassment on the one hand and fosters mental well-being by reducing stress and inculcating a sense of belonging on the other, the researcher has conducted ANOVA and multilinear regression.

**Table 2: ANOVA**

Source	DF	Sum of Square	Mean Square	F stats	P value
Regression	3	1.86	0.62	5.26	0.0019
Residual	116	13.69	0.12		
Total	119	15.55	0.13		

**Table 3: Summary of Overall Fit**

R- Squared	$R^2 = 0.1198$
Adjusted R- Squared	$R^2 \text{ adj} = 0.0971$
Residual Standard Error	0.3435 on 116 degree of freedom
Overall <i>F</i> -Statistics	5.2637 on 3 and 116 degree of freedom
Overall <i>p</i> value	0.0019

Table 2 and Table 3 tell us the following.

1.  $H_0$  Hypothesis: Since the  $p \text{ value} < \alpha$ ,  $H_0$  is rejected.
2. Since the  $p \text{ value} = 0.0019$ , the chance of Type 1 error, or rejecting  $H_0$ , is small. In other words, the smaller the  $p \text{ value}$  is, the stronger the chance of rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative hypothesis.

3. Since the observed effect size  $f$  is large, the magnitude of the difference between the averages is large.
4. Since both ANOVA and multilinear regression show a low  $p$  value  $< 0.05$ , the null hypothesis, i.e., there is no significant relation between school climate and emotional wellness and psychological resilience, is clearly rejected.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics have proven that there is a significant relation between school climate and emotional wellness and psychological resilience.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of the descriptive statistics have shown that the individual mean scores of the dimensions are suggestive of a higher presence of discipline and support by teachers and administrative staff. The individual mean scores of the four dimensions, freedom & cooperation, discipline, support of faculty and administration and, above all, motivation and enjoyment in school, are high. This suggests that all these dimensions are held high on priority in the list of practices and are also practiced by more than 95% of army schools.

While the individual dimensions are statistically evaluated, the objective of the paper is to understand the relation between the perceived school climate of army schools and bullying and support from teachers and administrative staff to improve mental wellness. Having descriptively evaluated, one can conclude that there is a significant relationship between school climate and bullying and mental wellness. Both are inversely proportional. The more bullying there is, the lower the positivity of school climate. More bullying is also inversely proportional to discipline. Similarly, the lower the motivation from faculty and administrative staff to lower stress, the lower the positivity of the school climate. Thus, discipline and motivation are both directly related to a positive school climate.

The results of the inferential statistics also support the descriptive results. A high  $F$  value of 5.2637 on 3 and 116 degrees of freedom ( $F > 4.0$ ) indicates that school climate is affected because of prevalent bullying or lack of motivation or fostering mental wellness. The last test  $p$  test gives us the  $p$  value to finally reject or accept the null hypothesis. The  $p = 0.0019$  ( $p < 0.05$ ) is quite small. With the above  $F$  value and  $p$  value, one can say that there is a strong relation between school climate and bullying and mental wellness. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Empirical studies have also proven that military run schools have always inculcated various life skills to fare well in life. These life skills have helped students cope with stress, think clearly in adversity and always look at the positive aspect of every problem by being resilient (Hosseini-Shokouh et al., 2018, Konstantinou et al., 2022).

Thus, after analyzing data descriptively, inferentially, and empirically, one can say that Army schools managed by AWES of the Indian Army have maintained a strict adherence to the “no bullying, no racial discrimination and no harassment” policy. Such adherence also fosters a discipline to imbibe. Army schools also help maintain a positive school climate through supportive teaching and administrative staff (Boye & Agyei, 2025). On the other hand, mental wellness is addressed by reducing stress, motivating each student, and fostering psychological resilience by instilling a sense of belongingness. Thus, army schools across the country uphold a positive school climate by harnessing bullying or any kind of discrimination. The group of schools also ensures positive mental health and wellness as well as psychological resilience among students.

The paper is significantly important as the concept of emotional wellbeing and psychological resilience has been of great relevance in modern times, especially post covid. The pandemic has opened the pandora’s box of various mental health issues. Stress in society has just added fuel to fire. School, on the other hand, must have a climate that is conducive to physical and mental safety, fosters a sense of belongingness, both in students and in teachers, and above all, make the student desire to attend school daily and teachers stick around (Kanyiri, 2025). Such a climate is termed a positive school climate that encompasses physical, mental and emotional safety, engagement and domain. The teaching and administrative staff play a humungous part in bringing in a change in the school climate. A supportive and approachable staff is the need of the hour. The paper intends to give a sneak peek into how regulations, principles and missions of army schools managed by AWES of the Indian Army uphold the necessity of creating and maintaining a positive school environment. The regulations also ensure strict adherence to the no-violence and no-harassment policy. They also ensure that supportive staff are in place to reduce stress and foster positive mental health and wellness. The study, albeit its own limitations, is a step forward and in understanding the climate existing in army schools. The study is also a stepping-stone for further research.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

While this study focuses on army schools, its findings are highly transferable to nonmilitary educational settings, particularly those serving diverse, transient, or socioemotionally vulnerable student populations. Nonmilitary schools, especially those in urban areas with high student mobility or multicultural enrollments, can benefit significantly from understanding how a well-structured, emotionally supportive, and inclusive school climate contributes to psychological resilience and emotional wellness.

This study offers a foundation for aligning the school climate of nonmilitary schools to foster emotional well-being and psychological resilience in students

who would be stepping out into the world. This study extends far beyond academic discourse, offering practical, actionable strategies for transforming army schools into environments that nurture emotional strength, resilience, and cross-cultural understanding. By recentring school climate as a cornerstone of military education, this research affirms that fostering emotional and psychological well-being is not ancillary—but essential—to the holistic development of students in transitional and diverse educational contexts.

The emotional and psychological demands on today's students are not confined to military families. Whether in urban schools with migrant populations or rural schools grappling with poverty and trauma, nonmilitary institutions face equally urgent challenges in nurturing emotionally healthy, resilient learners. This study's emphasis on school climate as a protective, empowering force offers a universal framework that can be tailored to benefit all school communities—military or civilian.

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