

Assessment of School Environment and School Safety

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Received: 16.05.2018 | Revised: 24.06.2018 | Accepted: 3.07.2018

ABSTRACT

Learning takes place effectively only when proper congenial environment and safety is provided for children in school. School environment is regarded as an important factor in child's education that plays an inherent role in moulding the innate potentialities of the individual and help in their academic progress. The present study was undertaken to study and compare the environment and safety of government and private schools. The sample comprised of 180 school students between the age group of 14 –15 years (class-IX) drawn from the Jorhat district of Assam. Data was collected from the respondents by using schedule to assess school environment and school safety. It can be highlighted from the findings that all the private schools had high and average level of school environment and school safety but all the government schools had average and low level of environment and safety of schools. Statistical analysis (z-test) also showed a highly significant difference between government and private schools in the dimensions of school environment and school safety.

Key words: Government School and Private School.

INTRODUCTION

Education is essential for the development of society. It plays a very important role in life and transforms a person to live a better life. Every Individual receives education informally from parents, peers, religious/cultural discourse, work/job place, mass communication media etc. and gets formal education in educational institutions such as schools, colleges and universities¹. The efficiency of a school depends on more than

just the availability of classroom, textbooks and a relevant curriculum. It also depends on tangible human elements⁷. Many studies proved that academic achievement of a student is related to several psychological and environmental aspects of students²¹. Students who feel connected and accepted within the school community are more likely to experience academic success and less likely to engage in risky behaviors.

Cite this article: Rengma, S.S, Saikia, J. and Borah, T., Assessment of School Environment and School Safety, *Int. J. Pure App. Biosci.* 6(4): 150-157 (2018). doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18782/2320-7051.6486>

Principals can enhance students' learning by developing goals that are accepted and supported by the staff and by implementing structures that support individuals to tolerate stress and maintain stability while responding to the demands of the school environment¹⁶. Joshee¹¹ discovered that the quality of education in the private school was better than the one in the public school. They have higher test scores, even after controlling for observable family and school characteristics. Koran (1989) discovered that students who feel comfortable and secure in the school environment, are aware of the rules guiding their behaviour and tend to be involved in a variety of school activities. The areas which schools need to improve include increasing positive reinforcement and rewards for students, and ensuring that students feel they are treated with respect and dignity in their interactions with school personnel. MacNeil *et al.*¹⁶ also found that students achieve higher scores on standardized tests in schools with healthy learning environments. Singla²¹ found that school environment effects academic achievement of students. The school with better environment in general has better academic achievement of students. . There is evidence that schools in which rules are effectively enforced or schools with better discipline management have lower rates of student victimization and student delinquency⁹. Furthermore, if a school is able to accomplish a feeling of safety, students can have success regardless of their family or neighbourhood backgrounds⁸. Depending on the environment, schools can either be open or close the doors that lead to academic performance⁴. Main noticeable quality of the private schools is that these schools have top class management and they compete for maintaining its qualities for keeping them ahead in the business. Time, discipline, punctuality, security etc are maintained at a greater level. Teacher to student ratio is less in these schools, thereby, providing very

comfortable learning environment. Private schools have better safety². The forces of environment begin to influence the growth and development of the individual right from the womb of the mother. There are millions of students who have enough potential to excel in the world but due to lack of proper stimulation in the school climate they are unable to unfold their talents. A proper and adequate environment is very much necessary for a fruitful learning of the child. Especially the school should provide the necessary stimulation for learning experience as the child spends most of his time in school and here his environment is exerting a different influence on performance through curricula, teaching techniques and relationships. Therefore, research on environment and safety of school will be of great importance for the growth of young generation in particular and human capital in general. It will bring light to the importance of proper and adequate school environment.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To study and compare the school environment of government and private schools
2. To study and compare the school safety of government and private schools

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study was conducted in Jorhat district of Assam. Three government and three private schools were selected for the study. A total sample of 180 students (Class IX) were selected out of which, 90 were selected from private schools and 90 from government schools. Thirty students of class IX standard from each school were selected randomly to draw the required sample. Data was collected from the respondents by using the schedule to assess the environment and safety of school prepared by the researcher. All the additional information along with few observations were recorded and maintained in diary.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Distribution of schools according to environment

Variables	Type of school	Levels of schools (N=06)			Mean score	SD	z - Value
		High	Average	low			
		N	N	N			
Appearance of school	Government	-	3	-	35.45	3.16	2.58**
	Private	2	1	-	37.08	5.09	
Adequacy of disciplinary procedures	Government	-	2	1	39.13	1.04	4.73**
	Private	1	2	-	39.9	1.13	
Availability of physical and mental health services	Government	-	2	1	21.08	1.66	3.69**
	Private	1	2	-	22.02	1.72	
Learning context	Government	-	3	-	19.8	1.7	6.83**
	Private	1	2	-	21.6	1.8	

**Significant at 0.01 probability level

Results highlighted (Table 4.2) that the appearance of 3 government schools were in average level while the appearance of 2 private schools were in the high level and 1 was in average level. The government schools under this study were established during the time of pre-independence and just after independence. Being old, the premises are looking dull and are not in a condition to give a new and fresh look. Moreover, the authority of government schools are always dependent on government funds, for which, maintenance of buildings and school belonging's are a big problem for them. But in private schools the premises are well maintained with high amount of fees collected from each student as the private school's appearance always matters a lot to attract more number of students.

It can be said from the results that 2 government schools were in average level of having adequate disciplinary procedures and remaining 1 school was in low level. In private schools 1 school was in high level of having adequate disciplinary procedures and other 2 schools in average level of having disciplinary procedures. The fact behind this may be that private schools have a homogeneous group of students from a particular status of the society, who get enough exposure from highly

educated and economically sound parents. Children of these families are taught to be well disciplined, focused and socially intelligent. Teachers of private schools maintain strict discipline and it was observed that the students were also very much obedient and sincere. Whereas in government schools the disciplinary procedures cannot be imposed and strictly followed. Moreover, less amount of concern on the part of parents regarding school values and norms, more number of students and bigger size of rooms may be the reasons of not following the disciplinary procedures adequately in government schools.

With regard to the availability of physical and mental health services, it was observed that 2 government schools had average level and 1 had low level of physical and mental health services like safe drinking water facility, medical services, teacher's comfort during depression etc. In private schools it was found that 1 school had high level of physical and mental health services and the other 2 schools had average level of physical and mental health services. Results also revealed that all the government schools (3) had average level of learning context like availability of sufficient books in the library, reference books, computer facility etc. While

in case of private schools 1 school had high level of learning context and the remaining 2 schools had average level of learning context. As government schools are fully dependent on government funds, they are unable to provide physical and mental health services as well as facilities for learning in the school. Unlike the government schools, the private schools try to give the best possible services to the students in terms of physical and mental health services, learning context like library and computer facilities to make their students competent enough and achieve success by focussing on results.

Difference between private and government schools in each variable of school

environment were statistically analysed. The result of z values were found to be higher than that of table value. Hence, there were highly significant differences between government and private schools in the variables of school environment namely appearance of school, adequacy of disciplinary procedures, availability of physical and mental health services and learning context. It is an indicative of the fact that the school authority in private schools focused on maintaining their school appearance consistently and tried to provide the best facilities and services to achieve their goal which was seen to be less in government schools.

Table 2: Distribution of schools according to safety

Variables	Type of school	Levels of schools (N=06)			Mean score	SD	Z - Value
		High	Average	Low			
		N	N	N			
Physical safety	Government	-	2	1	17.2	1.26	6.21**
	Private	1	2	-	18.2	0.79	
Emotional safety	Government	-	2	1	32.4	2	2.54*
	Private	1	2	-	33.2	2.2	
Rules to ensure student's safety	Government	-	2	1	21.4	1.47	3.54**
	Private		3	-	22.3	1.87	
General safety	Government	-	2	1	9.6	2.19	5.55**
	Private	1	2	-	11.2	1.6	

**Significant at 0.01 probability level

* Significant at 0.05 probability level

Results (Table 4.2) of school safety indicated that in each of the variables namely physical safety and emotional safety, 2 government schools were in average level and 1 government school was in low level. While in case of private schools 1 was in high level and the other 2 were in average level in each of these variables of safety. Two government schools had average level of rules to ensure students safety while 1 was found in low level. In case of private schools it was found that all

the 3 schools had average level of rules to ensure students safety. Again results relating to general safety showed that 2 government schools had average level and 1 had low level of general safety. In private schools it was found that 1 school had high level and remaining 2 had average level of general safety. It can be said that in private schools students find themselves emotionally and physically secured as they have one to one interaction particularly with the school

teachers and principal. Each one of them receives personal care as the number of students enrolled were lesser than that of government schools. They also get ample opportunities for value education and character building for which they are emotionally attuned to everyone in the school too. But in government schools due to more number of students, less personal contact, and lack of discipline, the students safety could not be assured adequately.

The data were analysed statistically (z-test) and significant differences were found in the variables of school safety (physical safety,

emotional safety, rules to ensure students safety and general safety). The private schools ensure the safety of the students at their own level by managing their own resources. But due to more number of students in a large premises and lack of government's aid, the government schools fail to maintain a safe environment for the students. This findings can be supported by the study conducted by Lleras¹⁴ who had also found that the students feel less safe in large schools and verbal bullying is more likely to occur at such schools.

Table 3: Differences in agreements of respondents between private and government schools in the dimension of school environment

Statements	Private School (Respondents) (N=90)					Government School (Respondents) (N=90)				
	SA	A	U	D	SD	SA	A	U	D	SD
My school surrounding is well maintained	85 (94.45)	05 (5.55)	-	-	-	-	-	-	90 (100)	-
Students always arrived on time	20 (22.22)	70 (77.78)	-	-	-	-	-	-	90 (100)	-
There are enough teaching aids in my school	-	90 (100)	-	-	-	-	-	-	60 (66.67)	30 (33.33)

Figures within bracket indicate the percentage to the total

SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, U= Uncertain, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree

The result (Table 4.3) showed that majority of the respondents (94.45%) of private schools strongly agreed with the fact of maintenance of their school surroundings. On the other hand cent per cent respondents (100%) of government schools disagreed on the maintenance of their school surroundings. The private schools are more concerned about maintenance of their school's surroundings so as to project a good image of the school's outlook. They also try to maintain their school surrounding to draw the attention of today's dynamic parents and guardians. Usually the private schools are run under the sole proprietorship in which the initiator consistently takes care of the school by utilizing the resources to bring it to the best possible position. Surprisingly disagreement of all the students of government schools on the

same aspects reflects the poor picture of government schools which may be because of less resources and awareness on the part of government and school authority. Respondents of private schools were found to have agreement (77.78%) and strong agreement (22.22%) on the fact of timely arrival of students but the respondents (100%) of government schools disagreed with student's arrival on time. Students of private schools are strictly instructed to follow the rules of school from the very beginning. As they are enrolled in early stage of life it helps them to form such kind of habits too. Being in enriching home environment they also received parental help and guidance to learn sincerity and punctuality to conform to the rules set by the schools. This can be supported by the study conducted by Kelly who had also found that private schools

are voluntary so they have much greater control over the discipline of their students and whether a student has done enough to warrant being kicked out of their school. In government schools, student's inability to arrive on time may be due to attending the school from far away places, coming by public vehicles and working as a supporting hand for the parents in daily activities for their livelihood. It is to be noted that cent per cent respondents (100%) of private schools agreed with the statement that their school had enough teaching aids in the school while in government schools respondents showed disagreement (66.67% - disagree, 33.33% - strongly disagree) on having teaching aids in the school. The reason behind this may be that in private schools the autonomous body can

take decision on their own to have various teaching learning materials by using their own resources and thereby try to put sincere effort to make their teaching learning practices and methods very effective. Further, school authority also takes utmost care for imparting education in the best possible way and support the teachers to achieve their long term goal. But in government schools, teachers get transferred or promoted for which, sense of belongingness is less and it makes some teachers indifferent and uninterested in effective teaching methods by using appropriate aids. Moreover, they also wait for the teaching learning materials which are supplied by the concerned department of the government.

Table 4: Differences in agreements of respondents between private and government schools in the dimension of school safety

Statements	Private School (Respondents) (N=90)					Government School (Respondents) (N=90)				
	SA	A	U	D	SD	SA	A	U	D	SD
There is security guard at my school gate	-	90 (100)	-	-	-	-	-	-	90 (100)	-
Parents are called when students disobey rules	20 (22.22)	70 (77.78)	-	-	-	-	-	-	75 (83.33)	15 (16.67)

Figures within bracket indicate the percentage to the total

SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, U= Uncertain, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree

Results (Table 4.4) depicted that all the students (100%) of private schools agreed on having a security guard at their school gate while the reverse is true in case of government schools where cent per cent respondents (100%) disagreed with the same. It can be said that in private schools, facilities like keeping a security guard at the school gate is provided as it is considered to be an important aspect of having good reputation and also aid to its accreditation. But in government schools some posts remain vacant until the government provides fund. Here, the school authority is not liable to assume these responsibilities. It can also be noted that in private schools majority of respondents (77.78%) had agreement and rest (22.22%) had strong agreement upon the

statement of calling their parents whenever the students disobey rules in school. But in government schools, majority of the respondents (83.33%) disagreed with the statement. It may be because in private schools teachers feel that parents should be equally responsible to modify their child's behaviour and at the same time they do not want to spoil the image of the school. But in government schools the parents are seemed to be less concerned about their child's behaviour in the school and sometimes parents with less education were also incapable of handling those disobedient adolescent children. It can be supported by the study conducted by Bhat⁵, who had also found that the guardians of the

government school students are less conscious and serious about the education of their wards.

CONCLUSION

It was found that private schools were better in the dimension of school environment and school safety as compared to Government School. When students feel safe and get adequate and favourable environment in school then they can focus on their academic goals. Everyone desires to get the best results in today's world but learning will take place effectively only when the students are provided with safe and adequate learning environment. Proper learning environment can only mould the innate potentialities of the individual to make the child a productive citizen. Hence, Effective environment and ensuring safety is important in school to enhance the academic achievement level of students.

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