

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS
TOWARDS SCHOOL CLIMATE AND THEIR DECISION-MAKING
STYLES IN BAOSHAN FOREIGN LANGUAGE
SCHOOL AFFILIATED WITH SHANGHAI UNIVERSITY,
SHANGHAI, CHINA**

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Abstract: The study's main purpose was to explore the relationship between teachers' perceptions of school climate and their decision-making styles in Baoshan Foreign Language School, Affiliated with Shanghai University in Shanghai, China. The study first assessed the teachers' perception of school climate, examined the teachers' decision-making styles, and tested the relationship between these two main variables. A total of 70 full-time teachers answered questionnaires by the researchers. Mean and standard deviation were used to identify teachers' perception of school climate and decision-making style. The Pearson product correlation coefficient was used to analyze the relationship between teachers' perception of school climate and decision-making style. The results showed that the teachers in the target school had a relatively positive attitude towards the school climate. Besides, teachers' most preferred decision-making style was the group decision-making style. However, the level of perception of school climate and Autocratic decision-making styles was not significant. In addition, teachers' favorite decision-making style is the group decision-making style, followed by the consultative and autocratic styles. Pearson's correlation test showed a strong positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of school climate and group decision-making styles. The researcher discussed the findings and suggested that the stakeholders of this school should be aware of the importance of school climate and decision-making styles. Teachers should be provided a stronger professional development platform as well as various forms of communication opportunities.

Keywords: Teachers' Perception; School Climate; Decision-making Styles

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Introduction

Education does not exist alone; it always promotes the development of human beings and is always influenced by the surrounding environment (Chawla & Cushing, 2007). Schools are undoubtedly endowed with great social responsibilities as an important place for carrying out systematic education and conveying talents to society. Schools mainly formulate regulations in line with the long-term development of the country's overall education policy based on adjusting and improving their educational activities in the process (Holmes, Clement & Albright, 2013), and finally form a school that meets the country's climate general education policy but has its characteristics. Teachers and students are the main body of the school, and a good school atmosphere is necessary for recruiting more excellent teachers and cultivating more excellent students (Freiberg, 1999). At the same time, it is also an important indicator for parents and students to measure the school's learning environment and decide whether to study there. Therefore, how to create a better and positive campus atmosphere has always been a topic worthy of more research.

For teachers in school, school is the most important workplace; decision-making is not only a self-management behavior but also an information processing activity. In this process, different social mechanisms affect people. A person involved in solving a problem or making a decision, and thus influencing the outcome. Therefore, decision-making is an important skill. It not only involves teachers' career planning and long-term growth; they do decide to produce the biggest benefit that they (Mesut, 2011) also lie in the teacher, as a leader and decision-makers in their class, teacher's decision-making ability and style are closely linked, decided the students' learning outcomes and future career rules. At the same time, it also has a decisive influence on the overall atmosphere of the school (Tajasom & Ahmad, 2011).

Similarly, the climate of the school also affects the learning experience of teachers and students. Participate, contribute, commit and motivate yourself and the school. In fact, teachers' motivation and commitment are to maintain the school's vision, mission, and goal, reflecting the elements of trust, respect, integrity, fairness, and security. When the school atmosphere fails in an unhealthy state, the equal interaction, combination, maintenance, and control of sustainable development between teachers and students will be limited by intelligence. Weak climate intensity or high differences in employees' climate perception seem to lead to inconsistent employee behavior, which largely depends on individual differences.

In general, as the main place for students to study and teachers to work, school climate is undoubtedly given a very important meaning. A positive and healthy school climate is positively related to teachers' work enthusiasm and satisfaction. This is used in teaching activities and student management and had a positive impact. At the same time, as an indispensable behavior in teaching activities, the decision-making method reflects the teacher's own teaching management. Nowadays, teachers need to constantly change the way or style of their work to cope with a more diverse and ever-changing world. Decision-making can improve teachers' quality and positively affect students' learning methods and motivation. Research on these two variables is particularly important in the context of school climate and decision-making styles important to teaching output. Therefore, the study of these two variables is particularly important. The research object is a new school that has just been established two years. The research will help to improve the management and development of the school.

Research Objectives

Based on the above research questions, the following objectives were developed for this study:

1. To identify the teachers' perceptions towards school climate at the Baoshan Foreign Language School affiliated with Shanghai University, Shanghai, China.
2. To identify the teachers' decision-making styles at the Baoshan Foreign Language School affiliated with Shanghai University, Shanghai, China.
3. To identify the relationship between teachers' perception towards school climate and their decision-making styles at the Baoshan Foreign Language School affiliated with Shanghai University, Shanghai, China.

Literature Review

Open and Closed School Climate

An open school climate is defined as a dynamic and vibrant school to meet the social needs of its staff. Both teachers and principals can easily and appropriately produce leadership behavior. The open climate is characterized by cooperation, respect, authenticity, and openness between principals and teachers as well as between teachers. The principal provided is high support, low guidance, and low constraint. In an open climate, leaders have a high degree of University relationship, a high degree of intimacy, and a low degree of disengagement, among schoolteachers.

The principal also enjoys equal treatment for teachers and staff, and he or she leads as a promoter and supporter. Headmasters encourage and attach importance to teachers' suggestions. To improve work efficiency, principals

value and respect the achievements, performance, motivation, cooperation, cooperation, appreciation, and teachers' interests and needs. As teachers do, they not only respect the principal but also know themselves and can know themselves (Hoy, tatter, and kottkamp, 1991).

A closed and open climate is absolute. In a closed climate, the principal and teachers lack dedication and productivity. The principal and the teachers are simply meeting, focusing on daily details and unnecessary work, and responding to teachers to a minimum extent, but showing little satisfaction. Neither the headmaster nor the teacher emphasizes the completion of the task. The principal's guidance to teachers is direct and binding. Principals are not considerate, supportive, productive, or insensitive to schoolwork, such as record keeping and other additional assignments in the working society.

Healthy School Climate

Another noteworthy concept of school atmosphere is a healthy school climate, which is mentioned in Miles (1965). He pointed out that a healthy organization exists in the social environment and needs to constantly enrich its survival adaptability. Only a healthy organization can continue to develop and play its role in such an environment. After being redefined by miles himself and other researchers, a healthy school climate refers to a school's characteristics, institutions, and beliefs. Principals can obtain resources through certain influences. Therefore, teachers do not have to be subject to external pressure so that they can concentrate on their academic achievements and get the support and guidance of the president to obtain the corresponding social welfare. In the process, parents and students are excited.

On the contrary, an unhealthy school atmosphere means a lack of principals. Under the influence of external resources, teachers are under pressure from the outside world. The president neither cares about the welfare of teachers nor supports their academic problems. As a result, the morale of teachers, parents, and students is very poor. Myers's (1969) preliminary conceptual framework of a healthy school atmosphere includes ten dimensions: goal focus, communication adequacy, optimal ability balance, resource utilization, cohesion, morale, innovation, autonomy, and adequacy of adaptation and problem-solving. Although the concept of a mile may not be directly used to measure the organizational health of a school, it provides ideas and methods to provide theoretical support for later researchers. Hoy (1991) founded the Organization Health Inventory (OHI) to measure school climate, which is a long and arduous process.

Vroom and Yetton's Theory of Decision-making Styles

According to Vroom and Yetton (1973), as a kind of leadership, decision-making in an organization is not unilaterally made by individuals but a social process. In an organization, there are often many social mechanisms to choose from when decisions need to be made. At the same time, these mechanisms vary from individual to individual. Due to the differences in the way and degree of information exchange among group members, there are differences in the way and degree of information exchange among group members. The final solution will not be the same. Therefore, Vroom and Yetton designed a model with three optional styles of decision making, namely:

Autocratic Decision-Making Style

The autocratic decision-making style consists of autocratic I and autocratic II.

Autocratic I. Decision-making Style (AI). This type of leader or decision-maker is completely autocratic. They make decisions based on their knowledge or experience, without reference to the opinions of others.

Autocratic II. Decision-making Style (AII). The leader or decision-maker asks to use information from subordinates or colleagues, then decides independently. Although others participate in the process of giving information, they may not necessarily be informed of the purpose of the inquiry and the outcome of the decision.

Consultative Decision-Making Style

Consultative decision-making style includes Consultative I and Consultative II

Consultative I. Decision-making Style (CI). Such a leader or decision-maker will inform subordinates or colleagues of the problems to be solved, ask their opinions, and ultimately make their own decisions. This process of inquiry with each individual is conducted separately. Although they provide different information and opinions, it is uncertain whether the decision-makers solution will finally be affected.

Consultative II. Decision-making Style (CII). Leader or decision-maker shares the problems they are facing with subordinates or colleagues, collects opinions and suggestions from everyone, and ultimately make a decision alone. Unlike Consultative Type I, each of the subordinates or colleagues here meets to share problems and thoughts. Although whether the decision-makers final decision is influenced by their opinions is still uncertain, this action can be seen as a group-level decision.

Group Decision-Making Style (GII)

Group decision-making, also known as GII, is a style in which leaders or decision makers use a collective approach to making decisions. Decision makers humbly accept the opinions of everyone on the team, who sees themselves as mere motivators and whose job is to brainstorm the best way to solve the problem by motivating everyone. This is a complete teamwork approach, and the final decision is based on the opinions and consent of everyone.

Based on the above styles, Vroom and Yetton develop a list of seven diagnostic problems to help managers make the most appropriate decision styles based on local conditions. The diagnosis is based on the design of seven rules to help the decision maker recognize the situation and make the best choice. Three are about the quality of the decision, and the rest is about accepting the decision.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 is the conceptual framework of this study based on the theories presented above.

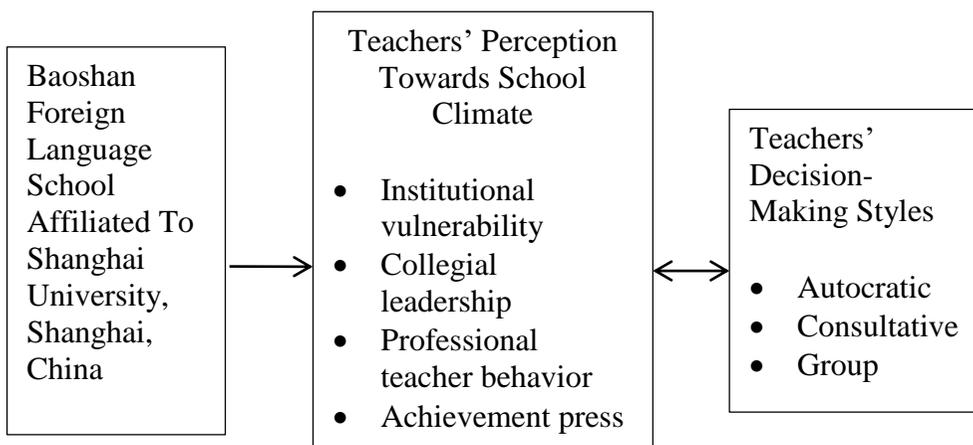


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Research Instrument

The research instrument in this study was a survey questionnaire consisting of two parts with 42 questions (Part I 30& Part II 12), developed from the different respective fields to obtain data for the research objective. Part 1 was the Organizational Climate Index (OCI), originally designed by Hoy et al. (2002) to determine teachers' perception of the school climate. Part 2 was adopted from a questionnaire formed by Dennis (2012) concisely based on the

decision model produced by Vroom and Yetton (1973). To conduct this survey, the researcher first requested permission from the Baoshan Foreign Language School affiliated with Shanghai University, Shanghai, China. After receiving approval, the researcher sent questionnaires to the Translation Institute for translation and translation validity checks. Then, the researcher returned to Baoshan Foreign Language School affiliated with Shanghai University and distributed 70 questionnaires to the teachers at the Baoshan Foreign Language School affiliated with Shanghai University through the help of the principals. The researcher successfully collected all 70 questionnaires back from the respondents by December 2020.

Findings

Research Objective One

Table 1 shows the total mean scores of teachers' perceptions towards school climate at the Baoshan Foreign Language School affiliated with Shanghai University was 4.27, the range of 3.51- 4.50. It was interpreted at a high level according to data interpretation standards. Therefore, the level of teachers' perception toward school climate was included. Among the four dimensions, Achievement Press obtained the highest mean score of 4.36, and Collegial Leadership got the lowest mean score of 4.19.

Table 1. *Summary of Teachers' Perceptions Toward School Climate*

| Variable | Mean | SD | Interpretation |
|-------------------------------|------|-----|----------------|
| Institutional Vulnerability | 4.20 | .13 | High |
| Collegial leadership | 4.19 | .60 | High |
| Achievement Press | 4.36 | .10 | High |
| Professional Teacher Behavior | 4.35 | .09 | High |
| Total | 4.27 | .38 | High |

Research Objective Two

Table 2 shows the summary of the total mean scores, and the standard deviation of the level of teachers' perceptions toward their decision-making style was 4.22, the range of 3.51- 4.50. It was interpreted at a high level according to data interpretation standards. Therefore, the level of teachers' perception toward their decision-making style was included. The function of group decision-making styles obtained the highest mean score of 4.27, and the autocratic and consultative decision-making styles got the lowest mean score of 4.09.

Table 2 Summary of Teachers' Perceptions Toward their Decision-making Styles

| Variable | Mean | SD | Interpretation |
|------------------------------------|------|------|----------------|
| Autocratic Decision-making Style | 4.09 | 1.24 | High |
| Consultative Decision-making Style | 4.19 | 1.10 | High |
| Group Decision-making Style | 4.27 | 1.07 | High |
| Total | 4.22 | 1.02 | High |

Research Objective Three

Table 3 show, Among the teachers at Baoshan Foreign Language School Affiliated to Shanghai University, Shanghai, China, the level of perception of school climate and Group decision-making styles were strongly positively correlated; the true value was $.773$ $p=.001$ which was $< .01$. Meanwhile, the level of perception of school climate and Consultative decision-making styles were a weak positively correlated, as the correlation (r) value was $.336$ $p=.004$ which was $< .05$. However, the level of perception of school climate and Autocratic decision-making styles was not significant.

Table 3 Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Between the Levels of Teachers' Perceptions Towards School Climate and Their Decision-making Styles

| Decision-making styles | | Teachers' Perception Towards School Climate | Conclusion |
|------------------------|---------------------|---|---|
| Group | Pearson Correlation | $.733^{**}$ | There was a strong positive relationship. |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | $.001$ | |
| Consultative | Pearson Correlation | $.336^*$ | There was a weak positive relationship. |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | $.004$ | |
| Autocratic | Pearson Correlation | $.027$ | There was no significant relationship. |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | $.501$ | |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2- tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05level (2- tailed).

Summary of the Findings

This study surveyed all the teachers in Baoshan Foreign Language School, affiliated with Shanghai University, Shanghai, China, to determine the teachers' perception towards the school climate and their decision-making styles. Overall, the levels of school climate were high. According to the finding, there was a difference in the preferred decision-making styles, where Group Decision-making Style was most preferred, group decision-making styles prevailed (45.7 percent), followed by consultative decision-making

style (40.0percent) and autocratic decision-making style (14.3 percent), indicating that teachers in this school were more inclined to make decisions through group work.

The study found that the teachers from this school had a relatively positive attitude towards the school climate, as their perception level is regarded as high. In addition, teachers' favorite decision-making style is the group decision-making style, followed by the consultative and autocratic styles. Pearson's correlation test result showed a strong positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of school climate and their group decision-making styles in the school. Meanwhile, there was a weak positive correlation between teachers' perceptions towards school climate and their consultive decision-making styles. However, there was no significant relationship between teachers' perceptions towards school climate and their autocratic decision-making styles in Baoshan Foreign Language School, Affiliated with Shanghai University, Shanghai, China.

Discussion

This study surveyed all the teachers in Baoshan Foreign Language School, affiliated with Shanghai University, Shanghai, China, to determine their perception of the school climate and decision-making styles. Overall, the levels of school climate were high. The role of school climate in the education process should not be ignored, especially as the main body of implementing education. How teachers feel about the atmosphere and climate of their working environment is closely related to their educational behavior (Liu et al., 2014). Cohen et al. (2009) found that a positive school climate is connected with the development and retention of teachers, which in turn affects students' healthy development and academic achievement. Identical to that, the results of Johnson & Stevens' (2006) article revealed that school climate perceived by the teachers is significantly associated with student achievement.

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School administrators must find the best way to build and provide more opportunities and platforms for teachers to share ideas, discuss regularly and participate in decision-making to improve the efficiency and achievement of school decision-making. Teachers were recommended to know more and understand their decision-making styles and the advantages and disadvantages of each style. Future researchers can examine more on the relationships between the sub-scales of these two variables from more dimensions to enrich this topic through other theories about school atmosphere and decision-making style.

Due to the limitations of this study, such as differences in the gender ratio of the respondents, and only one target school, the researchers hope to conduct more diverse and comparative studies based on more respondents. For example, whether teachers in public and private schools perceive these two variables differently, whether the perceptions are the same between men and women, or whether there are significant differences between schools. Through multifaceted research, this topic may be sublimated.

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