A SUCCESS STORY OF CHILD FRIENDLY SCHOOL PROGRAM: THE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

In child friendly environment students feel motivation and readiness for learning. Staff members are friendly. They welcome children to school and attend to all their health and safety needs. The present research report is about the success of child friendly schools programs through a comparison of learning environment of child friendly schools with conventional schools. Data was collected from a sample of 480 students out of which 240 were from child friendly schools and 240 from conventional schools, through a questionnaire. Outcomes of the research exposed, on whole, that learning environment of child friendly schools was found better than conventional schools. Moreover, learning environment of child friendly schools for boys as well as girls were also appeared sound than conventional schools. While comparing academic performance of conventional and child friendly schools, it was found that academic performance of child friendly schools was better as compared with conventional schools. The findings indicating that school environment is very important are clearly eye opener to policy makers and educationists. Hence, it is recommended to bring more and more schools under child friendly school program.

Keywords: *Learning Environment, Child Friendly & Conventional School & Performance*

INTRODUCTION

Promoting learning and achievement of students is a significant objective of education. Learning is the acquisition of knowledge or skill through education and experience. O'Donnell, Reeve, and Smith, (2011) reflected view of Dewy that learning can be defined as a relatively permanent change in behavior based on the individual's interactional experience with its environment. Hansmann, (2014) stated Curt Lewin's (1936) formula of the behavior: $B = f(P, E)$, which means behavior (B) is a function (f) of the person (P) and of the environment (E). It means behavior cannot be changed and modified in a vacuum and it changes and modifies when students interact formally and informally with environment of their school. Therefore, it can be said that the school environment plays a critical role in process of learning, and has a significant impact on individual as it influences motivation, adjustment with environment, and school performance. According to Robins (2005), "learning environment is context for informal and formal curricula and matrix that nurtures or inhibits learners' growth. It refers to social, physical, psychological and pedagogical contexts in which learning occurs and which affect students' achievement and attitudes".

Researches opined that the learning environment includes learning environment of school and home. These two forces continuously reshape personalities of students and modify behavior of students (Santora, 2004). Besides their homes, school is the place where students spend most of the time. However, all schools are not the same. Some of them are big; others are small. Some are in the cities; others are in the countryside or in the remote areas. Out of all these, some have been declared as child friendly; and rest of them are not child friendly (conventional schools). Over the years, UNICEF (1996) has developed Child Friendly Schools (CFS) framework as a model for promoting rights based education by assisting in making schools which cater to all aspects of a child's development while also providing quality education. According to Basic Foundation Module for Primary School Teachers (2010), "child friendly school is a place where the children have desire to come and learn. The environment of school must be healthy, loving and appealing. It should be a place where a child is physically and psychologically at ease". Similarly, Child friendly environment aims to develop a learning environment in which children are motivated and ready to learn. Staff members are friendly and they welcome children and attend to all their health and safety needs (Shaeffer, 1999).

It can be deduced that a child friendly school provides learning environment compatible with children needs. Polishing of inherent potentials and students learning are centre of interest in these schools. Furthermore, according to UNICEF (2006), in these schools:

> ➢ Children receive overall enriched environment with reference to physical emotional and mental development.
> ➢ Children's needs, interest and levels are focused and curriculum and environment are modified accordingly.
> ➢ Equity is practice during admission process and children are treated equally without any discrimination in and outside school i.e. ethnicity, sex, socio economic status etc.
> ➢ Health and security needs drag special attention of administration.
> ➢ All stakeholders, parents, teachers and local community contribute in policy making, planning, implementation and evaluation process.
> ➢ Corporal punishment is prohibited and children are completely protected from child abuse.

According to the report of UNICEF (2009), in Pakistan, the child friendly schools framework was first announced in 2000 in 60 government primary schools of Rawalpindi District. Since then the implementation of child friendly school ideology has gained force and it was being extended to all four provinces and areas where it is presently at various stages of implementation. The most prominent efforts have been made in Punjab where the child friendly school approach was first initiated in 2004 by clustering 25 schools in each of six districts around a Training and Resource Centre (TARC). The success of these schools has led to continuous support from various donors increasing the number of schools in the province to 1800.The child friendly school model is also

applied in around 300 schools in Baluchistan and a child friendly school minimum standards document has developed in consultation with local stakeholders to guide this process. UNICEF (2010) mentioned that in 2010, approximately 2700 CFS's exist across the country primarily in Punjab and Baluchistan and to a lesser extent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK). Vine (2006) suggested that "CFS schools have been successful in bringing about higher level of academic achievements and that they are differentially effective according to subject and gender". He further pointed out that "a positive school environment creates an optimal setting for teaching and learning.

It can be a stabilizing force for young people, both emotionally and academically, particularly when they are experiencing transition or crisis". Vine (2006) concluded that, child friendly school provide encouraging learning environment for potential building. In Pakistan, most of the schools are still working in a conventional way where memorization is focused. A few teaching aids are being exploited with textbooks for students' learning. According to Anwar (2000), "in Pakistan, often classrooms are overcrowded, with no alternative spaces to learn, nor are they attractive, inviting or sensitive towards children's needs. Inappropriate school design may drastically affect the teacher's productive output and the classroom management. In fact, the role of this all - encompassing, physical environment has been restricted merely to shelter educational activity". Due to all these concerns, conventional schools are not properly following the teaching learning environment compatible for students because of threat of punishment and fear of teachers.

In conventional schools, the teaching learning process is mostly based on corporal punishment, similarly, Bhushana, & Shiledarb (2016) expressed that psychological damage; weak self-esteem and low confidence are consequences of corporal punishment. Furthermore, Kaplan (2006) highlighted that punishment is cause of stress, anxiety and ultimately of depression and students who are punished have more tendency for suicide, violence and criminal activity. This shows that corporal punishment not only causes physical but also mental torture. While in child-friendly school such aspects are focused. Child-friendly environment promote quick learning and reduce mental stress during learning process. On the other hand, instead of taking students feeble and deprived, child-friendly schools consider students strong and skilled. Hence teachers consider punishment very dangerous and consequently try to avoid it. Mutual cooperation among family and faculty, law and proper training of teachers can be helpful to stop this violence. Teachers should be friendly with children (UNICEF, 2010).

LITERATURE REVIEW
The term learning environment refers to physical characteristics, the staff mutual coordination, morale and leadership styles UNICEF (2006). Angus, Doris, Prater & Busch, (2009) expressed that this phenomenon addresses overall development of individuals. The expectation of overall system, values and group patterns come under this umbrella. Nurture is major contributor for

development. Learning is the combination of interaction and the application of various elements. Outcomes of learning environment depend upon educators, infrastructure, and way of interaction among students and teachers. The learning environment revolves around psychological, physical, social and pedagogical contexts which affect students' attitude and achievement. Robins (2005) analyzed that "the learning environment is the context for informal and formal curricula and the matrix that nurtures/inhibits learner's growth." In this perspective, Strong-Wilson & Ellis (2016), for example, writes "a classroom that functioning successfully as third teacher will be responsive to the children's interests, to provide opportunities for children to make their thinking visible and then foster further learning and engagement".

"Learning environment refers to the tone, ambience or atmosphere created by a teacher through the relationships developed within classroom and way in which instruction is delivered. Research in the field of learning environments over the past few decades has often involved associations amid students' cognitive and affective learning outcomes and their perceptions of psychosocial characteristics of their classroom environments" (McRobbie, & Fraser, 1993). Seyoum, (2012) relates the dimensions of learning environment as it may be the sum of lecture halls, libraries, individual study areas, the instructional materials, support services and options available not to simply permit learning to occur in educational institution. Every environment should be effective in a way to enhance the learning. In context of comparison of child friendly and conventional schools, following dimensions were taken into the account from the literature of both types of schools programs.

- ➤ Hygienic Environment
- ➤ Protective and Welcoming Environment
- ➤ Child Centered Learning Environment
- ➤ Conducive classroom environment for learning
- ➤ Teacher-student interaction
- ➤ Forbidding corporal punishment and bullying
- ➤ Physical environment of Classroom
- ➤ Parent and community involvement

Learning Environment (Conventional Schools)

In conventional schools, teachers tend to seek more respect in return of very basic effort done for delivering knowledge to the students. Kaplan (2006) categorizes four major disadvantages of the conventional learning environment. He argues that monotony and rigidity greatly reduce student's learning abilities and do not allow full personality and intellectual grooming. Moreover, most of the teachers lack the necessary mental maturity, knowledge and skills for ensuring maximum learning outcome. Such a lazy and outdated approach towards teaching develops resistance in students from schools. Teachers' bullying, corporal punishment, unhygienic classrooms and the surroundings and no active parent involvement are the main defining parameters of traditional schools having traditional learning environment. In conventional schools environment was not

conducive for learning. No formal attention was given to the learner. Students' mental level and interest was ignored. Students were not considered as focal point in the learning process. Corporal Punishment is another essential ingredient of the conventional learning environment. UNICEF (1996) defines corporal punishment as, "the use of physical force causing pain, but not wounds, as a means of discipline".

Since theory of behaviorism is in practice, punishment is taken as a part of Conditional Learning. Teachers here are neither ready to the accept their lack of skills never they think of looking for training classes that would help them manage the class peacefully and get good results from students (Batten). In wake of this stubbornness they find Corporal Punishment as best medicine for treating all ills of the students and showing their dedication for extracting best results out of the class. Most of the promoters of corporal punishment believe that beating students is actually for the purpose of beating the devil out of them. According to them, corporal punishment helps in creating focus of student in studies and for telling him that he has to be obedient to the teachers at any cost. Another study by Dad came up with the conclusion that the more educated and trained is the teacher, the better is his decision making for rewarding or punishing a student as compared with the less educated and trained teacher. He studied a sample of teachers collected randomly from far and wide of Pakistan (urban and rural areas) and found that urban teachers were more effective and successful in controlling students' output by use of reward and punishment options.

Learning Environment (Child-friendly School)

If students are being provided with environment which is addressing all needs, students, age level and students' interest is called child friendly environment. Moreover, in these schools: UNESCO (2001) reported positive environment and quality education are main traits of child-friendly schools. If anyone of this will be missing then it will not a child friendly school. UNICEF has disseminated a framework for child-friendly school on bases of rights that is characterized as "healthy for children, effective with children, protective of children, and involved with families and communities and children" (Shaeffer, 1999). According to him:

➢ School is platform which provide healthy social, moral, psychological and intellectual environment.
➢ Teachers are triggering factor for conducive and positive learning environment.
➢ Child friendly schools focuses on students metal level and provide enriched opportunity for capacity building
➢ Family cooperation is backbone for students learning hence school should have healthy interaction with families.
➢ Child-friendly schools address gender parity also. Healthy environment ids developed for both boys and girls for their better learning.

In every education system child is the center and environment is the pivot of the educational process. It is assumed that if the environment is child friendly, learning and teaching will take

place and performance of schools will be better. The environment of the school must be healthy, loving and appealing. It should be a place where a child is physically and psychology at ease. Keeping in mind the positive aspects of learning environment of child friendly schools, therefore, a research is intended to see whether child friendly school program is successful or not.

Objectives of Study

The main objective of the study was to compare the learning environment of child friendly schools with conventional schools.

Research hypotheses

Following hypothesis were tested for addressing the research problem:

Ho_1: There is no significant difference between the learning environment of child friendly and conventional primary schools.

Ho_2: There is no significant difference between the learning environment of child friendly and conventional primary schools for boys

Ho_3: There is no significant difference between the learning environment of child friendly and conventional primary schools for girls.

Ho_4: There is no significant difference between the academic performance of child friendly and conventional primary schools.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of this research was to investigate the successfulness of Child Friendly School program with reference to learning environment and its effect on academic performance.

Research Design

The study is descriptive in nature and survey technique was used to probe into phenomenon.

Population and Sampling

Public sector schools under the child friendly schools program and schools not under the child friendly schools program (they are called here conventional schools) in Punjab were taken as the population. The sample was selected through multistage sampling procedure, at first stage, 120 schools out of which 60 child friendly schools and 60 conventional schools were taken randomly. At second stage, from each school 4 students were conveniently taken. So, 480 students out of which 240 from child friendly schools and 240 from conventional schools were selected.

Research Instrument

A questionnaire TLEQ (The Learning Environment Questionnaire) was developed in the light of the following sources:

  ➢ Air (2009) about the comparative analysis of child friendly schools and non child friendly schools. In his study, he used survey method (for grade 5 and above).

➢ UNICEF (2009) about the evaluation of child friendly schools of Nigeria
➢ UNICEF (2009) about the evaluation of child friendly schools of Thailand
➢ Teacher net (2008) about creating a learning environment for 21st century

Questionnaire comprised of 58 items and divided into nine aspects (e.g., hygienic environment, protective and welcoming environment, child centered environment, conducive for learning classroom environment, teacher-student interaction, forbidding corporal punishment, forbidding bullying, classroom physical environment, parental involvement). Students responded to each item of questionnaire on five-point Likert scale that ranged from very true (5), true (4), moderate true (3), somewhat true (2) not at all true (1). Rreliability coefficient for the whole questionnaire was 0.77, whereas wide variation among different aspects was observed, for instance the reliability coefficient for physical environment was found 0.76 compared to 0.55 for forbidding bullying aspect.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data were collected by adopting three different strategies in order to get 100% response. These were through personal visits, mail and messengers for the data collection. The collected data were analyzed with the help of SPSS, and the Microsoft Excel. In order to analysis the academic performance of child friendly and conventional Primary schools, researcher used the mean percentage of 5th class annual results of 2014, 2015 and 2016 declared by Punjab Examination Commission. The mean, standard deviation and Independent Sample t-test was used to explore differences in opinions between the learning environment of child friendly and conventional schools at primary level.

Table 1 Learning Environment Comparison (Conventional VS Child Friendly Schools)

Type of School	N	Mean	SD	t-test for equality of Means (α = 0.05)		
				t	df	p-value (sig.*)
Conventional	240	179.55	11.51	3.93	478	0.023*
Child Friendly	240	199.98	10.85			

* 2-tailed significance value less than 0.05 shows significant difference

Table 1 showed the testing of hypothesis 1, comparing the learning environment of conventional schools with child friendly schools. The null-hypothesis was rejected at α = 0.05 as, t (478) = 3.93, df= 478 and p = 0.023> 0.05, therefore, it is clear that the value of mean = 179.55 and SD = 11.51 of conventional schools is lower than child friendly schools (Mean = 199.98, SD = 10.85), and it can be concluded that there is significant difference between conventional schools and child friendly schools in their mean scores of learning environment.

Table 2 Dimension-wise Comparison of LE (Conventional and Child Friendly)

Aspects of Learning Environment	Type of School n=240	Mean	SD	t	df	p-value (sig.)
Hygienic Condition	Conventional	20.89	3.13	2.53	478	0.019
	Child Friendly	24.12	2.81			
Protective and Welcoming	Conventional	24.60	3.96	2.51	478	0.010
	Child Friendly	27.75	3.11			
Child Centered	Conventional	18.39	3.56	2.86	478	0.025
	Child Friendly	19.54	3.21			
Conducive Classroom	Conventional	18.12	3.27	2.86	478	0.021
	Child Friendly	19.54	3.01			
Teacher-Student Interaction	Conventional	24.41	3.54	2.31	478	0.015
	Child Friendly	25.11	3.04			
Hostile Corporal Punishment	Conventional	18.32	2.85	2.56	478	0.017
	Child Friendly	20.39	2.14			
Forbidding Bullying	Conventional	17.90	3.19		478	0.016
	Child Friendly	19.58	2.96	2.05		
Classroom Physical Environment	Conventional	17.26	3.07	3.25	478	0.026
	Child Friendly	19.63	2.93			

Table 2 showed the comparison of learning environment with respect to different aspects of conventional and child friendly primary schools by applying an independent t-test. The value of t-test indicates that there is significant difference between the mean score of learning environment of conventionaland child friendly schools.

Table 3 Comparison of LE (Conventional VS Child Friendly Schools for Boys)

Type of School	Gender n=120	Mean	SD	t-test for equality of Means (α = 0.05)		
				t-value	df	p-value (sig.)
Conventional	Boys	167.35	12.65	3.24	238	0.027
Child Friendly		178.29	11.51			
Conventional	Girls	153.19	12.95	2.95	238	0.023
Child Friendly		163.71	12.22			

Table 3 showed the testing of hypothesis 2 and 3; t-test was run to compare the learning environment of boys' conventional schools with boys' child friendly schools and girls' conventional schools with girls' child friendly schools. In both cases the t-test was statistically significant, t (238) = 3.24, p = 0.027, and t (238) = 2.95, p = 0.023, therefore, the null-hypothesis 2 and 3 were rejected at α = 0.05. It is clear that mean = 167.35/SD =12.65 of boys conventional primary schools is lower than mean = 178.29 of boys child friendly schools. Similarly, mean = 153.19 of girls conventional primary schools is lower than 163.71 of girls child friendly schools.

Table 4 Comparison of School Performance (Conventional VS Child Friendly Schools)

Type of School	N	Mean	SD	t-test for equality of Means (α = 0.05)		
				t	df	p-value (sig.)
Conventional	240	71.63	3.53	2.29	478	0.017
Child Friendly	240	82.18	3.01			

2-tailed significance value less than 0.05 shows significant difference

Table 4 showed the result of testing of 4th null hypothesis. An independent t-test was run to compare the academic performance of conventional schools with child friendly schools. The null-hypothesis was rejected at α = 0.05 as the t-value = 2.29, df=478, and p-value = 0.017, therefore, it is obvious that mean score of academic performance of conventional primary schools (Mean = 71.63, SD = 3.53) is lower than child friendly schools (Mean = 82.18, SD = 3.01), and it can be observed that there is significant difference between conventional schools and child friendly schools in their mean scores of "academic performance".

FINDINGS AND RESULTS
On comparing learning environment of conventional primary schools with child friendly schools, the difference between the means of conventional and child friendly primary schools was found i-e 20.43, is in favor of child friendly schools. Therefore, learning environment of child friendly schools is better than conventional schools. In case of boys' conventional and child friendly primary schools the difference between the means was found to be 10.94, i-e in favor of child friendly schools and therefore, learning environment of child friendly schools for boys was found better.As well as girls conventional and child friendly primary schools is concerned, the difference between the means i-e 10.52, is in favor of child friendly schools and therefore, it was observed that learning environment of child friendly schools for girls was found better. When comparing academic performance of convention al and child friendly schools the difference between the means i-e 10.55, was found in favor of child friendly schools. Therefore, the academic performance of child friendly schools was better as compared with conventional schools.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS
Students of both sex (boys and girls) belonging to child friendly schools were rated significantly better in school learning environment than students from conventional schools. They mentioned significantly higher on all the aspects of learning environment via hygienic conditions, protective and the welcoming environment, child centered learning environment, the conducive learning environment, teacher-student interaction, physical state of the classroom and parent involvement. Therefore, it is concluded that there were better hygienic conditions in child friendly schools as compared with conventional schools. Protective and welcoming environment was found in child friendly schools. It was concluded that, in child friendly schools classroom learning environment

was child centered and conducive. Physical environment of classroom was also found better. It was concluded that the involvement of parents in school affairs and in other activities was significantly higher as compared with the conventional schools. There was positive and healthy teacher-students interaction was observed. It was evident from finding that there is no corporal punishment and bullying in the child friendly schools. They reported to be treated well and also reported not to have corporal punishment and bullying.

It is concluded that the better learning environment is contributing towards the better academic performance. So that among entire group of boys and girls a positive relationship was measured with reference to learning environment and academic achievement. Hence it can be concluded that due to good school environment academic performance was better. Finding is supported by Vine (2006), who suggested that CFS schools have been successful in bringing about higher level of academic achievements and that they are differentially effective according to subject and gender. The learning environment was considered as one of the major contributors towards the schools performance. After the detailed analysis of the students responses vivid picture of the learning environment in two different types of schools has been outlined. The results of the present study provide factual evidence that child friendly program is successful.

Recommendations

As the child friendly school program appeared successful, therefore, following recommendations were made.

- ➢ Positive and productive learning environment may be created in conventional schools.
- ➢ More and more schools may be affiliated with child friendly project.
- ➢ Pre and in-service teacher training curriculum may be integrated with approaches and models of child-friendly schools so that they would be able to perform as per need of child –friendly schools.

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