

## Abstract

*School climate and trust are latent variables, which are reputed to impact students' marks, engagement, attendance, expectation, and aspiration, sense of scholastic competence, and on-time progression (Tableman, 2004). These made scholars curious to do rigorous researches on the area where this piece of work can be considered as one of the addenda. Thus, the objectives of this research were to study the existing status of school climate; school community trust and their impact on the academic achievement of primary school students. In order to make the journey of the research more focused and concentric, conceptual frameworks were formulated for school climate, trust and their interplay with academic achievement. This was done based on their dimensions in relation to students' academic achievement. This helped to underpin and legitimate the method.*

*The study was ignited with a rationale of shanty of empirical shreds of evidences on the area, especially in the Ethiopian context. For this study, two districts of South Gonder Zone in ANRS and two districts of Gurage Zone in SNNPR were considered with a sample of 16 schools. In this study, both probability and nonprobability sampling methods were used based on the pertinence of the target respondents.*

*The study followed a pragmatic approach where both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from teachers, students, parents, principals and supervisors. Furthermore, school records were reviewed. For these, standardized but contextualized and piloted tools of school climate index and trust scales were used with the permission and acknowledgment of the authors. Overall, data had been collected from 32 principals, 331 teachers, 327 students, 9 cluster supervisors, 159 parents and reviewed 1731 students' roasters. The data were analysed using frequency count, percentage, mean, standard deviation, correlation ( $r$ ),  $t$ -test, ANOVA, regression, and content analysis.*

*The study has indicated that the overall status of school climate and trust were at moderate level where principals showed low mean value for teachers' professionalism and competence dimensions of school climate. Teachers showed concern on the academic press of their schools compared to other dimensions of school climate. Overall, principals and teachers did not show statistically significant differences in their perception of school climate across location, gender and experience. The school community's level of trust was*

*viewed in line with the location of schools being in rural and urban. It was only teachers' level of trust which showed statistically significant difference based on location. This happened because teachers in rural schools have a high level of trust in their school community compared to urban schools. In terms of gender, it was only students who showed a statistically significant difference in their level of trust as females showed a relatively higher level of trust in their teachers compared to males. The study has also confirmed the statistical insignificance of the differences in the perception of trust among teachers and principals in line with their experience.*

*The academic achievements of grade four and grade eight students for the year 2015/16 academic year were analysed. Accordingly, the overall mean of grade four students was 67.83 percent and it was 51.41 percent for grade eight with an overall mean of 59.42 percent. The correlations between school climate, trust and academic achievement of students were computed. The principals' perception of school climate and school community trust showed moderately positive correlation where it had 40 percent of their variance in common and 60 percent of their variance was not explained by their correlation. The teachers' perception of their school climate and their trust in their school community has a strong positive correlation where it had 55 percent of their variance in common and 45 percent of their variance was not explained by their correlation. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected for both trust and school climate variables of principals and teachers.*

*Students' academic achievement was regressed with the school climate as per the perceptions of principals and teachers. In line with the expectation of the researcher, it was found no direct effect of the principals' and teachers' perception of school climate on the academic achievements of students. However, being trustful or mistrust of principals to the school community showed impact on the achievement of the students directly that rejected the null hypothesis.*

*The study was conceived with the void of research based evidences on school climate, trust and their impact on the academic achievement in the Ethiopia perspective, being key factors in the improvement of school performance. The findings clearly indicated that the teachers and principals are having low trust to students and parents, and teachers are working in a school where academic freedom is hardly exercised. Thus, the paper has given insights in filling these gaps in reporting the existing status of school climate and trust in the Ethiopian context. Moreover, it can be a stepping stone for further researches as there are many*

*shanty areas in this regard. It has also reminded the need for additional researches to have a deeper understanding of the effect of school climate and trust on achievement since this is the first an eye opening work at primary school level.*

*The study is ever first in its kind in the target area in examining school climate, school community trust and their impact on the academic achievement of primary school students. Thus, it faced challenges in comparing the findings with similar studies. Henceforth, the researcher has a strong belief that this study will open an insight to do further studies since it is not totally confined to the target schools but can have a wider scope for educationalists who are working hard to maintain healthy school climate and trustworthy relationships for the provision of quality education. It is unto the school principals, teachers, supervisors, PSTA, students and experts to explore the causes and look for solutions to barriers that are dwindling the school climate and trust.*

*Lastly, the study forwarded suggestions for further improvement of school climate and trust to improve school performance like the need for being curious in assigning principals and the need for teachers' capacity building as per their gaps since these were found as concerns for the school community which are eroding their trust. Furthermore, provision of an academic press for teachers, setting strategies to recover the eroded trust, reviewing students' academic performance and looking for strategies to fill the gaps were priority areas that need immediate actions. The study has also forwarded few of the gloomy areas that can be further researched in the context.*