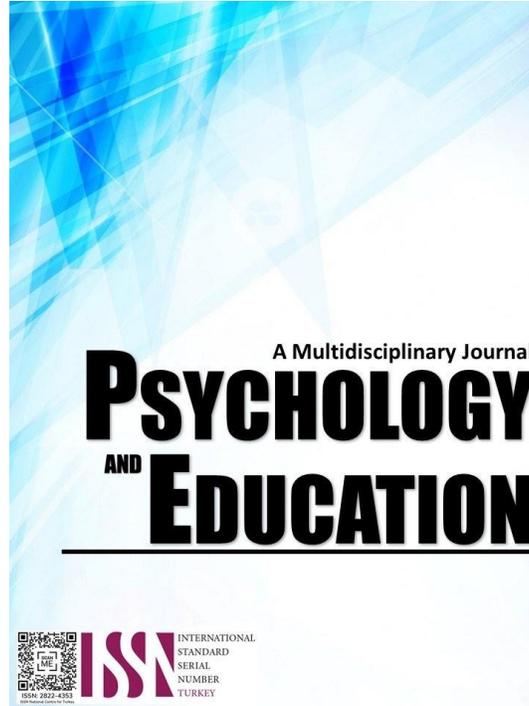


EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF CLASSROOM CLIMATE ON ELEMENTARY GRADE LEARNERS OF SMALL SCHOOLS: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY



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Exploring the Impact of Classroom Climate on Elementary Grade Learners of Small Schools: A Mixed-Methods Study

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Abstract

This mixed-methods study explores the impact of classroom climate on the academic and social-emotional development of elementary grade learners in small schools. Classroom climate, encompassing both the physical environment and the interpersonal relationships within the classroom, plays a crucial role in shaping students' learning experiences and outcomes. The research combines quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews and observations to assess how different aspects of classroom climate—such as physical environment, teacher and student interaction, peer relationship, and teacher's orientation towards learning. The study focuses on elementary schools with fewer students, where smaller class sizes and a close-knit school community offer a unique context for understanding the role of classroom climate. Findings reveal that a positive and supportive classroom climate enhances students' academic performance, social skills, and emotional resilience. Additionally, the study highlights how teachers' relational practices, classroom management strategies, and a sense of belonging contribute to creating an environment that fosters both academic and personal growth. The implications of these findings suggest that improving classroom climate can lead to more effective teaching practices and better outcomes for students in small school settings.

Keywords: *classroom climate, small schools, elementary learners, mixed-methods study*

Introduction

Classroom climate issues at the elementary grade level can significantly affect young learners, potentially impeding their academic advancement, emotional stability, and overall educational growth. Understanding the crucial significance of classroom settings in molding the educational experience of young elementary students is essential, as it is the gateway to unleashing their complete academic and personal capabilities. The school environment encompasses the relationships among members of the school community, shaped by structural, personal, and functional elements of the educational institution, giving each school its unique character. This environment plays a crucial role in assessing student well-being (Tapia-Fonllem, 2020).

In the United States, artificial lighting in schools is automatically managed by photoelectric cells. A study investigated the impact of classroom lighting on stress hormones, academic performance, physical growth, and health among 88 students aged eight to nine over the course of a year. The findings indicated that stress hormone levels rose during the summer months, and both a lack of natural and artificial light significantly delayed increases in these hormones. The colors used in school spaces and facilities are crucial, particularly considering the age and physical conditions of children and adolescents. These factors influence students' energy levels, mental well-being, motivation, and overall efforts, ultimately enhancing the learning process. Conversely, inappropriate color choices can lead to feelings of boredom, passivity, anger, anxiety, and depression. It is essential to approach the educational environments of schools, especially elementary schools, from various perspectives, as the process of memory construction begins in childhood. Unfortunately, there is a significant gap in this area. With a few exceptions, such considerations have largely been overlooked. Schools primarily focus on safety and structural engineering, while art and psychology experts, who possess valuable insights in this domain, are rarely consulted or involved in the design and implementation of educational spaces. Since children of all ages begin to form connections with colors early in life, the foundation of memory construction is influenced by color from infancy (Gilavand, 2016).

In the Philippines, a study was conducted to explore the various factors influencing the academic performance of Grade VI students in the Alfonso Lista District II. Most of the student respondents were female and of middle age. The pupils indicated that factors such as socio-economic status, psychological aspects, and the classroom environment can sometimes impact their academic success. They noted that family income, attitudes towards school, school attendance, study habits, the quality of classmates and friends, as well as the learning environment, all play a role in their academic performance. Additionally, the respondents believed that both home and classroom environments significantly affect their educational outcomes (Ormilla, 2022).

The social relevance of this title lies in its potential to improve the quality of education for elementary grade learners by understanding how classroom environments influence their learning, ultimately contributing to better educational outcomes and fostering a brighter future for these students. Several groups stand to benefit from research on the impact of classroom environment on elementary grade learners that includes the teachers, learners, parents, school administrators, and education policymakers. This study requires urgency because it directly impacts children's development, addresses educational disparities, provides crucial guidance for teachers in rapidly changing environments, and contributes to overall societal well-being, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the pursuit of global development goals.

Through an examination of relevant academic sources, I have found some related study of Ormilla (2022) titled "Socio-economic, Psychological and Environmental Factors in the Academic Performance of Elementary Pupils of Alfonso Lista District, Ifugao,

Philippines" and that of Umar (2022) titled " The Effects of Classroom Environment on Student's Academic Performance and Musculoskeletal Discomfort". This topic is exceptional because it focuses on the intersection of various factors, such as classroom environments and elementary grade learners, using a mixed-methods approach. Its uniqueness lies in its ability to provide a holistic understanding of how physical, social, and pedagogical aspects of classrooms interact to influence young students' educational experiences and outcomes.

Research Questions

In this study, convergent parallel mixed method research was utilized in broadly examining the impact of classroom environment on elementary grade learners of Kapalong Davao del Norte. In simple terms, the main focus is on answering these specific research questions:

1. How does the overall classroom climate impact the academic performance of elementary grade learners?
2. What are the specific elements of classroom climate (e.g., teacher-student relationships, peer interactions) that significantly influence the learning experiences of elementary students?
3. In what ways does a positive or negative classroom climate contribute to the social and emotional development of elementary grade learners?

Methodology

Research Design

This research utilized a mixed methods approach, which combines both qualitative and quantitative elements to offer a more thorough understanding of the research issue. As explained by Halcomb and Hickman (2015), this fusion is essential for ensuring the robustness of mixed methods research and can occur at various stages throughout the research process. The term "mixing" pertains to the act of connecting qualitative and quantitative aspects to generate a more comprehensive depiction of the research problem.

As per Bryman (2007), mixed methods research serves a crucial purpose in research that goes beyond mere validation. It facilitates the incorporation of various research approaches, resulting in a well-rounded and all-encompassing view of the subject being studied. This method not only validates the research findings but also enables a deeper comprehension of the phenomenon under examination. By amalgamating outcomes from diverse methods, researchers have the potential to uncover fresh insights that might have been missed when employing a single-method approach.

In this study, a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach was chosen. In this design, both qualitative and quantitative data are gathered simultaneously, with equal importance placed on each. Initially, survey data was collected, followed by either focus group discussions or one-on-one interviews. These two sets of data are analyzed independently, and subsequently, their findings are merged and interpreted together. This research design is well-suited for this study's objective, which is to investigate the alignment, disparities, inconsistencies, or connections between the two data sources, as outlined by Hanson et al. (2005).

The convergent parallel design, sometimes referred to as the convergent/triangulation design, entails the concurrent use of quantitative and qualitative research methods within the same research phase. In this approach, both methods hold equal significance, allowing them to contribute equally to addressing the research issue. This design ensures that the two studies remain separate during data collection and analysis and subsequently integrates or unites their findings during the overall interpretation, as described by Petrosyan (2018).

In a convergent parallel design, data were gathered from both qualitative sources, such as online interviews conducted via Google Meet, face to face, and transcriptions. Also, the quantitative data was being collected through a survey questionnaire. These datasets were analyzed simultaneously to identify trends and gain insights. In the qualitative phase, discourse and thematic analysis methods were applied to examine the impact of their classroom environment on elementary grade learner's learning. On the other hand, statistical analysis was utilized for the quantitative data to provide results regarding the profiling and experiences of these students, as well as to identify any significant differences in how the quantitative data aligned with the qualitative findings.

Participants

Quantitative Phase

The primary subjects of this research were the grade five to six elementary school learners from Kapalong, Davao del Norte area. These learners were selected as the main respondents of the study due to their direct interaction with and experience in the classroom environment. Their perspectives, behaviors, and reactions offer valuable insights into how the classroom environment impacts their learning, well-being, and academic performance. Additionally, young learners may not have fully developed cognitive and emotional coping mechanisms, making them more susceptible to the influences of their surroundings. As such, their input is essential for understanding the relationship between the classroom environment and their educational outcomes.

Furthermore, the respondents were selected through stratified random sampling to ensure randomness and uphold the scientific rigor of the study. This method involves dividing the population into smaller groups, or "strata," and randomly selecting a sample from each

stratum. The samples from each stratum are then combined to form an overall stratified random sample. As an alternative to simple random sampling, stratified random sampling ensures that each stratum is represented in the sample, providing more accurate results when analyzing subgroups within the population (Nguyen et al., 2020).

This sampling method was particularly appropriate for this study because the respondents, the elementary students, were randomly selected based on strata, which, in this case, were the different year levels of the public elementary school in Kapalong Davao del Norte. This approach ensured that all respondents in the population had an equal chance of being selected. The researcher submitted a formal request letter to the public elementary school in Kapalong, Davao del Norte, to gain access to the population of elementary students in grades five and six. The researcher then collected data from the entire population of elementary students to compute the sample. Once the data were gathered, the researcher forwarded the information to a statistician for sample computation.

Table 1.1. *Distribution of Respondents*

<i>Year Level</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Grade 5	27	27	
Grade 6	34	34	
Total	61	61	100%

The study was conducted among elementary learners in grades five and six. The institution had a total of 61 students in these grades, consisting of 27 grade five students and 34 grade six students. The statistician computed the appropriate sample size for the study, which included all 27 grade five students and all 34 grade six students. In total, 61 students were included in the sample, representing the entire population of grade five and six learners at the school.

Qualitative Phase

In contrast, subject selection in qualitative research was purposeful. In this phase, a non-probability sampling technique, specifically purposive sampling, was utilized. Participants were selected based on their ability to best inform the research questions and enhance understanding of the phenomenon under study (Kuper et al., 2008). A total of 10 participants from Maniki, Kapalong, were involved in the qualitative phase: five (5) for in-depth interviews and another five (5) for focus group discussions.

Table 1.2. *Profiles of the Participants*

<i>Assigned Code</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Year Level</i>
IDI-01	Female	Grade 6
IDI-02	Male	Grade 5
IDI-03	Female	Grade 6
IDI-04	Female	Grade 6
IDI-05	Female	Grade 6
IDI-06	Female	Grade 6
IDI-07	Female	Grade 5
FGD-01	Female	Grade 5
FGD-02	Male	Grade 6
FGD-03	Male	Grade 6
FGD-04	Female	Grade 6
FGD-05	Male	Grade 5
FGD-06	Female	Grade 5
FGD-07	Female	Grade 6

All participants were grade 6 learners from Maniki, Kapalong, Davao del Norte. It is important to note that participants in the qualitative phase were not involved in the data collection of the quantitative phase.

Instrument

Quantitative Phase

The researcher utilized an adapted survey questionnaire for classroom climate, which was based on Hsu (2017). The questionnaire employed a Five-point Likert Scale with the following indicators: preparation, production, communication, instruction, and development.

In a five-point likert scale, participants were only required to rate and tick one box among one (lowest) to five (highest) in each question. Moreover, Likert Scale was good for measuring constructs, attitudes and stimuli which are not readily perceivable by human senses. Despite the questionnaire being adapted, it was still subjected to expert validation.

Qualitative Phase

As to the qualitative phase, a set of researcher-made grand tour questions was devised by the researcher and validated by the panel of

experts. This was a set of open-ended questions that was developed based on the results of the survey. This was used as a compass for the in-depth interviews. Of all the participants who answered the survey questionnaire in the previous phase, five were purposively selected to undergo the IDI and another five for the FGD. Interviews were suitable in gleaning insights, stories, experiences, opinions and other useful information which could not be expressed with the use of numbers.

Procedure

To gather data for the study, the researcher followed a series of planned steps. Firstly, permission was requested from the local elementary school institution in Kapalong, Davao del Norte, to ensure their cooperation in assisting with participant recruitment. It was crucial that each potential participant was well-informed about the study before agreeing to take part. Secondly, participants were identified and selected using purposive sampling to ensure they were suitable and could provide relevant information for the upcoming chapters. To maintain integrity in the process, consent and agreement forms were administered prior to conducting interviews. These documents outlined the terms and conditions, emphasizing that participation was entirely voluntary and contributed to the research's success.

During the interview sessions, the researcher acted as the primary data collection instrument. Tools such as smartphones were employed for recording, facilitating accurate transcription before translating the data into standard English. Participants had the flexibility to choose the interview time, location, and date that suited them best. Throughout the interviews, the researcher refrained from interrupting participants while they shared their experiences, intervening only if they requested clarification or encountered difficulties with the questions, which were then refined for better comprehension.

Finally, after the interview sessions, the next step involved transcribing the recorded data and identifying emerging themes using thematic analysis techniques. These extracted themes were reviewed by a data analyst with expertise in language research for verification and approval.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

In the quantitative data analysis, descriptive statistics such as the mean were utilized to assess the average responses of the respondents. Moreover, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and T-test were used to determine the experience of school climate of the participants when grouped accord to their profile. The survey data, which was collected, served as the basis for in-depth analysis. Upon retrieval of the questionnaires, the data was tallied and treated accordingly. The survey data was further analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for both descriptive and inferential statistics. These statistical treatments were applied to ascertain the status of grade five to six elementary students.

Qualitative Data Analysis

In qualitative data analysis, participants' responses were collected and then organized into themes through a coding and condensing process. The researcher deeply engaged with the descriptive data, utilizing coding and categorization techniques to structure it. The aim was to derive themes that could describe the level of awareness among college students. Qualitative analysis was an iterative process that entailed continuously generating and refining themes, along with thorough examination and re-examination of the data to arrive at a comprehensive analysis. This analysis was then presented using narratives, tables, or figures.

Ethical Considerations

To preserve the trust of the elementary students at Kapalong, Davao del Norte, this study placed utmost importance on their safety, anonymity, full protection, and confidentiality. Special attention was given to ensuring that these ethical considerations were carefully addressed, with the overarching goal of upholding participants' trust throughout the study.

The researcher diligently adhered to ethical principles, including respect for individuals, promoting their well-being, ensuring fairness, obtaining informed consent, and safeguarding confidentiality. These ethical principles served as a compass, guiding the study's conduct in a responsible and respectful manner, with a clear focus on respecting the rights and welfare of the participants, as advocated by Mack et al. (2005).

Respect for persons is an ethical principle that underscores the significance of treating research participants with politeness and reverence, while acknowledging their autonomy in making decisions about their involvement in a study, as highlighted by Munhall (2012) and Scott (2013). This principle entails providing participants with comprehensive information about the research, ensuring they fully understand its purpose, potential risks, and benefits. Obtaining informed consent is a vital component of adhering to this principle, signifying that participants voluntarily agree based on informed awareness. By upholding respect for persons, the researcher can conduct the study ethically, honoring the rights and autonomy of the participants.

In my study, prior to conducting interviews, I obtained participants' permission and coordinated schedules to avoid conflicts with their classes or other commitments, respecting their time. This was done to ensure minimal disruption to their schedules and to prevent the need for rescheduling or cancellations. Throughout the study, I cultivated a courteous and respectful relationship with participants,

securing their consent before recording conversations, encouraging them to ask questions at any time, and maintaining the confidentiality of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Furthermore, participants had the option to decline answering sensitive questions. By establishing rapport and acting with courtesy towards the participants, the study was conducted in an ethical and respectful manner.

Consent in obtaining informed consent is a foundational element of research ethics, serving as a means to demonstrate respect for research participants. Through informed consent, participants gain a full understanding of the research's objectives and purpose, providing transparency and ensuring they are well-informed, as outlined by Creswell (2012). Written consent was acquired from participants, signifying their agreement to partake in the in-depth interviews and focused group discussions.

To uphold ethical standards in the study, I furnished participants with permission and consent letters detailing the study's specifics, including its methods, design, and procedures. These letters aimed to facilitate participants' comprehension of the study's nature, empowering them to make informed decisions about their involvement. Those who chose not to participate were allowed to withdraw without providing reasons, with the assurance of data confidentiality. Furthermore, participants were informed of their right to receive the study's results. By adhering to these ethical guidelines, the research was conducted in a responsible and respectful manner.

Beneficence, as an ethical principle, underscores the dedication to minimize potential risks and enhance the welfare of research participants. In this study, measures were taken to safeguard the well-being and security of the participants. Preserving the anonymity of interviewees was a priority to mitigate any potential threats to their privacy and confidentiality. All data files were appropriately secured and never left unattended or unprotected, in accordance with the principles outlined by Bricki and Green (2007).

To uphold the principle of beneficence, the researcher implemented measures to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of participants' responses and personal information. To minimize potential risks, I refrained from conducting face-to-face interactions with participants and instead utilized a social media platform for communication. These precautions were taken to prioritize the well-being and interests of the participants, demonstrating a commitment to ethical research practices.

Moreover, the data collected in this research study was strictly used for the purposes outlined in the study. However, the study's results may also be disseminated through various channels, including presentations within the institution, publication in scientific forums or journals, or presentations at conferences, whether on a local, national, or international scale. The intention behind sharing the study's findings is to contribute to the broader knowledge base in the researcher's field of study.

Confidentiality concerning the data, results, and findings, as well as to safeguard the participants, several strategies were employed. This involved concealing the personal identities of all participants, ensuring that their names or any identifying information were not revealed. Additionally, all materials related to the study, such as audio recordings, encoded transcripts, notes, digital files, and physical copies of data, were securely disposed of once the data analysis was completed, in alignment with the guidelines presented by Maree and Westhuizen (2007).

In order to safeguard the anonymity of the participants and adhere to the Data Privacy Act of 2012, I implemented discrete coding methods to represent each participant's responses. This approach entailed handling any details that might reveal the participants' identity, such as their names, gender, ethnicity, or employment/location, with great care to prevent any breach of their anonymity. Through the use of appropriate coding techniques and other precautions, I effectively preserved the confidentiality of the participants and demonstrated a commitment to respecting their privacy.

Justice is a commitment to upholding the rights of participants who identified themselves as mathematics teacher education students was paramount. Since the study's focus was on classroom environment on elementary grade learners, there were no infringements on the rights of minor students. To ensure fairness and equitable participation opportunities, the researcher employed random and purposive sampling techniques. Participation in the study by mathematics teacher education students was entirely voluntary, and they had the freedom to decline if they wished. As a token of appreciation for their contribution, participants received tokens and were duly recognized for their involvement, which significantly contributed to the study's overall success. Moreover, justice was upheld by including only relevant statements from participants that pertained to the research objectives and ensuring accurate transcription, in accordance with ethical principles as outlined by (Munhall, 2012 & Scott, 2013).

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results from both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study. The first phase focuses on the quantitative aspect, detailing the status of elementary learners in relation to the impact of classroom climate. The second phase addresses the qualitative component, which is presented in a matrix format. This matrix illustrates the participants' responses regarding their lived experiences and perceptions of the impact of their classroom climate. Additionally, it includes the issues explored, core ideas, codes or categories, essential themes, and relevant theoretical perspectives. Another matrix is provided to integrate the key quantitative and qualitative findings.

Status of Elementary Learners Impact of Classroom Climate of Small Schools Impact of Classroom Climate

Shown in Table 2 is the status of the impact of classroom climate on elementary students. It obtained an overall mean score of 4.63

with a description of very high. This means that the elementary learner's students manifested oftentimes their classroom climate. The variable of the study which is the impact of classroom climate with five indicators namely: physical environment, teacher-student interaction, peer relationship, and teacher's orientation towards learning.

Table 2. *Status of Classroom Climate in terms of Physical Environment of Small Schools*

Variables	Mean	Description
A. Physical Environment		
1. find my classroom clean and tidy.	4.75	Very High
2. like my classroom.	4.75	Very High
3. am satisfied of the light to work during class.	4.56	Very High
4. am satisfied of the size of the classroom.	4.79	Very High
5. can see the blackboard/whiteboard clearly from any place in the classroom	4.79	Very High
Category Mean	4.73	Very High
B. Teacher-Student interaction		
1. can see that it is easy for teachers to maintain student's good behavior and order during lessons.	4.80	Very High
2. help to decide good climate and discipline rules for the classroom.	4.72	Very High
3. obey and follow the rules and obey their orders.	4.75	Very High
4. when a student does not follow a rule, teachers take measures.	4.74	Very High
5. we can give our opinion about High how to organize the classroom (decoration, layout, seat display, etc.).	3.92	
Category Mean	4.59	Very High
C. Peer Relationship		
1. can talk and participate without being teased or insulted by our classmates.	4.38	Very High
2. get along with my fellow classmates.	4.46	Very High
3. am accepted and valued by who am I.	4.67	Very High
4. help my classmates when they need it.	4.70	Very High
5. sort out our conflict in the High classroom by talking.	4.20	
Category Mean	4.48	Very High
D. Teacher's orientation towards Learning		
1. our teacher tells us why we cannot do certain things.	4.74	Very High
2. our teachers tells us that we can all learn, even if it is at a different pace.	4.70	Very High
3. we can ask our teachers what we learn in our class is useful to us.	4.79	Very High
4. our teachers encourage us to ask questions when we do not understand.	4.64	Very High
5. we try our best to do well.	4.79	Very High
Category Mean	4.73	Very High
Overall Mean	4.63	Very High

Physical Environment. In terms of preparation, the category mean is 4.73, which is describe as very high. This means that it is oftentimes manifested by the students. This means that it is oftentimes manifested by the students. Among the items under this indicator, am satisfied of the size of the classroom, and can see the blackboard/whiteboard clearly from any place in the classroom got the highest mean of 4.79 which is described as very high. This means that it is always manifested by the students. On the other hand, the lowest item rated by the participants was the, am satisfied of the light to work during class with a mean of 3.56. This rating is described as high. This means that it is oftentimes manifested by the students.

Teacher-student Interaction. The production was rated by the participants as very high, with a category mean of 4.59. This means that it is oftentimes manifested by the students. Can see that it is easy for teachers to maintain student's good behavior and order during lessons garnered the highest rating with the mean 4.80, which is described as very high. This means that it is always manifested by the students. Conversely, we can give our opinion about how to organize the classroom (decoration, layout, seat display, etc.) got the lowest mean of 3.84, which is described as high. This means that it is oftentimes manifested by the students.

Peer Relationship. The communication got the category mean of 4.48, which is described as high. This means that it is oftentimes manifested by the students. The item help my classmates when they need it got the highest mean of 4.70, which is described as very high. This means that it is always manifested by the students. Meanwhile, sort out our conflict in the classroom by talking is the lowest



rated item which has a high category mean of 4.20. This means that it is oftentimes manifested by the students.

Teacher’s orientation towards learning. In terms of teacher’s orientation towards learning, the category mean is 4.73, which is described as very high. This means that it is oftentimes manifested by the students. The highest rated items: can ask our teachers what we learn in our class is useful to us, and we try our best to do well which has a category mean of 4.79 and is described as very high. This means that it is oftentimes manifested by the students.

The Lived Experiences of Elementary Learners of their Classroom Climate of Small Schools

There are two essential themes which were created based from the in-depth interviews of the participants on the first research question. Before the presentation of the results from the interviews and discussions, profiles of the participants for the qualitative data collection was presented in Table 3. The table represents the participants’ profiles for the qualitative phases are selected purposively following the inclusion criteria: (1) must be currently enrolled in grade five and six level; (2) must be previously enrolled in the present and previous academic year 2023-2024; (3) can be male or female or any gender; and (4) the researcher will not require age limits to the respondents.

Table 3. Profiles of the Participants

Assigned Code	Sex	Year Level
IDI-01	Female	Grade 6
IDI-02	Male	Grade 5
IDI-03	Female	Grade 6
IDI-04	Female	Grade 6
IDI-05	Female	Grade 6
IDI-06	Female	Grade 6
IDI-07	Female	Grade 5
FGD-01	Female	Grade 5
FGD-02	Male	Grade 6
FGD-03	Male	Grade 6
FGD-04	Female	Grade 6
FGD-05	Male	Grade 5
FGD-06	Female	Grade 5
FGD-07	Female	Grade 6

Further, Table 3 deals on the lived experiences of elementary learners of their classroom climate of small schools. The essential themes which emerged from transcriptions of the participants’ responses for the research question number one are consisted of overarching themes which are summarized in the said table.

Table 3. The Lived Experience of Elementary Learners of their Classroom Climate of Small Schools

Issues Probed	Core Ideas	Code/ Categories	Essential Themes	Theoretical Support
The quality of the teacher- student relationship	The teacher helps and supports students with their tasks and lessons, even when they face difficulties.	Teacher’s Encouraging Participation	Supportive Teacher	Social Learning Theory
	Students have a good relationship with the teacher because they feel supported and properly guided in class.			
Teacher's role in creating an organized and conducive learning environment	Students acknowledge the teacher's assistance when they struggle with lessons, emphasizing the importance of effective teaching.	Teacher's Guidance in Classroom	Classroom Organization	Cognitive Load Theory
	Classroom rules set by the teacher promote respectful behavior among students, ensuring everyone feels valued and heard during class participation.			
	Group activities like Catch-up Fridays promote communication and closeness among students, allowing them to share ideas and bond with each other.			
Teacher's role in creating an organized and conducive learning environment	Students appreciate activities where they can take on leadership roles and guide their peers, fostering a sense of camaraderie and teamwork.	Engaging Group Activities Fostering Communication	Classroom Organization	Cognitive Load Theory
	The presence of classroom rules that emphasize the importance of respectful behavior, particularly during class participation.			
	Teachers actively remind students to adhere to these rules, ensuring that everyone feels respected and valued in the classroom environment.			

Supportive Teacher. In the context of classroom climate, elementary learners may experience a variety of enriching encounters that significantly impact their development. It was mentioned by the participants that they thrive on positive reinforcement, receiving regular praise and encouragement for their efforts and achievements, which bolsters their confidence and motivation.

Furthermore, a supportive teacher contributes significantly to the overall classroom climate by fostering a nurturing and trusting relationship with students. This relationship is characterized by a teacher's ability to recognize and celebrate each student's unique strengths and achievements. By maintaining a positive and affirming approach, teachers create an environment where students feel valued and supported. This positive classroom atmosphere is essential for developing a growth mindset, as it encourages students to view challenges as opportunities for growth rather than as insurmountable obstacles. Overall, the consistent support and encouragement provided by teachers are fundamental in shaping a productive and engaging learning experience for elementary learners, enhancing both their academic performance and emotional well-being.

Teacher's Encouraging Participation. This is the first code of the probed on the first probed issue. Student expressed common responses on learning lessons using digital literacy in academic context. Most of them stated that digital literacy helped them finished their task and improving efficiency in tasks like research. Despite facing challenges, the teacher in question demonstrates kindness, patience, and dedication to their students' academic growth and well-being. They provide not only assistance but also a supportive environment where students feel valued and encouraged to learn. Additionally, to enhance students' engagement and enthusiasm towards learning. Many students reported that these tools make lessons more interactive and accessible, which contributes to a more dynamic and enjoyable learning experience. This combination of innovative teaching methods and personalized support ultimately leads to a more effective and enriching educational experience for the students. Through their guidance and teaching methods, they foster positive relationships with their students, creating an atmosphere of trust and respect.

Similarly, Participant 2 recognized when teachers acknowledge and praise students' contributions, it validates their efforts and boosts their confidence. This encouragement serves as a motivational factor for students to actively participate in class discussions and activities. Feeling appreciated and valued by the teacher enhances students' engagement and enthusiasm for learning. She stated that:

“Everytime na magparticipate mi kay gina- acknowledge mi teacher ang among answer gina- ingnan mi ug “Very Good!’ mao ng ganahan mi mag participate sa klase.” (IDI-02)

(Every time we participate our teacher acknowledges our answers and tells us 'Very Good!' That is why we enjoy participating in class.)

Moreover, the participant expresses how their teacher improve their capabilities, particularly in participating in class through motivation. They emphasize the benefits of encouragement in facilitating their ideas. As what Participant 3 said that:

“Ako sir ganahan ko magtuon sa among klase kay tawagon mi ni teacher ug apil jud sa mga activity arun ma share akong mga ideas.” (IDI-03)

(I like studying in our class sir because the teacher calls us and really includes us in the activities so that I can share my ideas.)

Furthermore, teachers for their patient guidance and dedicated teaching is essential in recognizing the invaluable contributions they make to students' lives. Teachers invest their time and energy in nurturing the potential of each student, ensuring that no one is left behind. As Participant 06 said that:

“Taas ug pasensiya si teacher sa amoa biskan mag kanang biskan mag pabadlong mi iyaha gihapon mi tudloan ug maayo para makatoon pa gyud mi kanang taas nga sa lesson or sa mga lesson namo.” (FGD- 03)

(Our teacher is patient with us even when we make mistakes or are reprimanded, she still teaches us well so that we can really learn the high-level lessons or our lessons.)

Teacher's Guidance in Classroom. This is the second code of the first probed issue. IDI participants imparted that teachers play a pivotal role in shaping students' understanding and facilitating their academic growth. By acknowledging individual differences and adapting teaching strategies accordingly, teachers can effectively cater to diverse learning needs and promote student engagement and success.

In that sense, the participant describes how their teachers have a crucial impact on students' comprehension and academic development. They emphasized the importance of individualized support, transparent explanations, and helpful feedback in improving student learning results. Similarly, Participant 3 said:

“Ako sir kay gina-ingnan ko sa akong teacher kung mag gawas mi kay mananghid ug mubalik dayun.” (FGD-03)

(My teacher always told us that if we go out, we will ask permission and come back immediately.)

Additionally, when students encounter difficulties in grasping complex concepts or navigating through academic tasks, teachers are there to lend a helping hand. With their expertise and dedication, teachers offer invaluable assistance, patiently explaining concepts, providing additional resources, and offering guidance tailored to each student's needs. It facilitates meaningful learning outcomes for students. As Participant 5 said that:

“Tudluan mi ug maayo ni teacher pag maglisod mi sa lesson ginatabangan mi niya.” (FGD-05)

(Our teacher teaches us when we struggle with a lesson then she assists us.)

Classroom Organization. Teachers cultivate a positive and respectful classroom culture, where every voice is valued, and diversity is

celebrated. By fostering open communication and mutual respect, they create a safe space for students to express themselves, ask questions, and explore new ideas without fear of judgment. Through their guidance and leadership, teachers inspire a love for learning and instill important skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork, preparing students for success in both academic pursuits and beyond. It was mentioned by the participants that it enhanced their learning which led them to experience a more effective learning.

Engaging Group Activities Fostering Communication. This is the first code for the second probed issue. Participants mentioned that such activities serve as catalysts for meaningful interactions and effective communication among students. They highlighted the importance of structured yet dynamic group tasks that encourage active participation and foster a sense of belonging within the classroom community.

Moreover, participants emphasized the role of facilitators in guiding discussions, promoting inclusivity, and ensuring that all voices are heard. By providing opportunities for students to engage in collaborative problem-solving, brainstorming sessions, and role-playing exercises, these activities not only enhance communication skills but also cultivate empathy, teamwork, and mutual respect. Ultimately, participants underscored the transformative impact of these group activities in creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment where students feel empowered to express themselves and collaborate effectively with their peers. to work more efficiently, generate creative ideas, and excel in their academic and professional endeavors. As Participant 01 said that:

“Akoa sir kay Catch-up Friday kay sa isa ka room mag- uban mi ug magdula mi ug ing-ana unya dira pud nako ma ano ang closeness kay naa man mi mga group activities ing-ana so dira mi ma kuan kay mag share pud mig ideas unya diha pud mi maclose.” (IDI-01)

(I like Catch-up Friday sir it is when we gather in one room to bond and play games like that, and that is where I feel the closeness because we also have group activities there, so that's where we can express ourselves because we also share ideas, and that's where we can get close.)

Similarly, experiencing fun in group activities is not just about enjoyment; it is about fostering bonds, cultivating teamwork, and creating lasting memories. Whether it is participating in team-building exercises, engaging in collaborative projects, or enjoying recreational games, group activities offer a unique opportunity for individuals to come together and connect on a deeper level. The shared laughter, excitement, and sense of accomplishment that come from working towards a common goal contribute to a sense of camaraderie and belonging within the group. As Participant 06 said that:

“Kami sir naa mi Catch-up Friday unya ang akong activity nga ganahan kay spelling ako man gud ang leader ana sir gina-guide nako akong kaubanan arun matama among answer ug madaog among grupo.” (IDI-03)

(We have Catch-up Friday sir and we do activities and I what I like is spelling because I am the leader sir. I guide my teammates so that we can get our answers right and win as a group.)

Moreover, active participation promotes a sense of belonging and inclusion within a community, as individuals contribute their unique perspectives and talents to collective endeavors. Through shared experiences and interactions, people forge bonds, build trust, and create a supportive network of peers who uplift and empower one another. Thus, social interaction through active participation not only enhances individual well-being but also strengthens the fabric of society, fostering a sense of unity, empathy, and cooperation among its members. As Participant 05 said that:

“Ug mag activity si teacher labaw na ug roleplaying mu apil jud ko ana kay daghan ko ug ma-amigo.” (FGD-05)

(And when the teacher conducts activities especially role-playing, I definitely participate because I make a lot of friends.)

Learners Respectful Behaviour. This is the second code for the second probed issue. Respectful behavior encompasses various aspects, including actively listening to others, valuing diverse perspectives, and demonstrating courtesy and empathy in interactions. By treating others with respect, learners create a safe and inclusive space where everyone feels valued and supported.

Moreover, respectful behavior fosters positive relationships and promotes collaboration, enabling students to work together effectively towards common goals. When learners exhibit respectful behavior, they not only enhance their own learning experiences but also contribute to the overall well-being and success of the entire learning community. Therefore, fostering learners' respectful behavior is essential for nurturing a positive and thriving educational environment where everyone can flourish. As Participant 01 said that:

“Kami sir naa mi classroom rules nga ginusunod nga kung naay magparticipate dili dapat kataw-an ug paminawon dapat.” (FGD-01)

(We have classroom rules that everyone follows, which state that when someone participates, they should not be laughed at and should be listened to attentively.)

Additionally, respectful attitude rules often include directives such as actively listening to others without interruption, refraining from derogatory language or behavior, and valuing diverse perspectives. By following these rules, individuals cultivate an environment where everyone feels safe, valued, and empowered to express themselves openly and honestly. Moreover, rules that promote a respectful attitude foster a culture of mutual respect and cooperation, where conflicts are resolved peacefully, and relationships are built on trust and understanding. Ultimately, these rules lay the foundation for a harmonious and inclusive community where individuals



thrive personally, academically, and professionally. As Participant 04 said that:

“Kami sir gina-remind mi ni teacher if naay magtubag ug mag participate kay dili namo kataw- an.” (FGD-04)

(We are reminded by the teacher that if someone answers or participates, we should not laugh.)

Data Integration of the Salient Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The current study explores the lived experiences of elementary learners regarding their classroom climate in small schools, using a mixed methods approach with a convergent parallel design. The fifth research question focuses on corroborating findings from both the quantitative and qualitative phases. Table 4 summarizes the key quantitative and qualitative findings, with the first column listing the main focal points of the study, followed by the quantitative and qualitative findings in the second and third columns. The quantitative results typically indicate the highest mean values, while the qualitative findings present identified responses that either confirm or contradict these quantitative results. The fourth column outlines the nature of data integration, and the fifth column discusses the axiological implications based on the data presented in the previous columns.

Table 4. Joint Display of Salient Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

<i>Aspect Or Focal Point</i>	<i>Quantitative Findings</i>	<i>Qualitative Findings</i>	<i>Nature Of Data Integration</i>	<i>Axiological Implications</i>
Classroom Organization	Table 2 on Physical Environment, specifically, item 4 - the learners express contentment with the size of their classroom, (M=4.79) which rated as very high.	Table 3.1 learner’s contentment of their classroom size.	Merging – converging	Students have clear visibility of instructional materials from any vantage point, educators implicitly communicate a commitment to equity and inclusivity in learning.
	Table 2 on Physical Environment, item 5 about the importance of visibility within the classroom, ensuring that students can clearly see instructional materials like the blackboard or whiteboard from any vantage point. (M=4.79) which rated as very high.	Table 3 on expected classroom behavior under the Theme of classroom rules and expectations and demonstrate a willingness to extend support and understanding, fostering a culture of kindness and mutual respect.	Merging – converging	Expected classroom behavior among learners, centered on demonstrating a willingness to extend support and understanding, holds profound axiological implications within the educational context. It reflects a commitment to fostering a culture of empathy, cooperation, and mutual respect among students.
	Table 2 on Peer Relationship item 4 students they demonstrate a willingness to extend support and understanding, fostering a culture of kindness and mutual respect.	Table 3.1 on positive group activity experience under the theme of engagement through active participation	Merging – converging	Students to actively contribute and engage with their peers, educators promote values of respect, empathy, and cooperation. Moreover, positive group experiences nurture a sense of belonging and mutual support, reinforcing the importance of community and interpersonal relationships within the learning environment.
	Table 2 on Teacher- Student interaction item 3 about gives clear and direct instructions for the learners to follow rules to be well-guided in the entire class (M=4.75) which rated as very high.			

Classroom Organization. The specific items on Physical Environment which are all rated as very high find my classroom clean and tidy like my classroom am satisfied of the light to work during class, am satisfied of the size of the classroom, and can see the blackboard\whiteboard clearly from any place in the classroom which are all rated as very high. These results are connected with the qualitative findings, which is under the theme supportive teacher. It is then safe to say that the qualitative data converges quantitative.

Supportive Teacher. The specific items on can see that it is easy for teachers to maintain student’s good behavior and order during lessons, help to decide good climate and discipline rules for the classroom, obey and follow the rules and obey their orders, and when a student does not follow a rule, teachers take measures which are all rated as very high. These results are connected with the qualitative findings, which is under the theme Teacher-Student interaction. It is then safe to say that the qualitative data converges quantitative.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

First, the classroom climate for elementary learners in small schools is rated very positively in terms of physical environment, teacher-

student interaction, peer relationships, and teachers' attitudes toward learning. This indicates that these aspects of classroom climate were consistently observed by the elementary learners.

Second, a thematic analysis of the qualitative data was conducted based on responses collected through in-depth interviews (IDI) and focus group discussions (FGD). The results provided deeper insights into the experiences of students regarding their classroom climate. Qualitatively, elementary learners reported various situations that influenced how their classroom climate affected their learning. Two main themes emerged: Supportive Teacher and Classroom Organization.

Lastly, to better understand the impact of classroom climate on elementary learners in small schools, the responses were thematically analyzed to corroborate the quantitative findings. The integration of results from both phases followed a structured plan. The quantitative results regarding digital literacy indicated a convergence with the qualitative data. Both sets of findings confirm that while there are some negative effects associated with using digital literacy in lessons, the positive impacts and benefits far outweigh these drawbacks.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were being drawn:

Since the status of the digital literacy reveal that among the four indicators of classroom climate, the peer relationship has the lowest mean which affects how students learn their bond and relationship, it is recommend that elementary learners can benefit significantly from structured activities and interventions aimed at enhancing peer relationships. Implementing cooperative learning strategies, such as group projects and peer tutoring sessions, can foster collaboration and mutual support among elementary learners. These activities not only encourage students to work together towards common goals but also promote communication skills and empathy.

Moreover, creating opportunities for social interaction outside of academic tasks, such as through team-building exercises or inclusive play activities, can help strengthen bonds and cultivate a positive classroom environment. It is also important for educators to actively facilitate and model positive social behaviors, encouraging kindness, respect, and inclusivity among students. By prioritizing the development of peer relationships alongside academic learning, elementary educators can create a supportive and nurturing classroom climate that enhances students' overall learning experiences and social-emotional development.

Moreover, based on the qualitative phase results on the lived experiences of elementary learners on their classroom climate with regards to their classroom organization and supportive teacher, students' may benefit from targeted interventions and adjustments. Students may benefit from structured classroom organization that includes clear routines, well-defined expectations, and an organized physical environment conducive to learning. Enhancing supportive teacher practices, such as providing individualized attention, offering constructive feedback, and demonstrating care and understanding, can further improve the classroom climate.

Additionally, it may be beneficial to implement professional development programs for teachers focused on effective classroom management strategies and building strong teacher-student relationships. By addressing these aspects, educators can create a more nurturing and effective learning environment that supports both academic achievement and the socio-emotional well-being of elementary learners in small school settings

Nowadays, classroom climate plays a crucial role in fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment. These schools cultivate close-knit communities where teachers, students, and families collaborate closely to personalize learning experiences. Teachers often leverage their deep understanding of students' backgrounds and learning styles to create a nurturing atmosphere where each student feels valued and supported. Classroom organization emphasizes collaborative and hands-on learning activities, such as project-based learning and cooperative group work, which promote teamwork and critical thinking skills. Beyond academic instruction, teachers in small rural schools serve as mentors, offering socio-emotional support and guidance to students. This mentorship fosters strong teacher-student relationships, builds trust, and encourages students to engage actively in their learning. Despite challenges like limited resources, small rural schools capitalize on their community-oriented approach to cultivate a positive classroom climate that enhances both academic achievement and overall well-being among elementary learners.

Lastly, to further enhance classroom climate in small rural elementary schools, it is recommended to continue fostering strong teacher-student relationships through personalized support and mentorship. Teachers should capitalize on their knowledge of students' backgrounds and learning needs to tailor instructional strategies effectively. Implementing collaborative and project-based learning activities can enrich student engagement and promote teamwork skills. Additionally, prioritizing professional development opportunities that address classroom management techniques and socio-emotional support can empower teachers with the skills needed to create a supportive learning environment.

Emphasizing community involvement and leveraging local resources can also strengthen the school's connection with families and enhance overall student well-being. By nurturing a positive and inclusive classroom climate, small rural elementary schools can maximize learning outcomes and foster a sense of belonging among students.

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