

The Relationship Between Social Climate of University and Student's Quality of Life

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Abstract – The philosophy of university is not only science education in its specialized meaning. The socialization of students, values of teamwork, and finding a peaceful sense of living with others are parts of university mission in the intellectual and human capitals development. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between social climate of university and students' quality of life. This was a descriptive – correlation research. The population consisted of students in Farhangian University. A number of 175 cases were selected as sample using random stratified sampling method; the Halpin and Kraft's Social Climate questionnaire (1993) and Ainle and Burke's Quality of Life in Educational Environment questionnaire (1992) were distributed among them. The descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients were used to analyze the data. The results showed that there was a significant relationship between close and open social climate in university and students' quality of life. Therefore, the more open the social climate in university, the more the students' quality of life. However, having a sense of belonging to the university, participation and accountability, and creating an intimate relationship between actors can improve the quality of students' life.

Keywords – Social Climate, Quality of Life in University, Students.

I. INTRODUCTION

Considering the necessity of university functioning in social and cultural contexts has become more highlighted and more significant. However, the definition of students' roles and characteristics has changed over time. Today, it is expected that the university eliminate and reduce the social and cultural needs and gaps along with knowledge and science in the community. The role of education and training of labor force may be merely conducted by technical and professional schools. However, the universities are the only institutions which may train individuals who are sensitive to issues such as poverty and environmental pollution, have social responsibility, and are committed to human principles and spirit (Kalengford, 2004). The learning environment is a community which may play an important role in the development of individual and his character (Aghai, 2009). The pace of changes and social developments necessitate the need for training. Therefore, the different research in this area may identify existing shortcomings and deficiencies and pave the way for resolving them. The education system needs a space in which learners to be raised as thinker, creative, innovative, self-esteem, committed, responsible, and regulative, not inanimate figures that move involuntarily in the life to every direction (UNESCO, 2003; Sabaghian, 1996). These characteristics are created in good social

atmosphere and participation in the educational environment. The social environment or climate has a significant importance in educational systems. In fact, it is the collective perception of individuals from their environment and their interaction with each other (Hui and Miksel, 2005). These systems are connected with a large group of students. Their climate may affect the actors and students' quality of life in the classroom and university. The positive and negative experiences that shape students' general perception of welfare, well-being, and life satisfaction within the university community indicate the satisfaction level of students in their daily lives in university (Ainle, 1999).

The university climate is a key element in its efficiency. It has powerful implications in relation to the social and cognitive development of students. However, when people find a sense of belonging to an environment such as universities, their behavioral and academic problems are reduced (Gallay & Pong, 2004). If the learning and classroom environments do not have healthy psychosocial climate and learners do not experience this climate during the education years, it should not be expected that compatible people and healthy community will exist (Aghai, 2009). Actually, the social environment has particular significance in educational system. However, these systems are associated with a large group of actors and their climate may affect individuals' learning experiences and personality. Heilman (1999) states that students' motivation should be studied in universities' social environment. The change in motivation is related to changes in social texture. One of the benefits of investigating and responding to needs is development of a positive attitude among the students toward the university. This cause the students accept university messages with satisfaction, get socialized based on them, and consequently affect the society by their values.

There is relationship between dissatisfaction from university and low levels of life quality and incidence of behavior problems and low academic achievement (Malin LA., Linnakyla, 2001). Also, there is relationship among quality of life in schools and universities, sense of belonging, participation in university works and affairs, high motivation to learn the lessons, positive attitude, better and more intimate relationship between learner and teacher and other peers, and physical and mental health (Mok M., Flynn M., 2004). Due to its impact on mental and physical health, therefore, the learners' quality of life is essential and its effectiveness should carefully be assessed (Anderson et al., 1976).

The relatively sustainable quality of higher education environment which people experience it impacts on their

behavior. It is based on the collective perception of individuals in the university. The university social climate can be divided into two main categories: open and close. In the open climate, the members have good group vitality and mood, there are mutual relations of friendship and cooperation between individuals, individuals are substantially satisfied, and they are motivated to overcome their problems (Hui, quoted by Ahmadi Vesai, 2011). Contrary to open climate, there is minimal satisfaction in close climate and the low satisfaction is the main indicator of this type of climate (Benisi, 2000).

In a study entitled the evaluation of unintended consequences (hidden curriculum) in social environment of high schools and the ways to reduce its negative consequences, Alikhani (2004) studied open and close social climate. The results showed that the major negative consequences hidden in the schools have close social climate including strengthening the spirit of obedience and conformity rather than critical thinking and creativity and imagination, strengthening the individual competitiveness, negative attitudes toward group activities, and strengthening negative self-reinforcement. In a study entitled evaluating the situation of communication in open and close climate of learning environment, Anderson (1998) showed that there is a dynamic communication in the environment with open climate and there is appropriate exchange of ideas and information. In a study named social climate and learners' involvement and participation level, Gali and Yang (2004) showed that in friendly and flexible social climate, people are self-motivated to participate. Studying the impact of schools' organizational climate on performance of teachers, Majnooni (2002) showed that the average performance of teachers in open climate is better than their average performance in close climate. In other words, the climate is more open, the teachers' performance will be higher. Bourke's., Smith M. (1989) conducted a research on the quality of life in schools. The results showed that there is relationship between students' quality of life in school and their staying in school, their attitude toward school, academic achievement, levels of academic achievement, responsibility and commitment towards homework, and abnormal behaviors in school.

Based on theoretical and empirical principles discussed in this study, as well as the lack of research on existing social climate and environment in Farhangian university, this study aims to investigate this question: whether there is relationship between social climate in university and students' quality of life in university?

II. METHODOLOGY

This was a descriptive – correlation study. The population consisted of students in Farhangian University. A number of 175 cases were selected as sample using random stratified sampling method (the number of boys=82 and the number of girls=93). The following questionnaires were used as research tools:

A) Halpin and Kraft's Social Climate questionnaire (1993): this describes the climate of learning environment

and measures the climate eight dimensions including lack of commitment, obstacle, vitality and spirit, devotion, production or close supervision, distance, respect, and influence or trust. In addition, based on these dimensions, the type of organizational climate (close and open) is determined. Alikhani (2004) reported the reliability of this questionnaire as 0.872. Evaluating the Cronbach's alpha, this study assessed the reliability as 0.89.

B) Ainle and Burke's Quality of Life in Educational Environment questionnaire (1992): this is derived from the quality of life in teaching environment questionnaire. This standard questionnaire assesses the feelings and attitudes of students towards learning environment. The seven subscales of this test are: 1) overall satisfaction 2) negative emotion 3) satisfaction of teachers. 4) Social cohesion 5) opportunities 6) Success 7) adventure. In the research of Sattari Kordabadi (2011), the reliability of each component in this questionnaire was obtained using Cronbach's alpha method (0.64 to 0.86) and the total reliability of the questionnaire was obtained 0.97. In the present study, the reliability of questionnaire was calculated by Cronbach's alpha method (0.86).

III. FINDINGS

The correlation coefficient was used to answer this question: whether there is relationship between social climate in university and students' quality of life?

Table 1: The correlation coefficient between social climate and students' quality of life

Significance Level	Correlation Coefficient	Number	Social Climate	Variables
0/001	0/31	80	Open	Quality of life at University
0/028	-0/17	95	Close	

According to the information contained in Table 1, there is a positive and significant correlation between open social climate of university and students' quality of life in university at level ($\alpha = 0.05$). In other words, it can be said that the more open the social climate in the university, the more students' quality of life. Also, there is significant and negative relationship between close social climate in university and quality of life in classroom. In other words, it can be said that the more close the social climate in the university, the less students' quality of life.

The table of descriptive statistics was used to compare the average scores of open and close climate and quality of life in university.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of students' quality of life separated by social climate

Number	Standard Deviation	Mean	Social Climate	Variables
80	2/11	106/99	Open	Quality of life at University
95	1/93	88/011	Close	

According to Table 2, the average score of open climate (SD= 2.11, M = 106.99) is greater than the average score of close climate (SD= 1.93, M = 88.011).

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact of social climate in Farhangian University on the quality of students' life in the university. In this regard, the findings showed that the more open the social climate and the better the interaction between teacher and students and with each other, the more their life quality. This result is partly consistent with the findings of Mehr Mohammadi (2002), Alikhani (2004), Majnooni (2002), Ainle and Burke (1984), Halpin and Craft (1993), Kalabers (2002), and Mouk and Flynn (2004). In explaining this finding, it can be said that if the relations in the University and its interactions will be positive and the climate will be appropriate and favorable to students' spirit and interests, the students will attend school more satisfied and appropriate context will be provided for collaborative group activities of students. If the school's climate will be much close, most of the students will be encouraged to work individually. Therefore, they will be displeased from attending the school and will consider it as time consuming. The university and its factors have unique and profound impact on the lives of young people and play an important role in defining their overall sense about community in youth time. From the perspective of psychology, if the individuals' sense about connection with a positive social context, such as university, will be better, they will more likely have appropriate social behaviors. If the teenagers feel appropriate to their learning environment, they will less likely have damaging individual and social behaviors. They will more likely have appropriate social behaviors such as success and progress. The university planners and authorities pay less attention to social climate of learning environment that is a part of hidden curriculum. While, this part of hidden curriculum plays substantial role in classroom life quality of students and impact on their academic progress. It must, therefore, be considered in planning for the university. Also, it is suggested that teachers establish an intimate relationship between themselves and their students, support them in times of problem occurrence, and finally, direct the classroom climate to nurture and strengthen students' sense of participation and collaboration.

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