Chapter – 3

PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

The present chapter deals with the formulation of objectives and hypotheses of research study undertaken. As a nation, we are focused on raising the level of academic achievement in our schools. The learning climate that is determined by the organization of learning space learner involvement in lessons and discipline in the classroom are often unnoticed in the assessment process. However these variables significantly influence academic achievement of students. The literature review clearly indicates that there is a greater need for emphasis on the classroom climate that may enhance academic achievement of students, the learning environment has a big influence on student outcomes and plays an important role in improving the effectiveness of learning in all levels of classrooms. Studies consistently have shown evidence of relations between student perceptions of their classroom learning environment and their outcomes (Chionh & Fraser, 1998; Fraser & Fisher, 1982; Fraser, 1986, 1989, 1994; Haertel, Walberg, & Haertel, 1981; Henderson, Fisher & Fraser, 2000; Hunus & Fraser, 1997; Koul & Fisher, 2002; Margianti, Fraser & Aldridge, 2001; Myint & Goh, 2001; Roth, 1998). Students learn better when they perceive their classroom environment positively (Chionh & Fraser, 1998). Positive school environment is recognized as a significant component of thriving and effective schools (Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger & Dumas, 2003; Miller & Fredericks, 1990). It is defined as shared beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape relations between students, teachers, and administrators and place the parameters of adequate behavior and norms for the school (Emmons, Comer, & Haynes, 1996; Kuperminc, Leadbeater, Emmons, & Blatt, 1997). School climate is a product of social relations among students and with teachers, is influenced by educational and social values, and has been shown to relate to social situations within classrooms and to the school as a whole. It has been linked to academic achievement (Battistich, Solomon, Kim, Watson, & Schaps, 1995; Griffith, 1999); student misconduct, aggression, and behavioral problems (Battistich & Hom, 1997; Battistich, Solomon, Kim, Watson, & Schaps, 1995; Shochet, Dadds, Ham, & Montague, 2006; Welsh, 2000; Wilson, 2004);
adjustment problems (Kuperminc et al., 1997); and social and personal attitudes (Battistich et al., 1995). Although these studies revealed that academic achievement has been debated and researched extensively. The review of literature reveals that academic achievement has been studied by a number of researches but it does not seem to be studied in connection with classroom environment in rural and urban perspective in Chhattisgarh region. There is need of more studies and researches to find out the relationship between perceived classroom environment of the rural and urban students and their academic achievement. Therefore, The present study has been undertaken with a view to investigate the relationship of perceived classroom environment along with its various sub dimensions namely involvement, affiliation, teacher support, task orientation, competition, order organization, rule clarity, teacher control and innovation, locale and sex with academic achievement of the students.

1. Classroom environment and academic achievement- Studies have shown evidence of relations between classroom learning environment and their outcomes (Fraser & Aldridge, 2001; Fraser & Fisher, 1982; Fraser,1994; Hunus & Fraser, 1997; Koul & Fisher, 2002; Myint & Goh, 2001). Students learn better when they perceive their classroom environment positively (Chinon & Fraser, 1998). Learning is an active, process, it presupposes active involvement by the learner in the act of learning before it can take place. As a result of active involvement learners learn what they are expected to learn to their fullest potential. In a positive classroom climate learners' are happy and enjoy going to school, and educators work together in a systematic way to achieve their objectives (Chrispeels, 1992). Research evidence in the united states has suggested that student academic involvement is a powerful predictor of their achievement Wentzel 1993; Hong and Lee (2000), Rao & Moely and Sachs (2000) have shown that student academic engagement is positively associated with their achievement.

(Berndt, 1999; Fuligni et. al., 2001; Steinberg, Dornbusch & Brown, 1992) revealed that peers affect all facts of a student’s life, especially social and emotional adjustment, educational aspirations and day to day behavior in school and peer influence peaks during adolescence.

Student perception of teacher support have been associated with greater feelings of school belonging (Ma, 2003 & Osterman, 2000) and greater school
engagement and motivation as well as better academic performance (Birch & Ladd, 1998) positive teacher-student relationship were associated with better school performance (Chiaki Konishi, 2010).

Teacher support in the classroom have been consistently linked with increased student achievement motivation and academic success, students relationships with teacher become increasingly significant as they look for role models and support. Research shows that student who feel that educators encourage them are more committed to learning and are more successful academically. The impact of classroom climate on students and staff can be beneficial for or a barrier to learning,

Researchers have found positive associations between perceptions of teacher support and students’ adaptive motivational beliefs and engagement behaviors. When students view their teacher as supportive they report higher levels of interest, valuing, effort, and enjoyment in their school work (Fraser & Fisher, 1982; Midgley et al., 1989; Trickett & Moos, 1974), a more positive academic self-concept (Felner, Aber, Primavera, & Cauce, 1985), and greater expectancies for success (Goodenow, 1993). Perceiving the teacher as supportive is also related positively to asking for help with school work when needed (Newman & Schwager, 1993), use of self-regulated learning strategies (Ryan & Patrick, 2001), and a desire to comply with classroom rules (Wentzel, 1994). Perceived teacher support is related negatively to absenteeism (Moos & Moos, 1978) and disruptiveness in the classroom (Ryan & Patrick, 2001).

Research suggested that student academic engagement is a significant predictor of their academic achievement (Wentzel,1993). Students’ academic engagement is positively associated with their achievement outcomes (Hong & Lee, 2000; Rao, Moely, and Sachs, 2000).

Taking these facts into consideration present study would test the hypothesis that classroom environment along with its various sub dimensions would show significant role in determining the academic achievement. It is hypothesized that classroom environment (along with its dimensions i. e. involvement, affiliation, teacher support, task orientation, competition, order organization, rule clarity, teacher control and innovation) would contribute significantly to academic achievement of the student.

2. **Locale and academic achievement** - The next problem of the study is to investigate the role of locale in academic achievement in relation to various
dimensions of classroom environment. The word locale refers to the residential background of the individuals. Here two types of locale, i.e., rural and urban were considered for study. Boylan and Mcswan (1978) reported that rural school were inferior and lacking in the range of facilities with high staff turnover and suffered from lack of continuity in their curriculum. Obe (1984) observed a significant difference in rural-urban academic performance. He concluded that children from urban schools were superior to their rural counterparts. Blackwell and McLaughlin (1999), found the rural-urban location variable to be significant in explaining performance. Owoeye (2002) found that there was a significant difference between academic performance of students in rural and urban area in public examinations. Nagaraju et al (2003) reported that the achievement of the pupils from urban areas was better than the achievement of pupils from rural areas. Usha (2007) revealed that urban pupils were found superior to rural pupils in their achievement. Bamman and Ksheersagar (2008) found that achievement of the pupils from urban areas were better than the achievement of pupils from rural areas. Dhanda and Singh (2009) found that urban area surpassed children from rural area in intelligence. Joshi and Srivastava (2009) reported that the achievement of the pupils from urban areas was better than the achievement of pupils from rural areas.

Taking these facts into consideration present study would test the hypothesis that locale would show significant role in determining the academic achievement. It is hypothesized that locale would predict significantly to academic achievement of the student in relation to various dimensions of classroom environment namely, involvement, affiliation teacher support, task orientation, competition, order organization, rule clarity, teacher control and innovation.

3. Sex and academic achievement-The last problem of the study is to investigate the role of sex in academic achievement in relation to various dimensions of classroom environment. Over the last decade there has been evidence of a growing gender gap in educational achievement. Fergusson & Horwood, 1997; Hillman & Rothman, 2003; Praat, 1999; Thiessen & Nickerson, 1999; Weaver-Hightower, 2003. Educational statistics have indicated that females are outperforming males at all levels of the school system, attaining more school and post-school qualifications, and attending university in higher numbers (Alton Lee & Praat 2001; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002; Mullis et al., 2003).
Research on gender differences in classroom environment perceptions was also conducted in various countries (Fisher, Fraser & Rickards, 1997; Fisher, Rickards, Goh, & Wong, 1997; Fraser, Giddings & Mc Robbie, 1995; Henderson, Fisher & Fraser, 2000; Wong & Fraser, 1997). Owens and Straton (1980) found that girls preferred cooperation more than boys but boys preferred competition and individualization more than girls. Overall, these studies have shown that girls generally hold more favorable perceptions of their classroom learning environments than boys in the same classes.

Taking these facts into consideration present study would test the hypothesis that sex would show significant role in determining the academic achievement. It is hypothesized that sex would predict significantly to academic achievement of the student in relation to various dimensions of classroom environment.