
Examining the Relationship between School Climate and Achievement Goals among High School Students

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ABSTRACT

Students' achievement goals are shaped by various internal and external factors, including the school climate, which influences academic motivation. This study aimed to examine the relationship between school climate and achievement goals among senior high school students. A quantitative correlational design was employed, involving 126 tenth-grade students selected through random sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires measuring school climate and achievement goals. Prior to hypothesis testing, assumption tests were conducted. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that the data were normally distributed ($p = 0.200$), and the linearity test confirmed a linear relationship between the variables ($p < 0.05$). Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between school climate and achievement goals ($r = 0.494$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a moderate correlation. The coefficient of determination showed that school climate accounted for 24.4% of the variance in students' achievement goals. These findings suggest that a supportive and positive school climate is moderately associated with stronger achievement goal orientation among students. The study underscores the importance of fostering a conducive school environment to support the development of students' academic goals.

Keywords: achievement goal, high school student, school climate

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INTRODUCTION

The academic success of high school students is a multifaceted construct that is significantly influenced by a complex interplay of environmental and individual psychological factors (Fan & Williams, 2018). Among these factors, school climate and achievement goals are recognized as key determinants that shape students' engagement, motivation, and overall academic trajectories (Apostol & Delos Santos, 2023). School climate, which encompasses shared norms, values, and interpersonal relationships, influences students' perceptions of the learning environment and their subsequent adoption of academic goals (Maxwell et al., 2017). A positive school climate has been identified as a critical factor in enhancing student achievement and reducing problematic behaviors (Wang & Degol, 2016). Meanwhile, achievement goals, defined as the purposes or reasons students engage in academic tasks, are important motivational constructs that guide learning behaviors and responses to academic challenges (Tomaszewski et al., 2024). In particular, the school's goal structure, reflecting the educational objectives and values communicated through school practices, can substantially influence both students' achievement goals and teachers' perceptions (Domínguez et al., 2019). The interaction between these personal and environmental factors is essential for understanding students' motivation, learning strategies, and academic outcomes, as a stronger alignment between students' personal motives and the school's relational goal structures is associated with higher academic achievement (Zhou & Wang, 2023).

In the educational context, achievement goal orientations are generally categorized into two types: mastery orientation and performance orientation (Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2023). Students with a mastery orientation focus on developing competence and improving themselves, whereas students with a performance orientation seek to demonstrate their abilities to others. Mastery-oriented goals emphasize the learning process, while performance-oriented goals focus on learning outcomes (Bostan et al., 2022). Individuals with a performance orientation are more concerned with how their performance is evaluated by others, whereas those with a mastery orientation focus primarily on personal improvement and task mastery (Zhang et al., 2022).

In addition to internal factors, the school environment, or school climate, plays a significant role in shaping students' achievement goal orientation. A positive school climate has been shown to promote better learning outcomes and academic achievement, potentially reducing achievement gaps and improving future career prospects, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Aldridge et al., 2024). Moreover, a positive school climate facilitates the effective implementation of the teaching and learning process (Istiqomah & Rohmah, 2022) and is recognized as an important factor influencing student achievement (Khosiyah, 2022). Previous studies have also identified school climate as one of the most influential determinants of students' academic success (Shindler et al., 2016). A school environment that fosters comfort, safety, and effectiveness can support the achievement of learning outcomes (Sitorus et al., 2023), while a pleasant school climate contributes to both improved student academic performance and the overall effectiveness of the school organization (Wuletu et al., 2024).

Arifandi (2020) suggested that a conducive school climate is built through four main aspects: (1) a clean, safe, and comfortable physical environment; (2) a social environment that promotes a sense of family, togetherness, and mutual respect; (3) personnel management that emphasizes motivation, professionalism, and the implementation of equality; and (4) a well-organized work environment characterized by structured activity schedules, recognition of achievement, and appropriate sanctions for rule violations to support an effective teaching and learning process. Furthermore, previous studies have shown that components of school climate, such as teacher support, peer relationships, and academic press, are associated with different types of achievement goals among high school students, including mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance goals (Fejes, 2023; Ratnawati et al., 2022).

Based on preliminary interviews with teachers, the researchers found that one of the challenges faced by high schools in Yogyakarta is the unequal opportunity for students to develop their talents and abilities. Some students show little interest in participating in academic

competitions, and their motivation to achieve is more apparent in non-academic domains. This phenomenon indicates that the school environment is dynamic and may influence how students prioritize and pursue their achievement goals. Previous studies have also demonstrated the association between school climate and various aspects of learning motivation. Laudya & Savitri (2020) reported that a positive school climate enhances students' school engagement, while Lestiani et al., (2021) found that school climate significantly influences procedural justice and students' citizenship behavior. In addition, Ningtyas & Kumalasari (2022) identified a positive relationship between academic resilience and achievement goal orientation, whereas Saraswati (2019) showed that achievement goals significantly affect students' self-regulated learning.

The relationship between school climate and achievement goals can be explained through several psychological mechanisms. A positive school climate provides students with a sense of safety, support, and belonging, which encourages active engagement in academic activities and fosters positive attitudes toward learning. When students perceive their school as an environment where they are respected, accepted, and supported by teachers and peers, they are more likely to invest effort in achieving academic success and pursuing meaningful learning goals. Teacher support and positive interpersonal relationships can further strengthen students' confidence in their academic abilities and reinforce the belief that learning is valuable and attainable. Moreover, a school climate characterized by clear academic expectations and encouragement for learning may enhance students' commitment to mastery and performance goals, leading them to perceive academic challenges as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles to be avoided. Consistent with motivational theories, supportive educational environments facilitate the fulfillment of students' psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy, thereby strengthening self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation. These experiences are closely associated with the development of achievement goals. Therefore, school climate is theoretically expected to be positively associated with students' achievement goal orientation and serves as an important contextual factor in understanding academic motivation among high school students. Based on these considerations, it can be assumed that school climate plays an important role in shaping students' achievement goal orientation. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between school climate and achievement goals among high school students.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative correlational design to examine the relationship between school climate and achievement goals among tenth-grade students at a senior high school in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The study population consisted of 183 tenth-grade students enrolled at the time of the study. The sampling frame included all registered tenth-grade students. A sample of 126 students was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error. The participants were selected through simple random sampling, ensuring that each student had an equal probability of being selected. The inclusion criteria required students to be actively enrolled in Grade X and willing to participate in the study. Students who were absent during data collection or submitted incomplete questionnaires were excluded from the analysis. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the context of the participating school and should not be generalized to the broader population of Indonesian high school students.

Data were collected by administering questionnaires to the selected participants. Before data collection, participants were informed of the purpose of the study and assured that their responses would remain confidential. Participation was voluntary, and the questionnaires were completed during the data collection period. Data were collected using two Likert-scale questionnaires. The School Climate Instrument was developed based on school climate theory, which emphasizes dimensions such as safety, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and the institutional environment that collectively shape students' perceptions of their school environment. The Achievement Goals Instrument was developed based on Achievement Goal Theory, which conceptualizes students' learning goal orientations as mastery- and performance-oriented. These dimensions reflect students' motivation to develop competence and to demonstrate their abilities in academic settings. Both instruments employed a five-point Likert

scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating more positive perceptions of school climate and stronger achievement goal orientation. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha indicated that the School Climate Scale had a reliability coefficient of .921 (24 items), while the Achievement Goals Scale had a reliability coefficient of .885 (18 items). These values indicate good internal consistency for both instruments. Items that met the predetermined validity criteria were retained for analysis, and reliability coefficients exceeding .70 were considered acceptable.

Questionnaires were administered during school hours after obtaining permission from the school administration. Data collection was conducted through Google Forms, allowing participants to complete the questionnaires electronically using their personal devices. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, assured that their responses would remain confidential, and notified that participation was voluntary. Responses submitted through Google Forms were automatically recorded and compiled for analysis. Only complete responses were included in the final dataset.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was used to assess the normality of the data, while a linearity test was performed to confirm the existence of a linear relationship between the variables. Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis was then employed to test the research hypothesis regarding the relationship between school climate and achievement goals.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the respondents' scores on school climate and achievement goals. The analysis included the number of participants, the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores, and score distribution. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Achievement Goal			School Climate		
N	Valid	126	N	Valid	126
	Missing	0		Missing	0
Mean		61.4683	Mean		70.4444
Standard Error on Mean		.66759	Standard Error on Mean		.93459
Median		62.0000	Median		71.0000
Mode		61.00 ^a	Mode		64.00 ^a
Std. Deviation		7.49366	Std. Deviation		10.49080

This study examined the relationship between school climate and achievement goals among high school students. The descriptive findings indicate that students' perceptions of school climate were predominantly moderate (74.6%), suggesting that the school environment provides adequate academic and social support but has not yet reached an optimal level. A moderately positive perception of the school climate reflects a stable learning environment that still requires systematic improvement to better support students' psychological and motivational development.

Table 2. School climate categorization

Interval	Category	Number of Students	Percentage
$X < 59,95$	Low	12	9,5 %
$59,95 \leq X < 80,93$	Medium	94	74,6 %
$80,93 \geq X$	High	20	15,9 %

Students' achievement goals were likewise found to be moderate. This indicates that most high school students possess reasonably clear academic goal orientations, although the intensity of their motivation remains limited. These findings suggest that achievement goals are not

solely determined by individual factors but are also substantially shaped by contextual conditions within the school environment, underscoring the importance of school climate as a key variable in this study (see Table 3).

Table 3. Achievement goal categorization

Interval	Category	Number of Students	Percentage
$X < 53,97$	Low	11	8,7 %
$53,97 \leq X < 68,95$	Medium	102	81 %
$68,95 \geq X$	High	13	10,3 %

The correlation analysis demonstrated a positive and statistically significant relationship between school climate and achievement goals (see Table 4). This finding provides empirical evidence that high school students who perceive their school climate more positively tend to exhibit stronger academic goal orientations. A supportive, safe, and inclusive school climate appears to facilitate students' motivation to engage in learning activities and to pursue their educational goals more consistently.

Table 4. Correlation test

Variable	Statistic	School Climate	Achievement Goal
School Climate	Pearson Correlation	1	0.494**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<0.001
	N	126	126
Achievement Goal	Pearson Correlation	0.494**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001	
	N	126	126

**. Correlation is significant at the 0,01 level (2-tailed)

The regression analysis further revealed that school climate explained 24.4% of the variance in achievement goals. This proportion represents a meaningful contribution within educational and psychological research, given the multidimensional nature of academic motivation. The result indicates that school climate is an important contextual determinant of students' achievement goals, though it does not operate in isolation (see Table 5 and Table 6).

Table 5. Simple linear regression test

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.494	0.244	0.238	6.542

Predictors: (Constant), School Climate

Dependent Variable: Achievement Goal

Table 6. Simple linear regression coefficient

Coefficients					
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	36.619	3.972	-	9.219	<0.001
School Climate	0.353	0.056	0.494	6.324	<0.001

Dependent Variable: Achievement Goal

These findings are consistent with previous research highlighting the role of school climate in enhancing students' motivation and academic engagement. Positive interactions with teachers, supportive peer relationships, and a conducive learning environment have been shown to strengthen students' achievement goals (Fejes, 2023; Ratnawati et al., 2022). In this context, school counselors play a strategic role in fostering a positive school climate through counseling

programs that promote students' sense of belonging, self-regulation, and academic goal-setting skills (Burns & Van Bergen, 2025; Goagoses, 2025).

A supportive school environment significantly contributes to students' well-being by fostering positive outcomes, such as academic achievement and constructive interpersonal relationships among students and staff (Berti et al., 2023). Conversely, a suboptimal learning environment may contribute to negative outcomes, including increased substance use and bullying behaviors among students (Berti et al., 2023). Previous research has consistently demonstrated that a positive school climate, characterized by strong teacher-student interactions and social-emotional support, is associated with enhanced academic achievement and motivation (Goagoses, 2025). Such an environment encourages students to enjoy school, set more challenging academic goals, and persist in their educational pursuits (Burns & Van Bergen, 2025). These findings are consistent with theoretical frameworks emphasizing the important role of contextual factors in students' development, particularly the interaction among teaching quality, goal structures, and teacher autonomy support (Burns & Van Bergen, 2025).

Nevertheless, a substantial proportion of the variance in achievement goals may be explained by factors other than school climate, such as family support, individual characteristics, and socioeconomic conditions. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted with caution, as the correlational design of this study does not permit causal conclusions regarding the relationship between the variables. Overall, this study contributes to the empirical understanding of the association between school climate and achievement goals among high school students. The findings indicate that a positive school climate is associated with stronger achievement goals among students.

CONCLUSION

This study found a significant positive relationship between school climate and achievement goals among tenth-grade students at a senior high school in Yogyakarta. The findings indicate that students who perceived a more positive school climate tended to report stronger achievement goals. This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the cross-sectional correlational design limits the ability to draw causal conclusions regarding the relationship between school climate and achievement goals. Second, the study was conducted in a single senior high school in Yogyakarta, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings.

Future research is encouraged to employ longitudinal designs to examine the relationship between school climate and achievement goals over time. Studies involving multiple schools and more diverse samples would enhance the generalizability of the findings. In addition, intervention-based studies may provide further evidence regarding the practical role of school climate in supporting students' achievement goals.

As a practical implication, schools and school counselors may consider fostering a positive school climate as part of broader efforts to support students' academic motivation and achievement goals. Based on the observed association, potential initiatives may include strengthening teacher-student relationships, promoting positive peer interactions, providing academic guidance programs focused on goal-setting and self-regulated learning, and conducting periodic assessments of school climate to identify areas for improvement. However, these recommendations should be interpreted with caution, as the present study did not evaluate the effectiveness of specific interventions. Further intervention-based research is needed to determine which strategies are most effective in fostering a positive school climate and supporting students' achievement goals.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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