



## ***A Comparative Study of Middle School's Ethical Climate in Indonesia***



**Rahmania Utari** (Corresponding Author)

(Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, rahmania\_utari@uny.ac.id)

ORCID: 0000-0003-1182-3769

**Wiwik Wijayanti**

(Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, wiwik\_wijayanti@uny.ac.id)

ORCID: 0000-0001-8535-9001

**Cepi Safruddin Abduljabar**

(Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia; cepi\_safruddin@uny.ac.id)

ORCID: 0000-0003-1876-2866

**Maria Dominika Niron**

(Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia; niron@uny.ac.id)

ORCID: 0009-0001-6660-5059

**Tina Rahmawati**

(Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia; tinarahma@uny.ac.id)

ORCID: 0009-0006-1770-4962

**Udik Budi Wibowo**

(Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia; udik\_bw@uny.ac.id)

ORCID: 0000-0001-5718-9244

**Abstract:** This study aims to: (1) describe the level of ethical climate at middle schools, (2) compare the ethical climate at public schools based on teacher-student analysis, public school-private school analysis, and district-level analysis, and (3) explore findings to gain an intensive understanding of issues within the ethical climate realm at middle schools. Using a mixed-method approach, the first stage of the research involved 360 participants (consisting of 288 students and 72 teachers), across four schools in the District of Gamping in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Proportional stratified random sampling and a modified questionnaire based on Schulte's instruments were used for collecting data during the quantitative phase. During the qualitative phase, the data were gathered through focused group discussions (FGDs), involving 20 teachers and four school principals. The quantitative result showed that the level of ethical climate at middle schools in the region was high at an average score of 3.285 out of four (82.125%). The study confirmed that the perceptions were significantly different between teachers and students and among the four schools. No

discernible disparity in the ethical climate is found between public and private schools. However, by multiple comparison test, it is evident that there are differences in the level of school ethical climate among schools in the District of Gamping. In the qualitative phase, the study emphasizes the complex nature of promoting ethical behavior and student well-being in educational settings, stressing the importance of considering cultural, social, and institutional factors in intervention design. This study highlights several important implications such as promoting intrinsic motivation by minimizing punitive discipline, fostering positive peer and teacher-with-student relationships also policy improvement regarding regional-level exams.

**Keywords:** School climate; school ethical climate; organizational behavior; Indonesian context.

## I. Introduction

In the Special Region of Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia, the police have documented a surge of violent incidents perpetrated by adolescents, escalating from 52 cases in 2020 to 58 cases in 2021. Additionally, the number of youths facing prosecution has increased the number of youths facing prosecutions from 91 individuals to 102 individuals (Kriesdinar 2021). Local communities commonly refer to this form of violence committed by juveniles as "*klitih*." The term is associated with street crimes at night in the Yogyakarta area, often involving inflicting harm upon the victims (Saptoyo 2021). Yogyakarta regional police records for 2021 revealed that 80 of the individuals involved in *klitih* cases were still students (Kriesdinar 2021). Sociologists mention the two driving factors behind *klitih*: Internal factors, or those factors that are inherently linked to the perpetrators themselves, and external ones that stem from the organizational structure within the cohort engaged in violent acts (Saptoyo 2021).

Criminologists reveal that apart from encouraging teenagers to use their free time for positive causes, there needs to be involvement from the adults around them to instill religious beliefs or values to eliminate cliché behavior (Universitas Islam Indonesia 2020). Still, according to these criminologists, students should be more involved in systems at school, home, places of worship, sports, and arts. The fact that this has implications for children's character education at schools and families makes it an intriguing subject for investigation from the school's ethical environment perspective.

The cultivation of positive character traits among students is contingent upon the quality of the educational institution they attend (Sihombing 2022), mainly the quality of school life (Grazia & Molinari 2021). The quality of school life is shaped by individuals' collective experiences within the school setting, manifesting through the institution's norms, objectives, values, structure, interpersonal dynamics, and pedagogical approaches (Grazia & Molinari 2021). The attributes and essence delineated are commonly denoted as the school climate.

In particular, within the realm of values such as compassion, adherence to

regulations, and adherence to professional codes, emerges the notion of the school's ethical climate. The ethical dimension within educational institutions is intricately linked to establishing a conducive ambiance, often called an ethical climate. This ethical climate denotes a collective perception concerning ethical behaviors and the collaborative approach to addressing ethical dilemmas (Kusumastuti & Sakapurnama 2013). Notably, a school's ethical climate is intertwined with the prevalence of teacher absenteeism (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Rosenblatt 2010). In the educational context, a school's ethical climate is manifested through mutual concern and respect, fostering students' sense of affiliation with the institution. A positive ethical climate within a school setting holds the potential to mitigate instances of violence and disrespectful conduct among the school community members (Schulte et al. 2002).

Schools must foster an ethical climate that transcends beyond students to encompass all of their members, including educators. However, research findings indicate that students are susceptible to violence, both verbally and physically, within school settings. In 2021, the online information system dedicated to the protection of women and children reported 12,938 instances of child victimization, revealing that 2.55% of these cases were attributed to acts perpetrated by teachers within the school environment (Puspa 2021). Research currently revealed that junior high schools exhibit higher prevalence rates for traditional and cyberbullying and both in general and severe cyberbullying victimization and offenders compared to senior high schools (Juliansen et al. 2024).

By employing a mixed-methods approach, this research sought to unveil the respondents' perspectives on the ethical climate within schools. Its ultimate goal is to formulate strategies to cultivate an environment conducive to learning that considers ethical considerations. Junior high schools were chosen because many junior high school students were involved in *klitih* in Yogyakarta and because of the limited existing research on school climate at this educational level and in this region. The phenomenon of *klitih* has not explicitly been examined from the perspective of the current school's ethical climate. Several studies on the juvenile delinquency of *klitih* have been conducted mainly related to aspects of developmental psychology (Gee & Riyani 2023), sociology (Lubis et al. 2023), criminology (Wijanarko & Ginting 2021), religion (Casmini 2020), reading culture (Sukirno 2018), culture (Harahap & Sulhin 2022) and communication (Alwiantara & Mahendra 2022).

This study helped identify differences in instructors' and students' impressions of the ethical climate in junior high schools across public and private institutions and within the same district in the Indonesian context. Additionally, the results of this study may provide insightful information to educators and policymakers about how to improve the ethical climate of schools on a local and organizational level, which may help to lower the rate of juvenile delinquency.

## II. Theoretical Reflection on the Related Research

In recent years, numerous studies have delved into the realm of organizational ethical climate, with the pioneering work being initiated by Victor and Cullen (Victor & Cullen 1988). They initially conceptualized ethical climate in terms of perceptions concerning behavior that aligned with organizational norms (Victor & Cullen 1988). Ethical climate is a pivotal component within the organizational milieu, serving as a perceptual framework through which individuals assess situations, aiding them in identifying and resolving problems within the organizational context (Acar et al. 2017; Moore & Moore 2014). This conceptualization of ethical climate mirrors the psychological climate, a moral construct that encapsulates an individual's psychological disposition (Parker et al., 2003).

An ethical climate establishes guidelines for all individuals within an organization, delineating expected behavior, upholding core values, and fostering mutual respect among members (Appelbaum et al. 2005). This framework safeguards everyone in the organization from harsh and inequitable treatment, a characteristic prevalent in most educational systems or schools.

Various researchers have provided insights into the school ethical climate over the past three years.

The Description of School Ethical Climate	References
The organizational ethical climate mirrors the overall organizational environment and encompasses members' perceptions of what the organization ought to do and how it should address ethical dilemmas. In the school context, the ethical climate concerning the process of school and school systems attempting to promote social rules and norms and to achieve learning goals.	(Çayak & Eskici 2023)
The (psychological) ethical climate at school involves the implementation of an ethical code through cognitive and shared-perception approaches. This climate is reflected in performance evaluations, employee codes of conduct, organizational structures, incentives, and official documents such as letters and memoranda. It is beneficial for student happiness and teacher performance.	(Haider et al. 2021)
The ethical climate in a school refers to the ethical atmosphere in an academic setting, which is demonstrated by the school's policies or regulations. Ethics-related expectations primarily originate from teachers during lectures.	(Cheng et al. 2021).
School ethical climate is the teacher's view on rules, morals, and school priorities in shaping decision-making norms and behavior. It embodies perceptions of school policy and the ethical implications of its process. To foster a positive learning environment and enhance learning achievement, the school's ethical climate should consider caring, legal, and instrumental ethics.	(Shua 2020)

Table 1: The Definition of School Ethical Climate.

Research findings highlight the positive impact of school ethical climate on fostering honest student behavior and enhancing interactions within the school community, including interactions among teachers (Cheng et al. 2021). The same research underscores that the more members of a school perceive that their institution upholds some ethical standards, the more positive their behavior tends to be. Studies conducted on the ethical climate in Chinese high schools revealed the correlations between perceptions of the school's ethical climate and such indicators as school achievement, gender, and grade level (Luo et al. 2007). Similarly, research conducted in Israel found a robust and meaningful association between schools' ethical climate and both student achievement and overall school effectiveness (Shua 2020). It was evidenced that there is a positive relationship between ethical leadership and the ethical climate, and the ethical climate partially mediated the association between ethical leadership and job satisfaction (Cansor et al. 2021).

An intriguing aspect lies in the perceptual disparities between students and teachers regarding their respective schools. Previous studies have identified differences in the perspectives of teachers and students concerning the overall school climate (Mitchell et al. 2010). The correlation between teacher assessments of the overall climate and those of students was found to be nonexistent. Consistent with previous literature, discrepancies in perceptions between students and teachers have been reported. Specifically, teachers reported heightened levels of student engagement and perceived more significant support from fellow educators relative to student reports. These observed differences in reporting the same objective experience may signal underlying power differentials. Teachers may exhibit a more favorable disposition towards the classroom environment owing to their enhanced agency over daily activities and the sequencing of tasks. In contrast, students' perspectives may be less favorable due to their constrained autonomy in determining task prioritization. The manifestation of these divergent roles and resultant power imbalances offers potential insights into the absence of alignment between teacher and student evaluations of the overall climate. This study also advocates for the meticulous consideration by school administrators of the imperative nature of assessing school climate involving both students and teachers. Such a collaborative approach is essential for understanding school climate dynamics, especially in evaluating the efficacy of school improvement endeavors.

Urban students consistently rated every subscale higher compared to their teachers, whereas in the suburban school, students' scores were lower across all subscales compared to their teachers. Notably, significant differences were observed in the student-to-teacher/learning environment and student-to-student subscales in urban school (Keiser & Schulte 2007).

Another noteworthy observation is the belief that private schools exhibit a more positive school climate than public schools. Research examining variations in school climate in American high schools indicates that private schools generally offer more

favorable conditions than their public counterparts (Shakeel & DeAngelis 2018). This research also highlights that private school environments tend to be safer and contribute to the long-term success of their graduates. Notably, distinctions between private and public schools have yet to be extensively explored regarding the school's ethical climate.

By referring to the previous research, the following research hypotheses were examined:

- There is a difference regarding the level of school's ethical climate between teachers and students;
- There is a difference regarding the level of school's ethical climate between private and public schools;
- Schools in Gamping District have different levels of school ethical climate.

### **III. Research Design**

This research employed an explanatory sequential design mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and methods to examine the ethical climate among junior high school students in Yogyakarta. The research design comprised two sequential phases. The initial phase involved collecting quantitative data, followed by a subsequent qualitative phase designed to delve deeper into the findings derived from the quantitative analysis (Creswell & Clark 2006). The quantitative findings that warranted further exploration in the qualitative phase were identified. Initially, a structured questionnaire was employed to gather respondents' perspectives on the school's ethical climate. The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed and used as a basis for further data exploration in the second phase. This process involved interviewing respondents to gain deeper insights into the identified quantitative findings.

#### **III.1. Quantitative Phase**

Based on previous studies, the current study sought to compare teachers' and students' perceptions of the school's ethical climate. Additionally, it assessed and compared the overall school climate levels between public and private junior high schools in Sleman Regency, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

#### **III.2. Population and Sample**

In the initial stage, this research involved students and teachers from 13 middle schools, selecting four schools as the research population. Two of these schools were public, and two others were private, collectively making a total of 1168 individuals as the population. These schools were established and have been operating for over five years. For students to be respondents, they had to meet the following criteria: 1) male or female, 2) registered as at least 11th graders, 3) having attended at least two years at the school, and 4) participating in offline/face-to-face learning. Subsequently,

some students from the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades were sampled using the proportional stratified random sampling technique, with a 5% margin of error based on Isaac and Michael's formula (Sugiyono 2017). According to this formula, the sample size is 291 students. Furthermore, the teacher sample size was determined using convenience sampling techniques, resulting in a sample of 72 teachers selected from the four schools.

### III.3. Data Collection

The data collection instrument used a school ethical climate index questionnaire modified from the one developed by Schulte et al. (2002). The data were collected using a school ethical climate index questionnaire designed on a Likert scale, ranging from "very suitable" to "not suitable," encompassing 44 items as detailed in Table 1.

Dimension	Item	Validity
Students to teachers	Students strive their best in completing assignments.	Valid
	Students follow the teacher's instructions	Valid
	Students often finish tasks late	Not valid
	Students show respect towards the teacher	Valid
	Students actively engage in classroom discussions	Valid
	Students pay attention to the teacher when delivering the material	Valid
	Students ask for help from the teacher when needed	Valid
	Students inform the teacher when they cannot commit as expected	Valid
	Students behave well even when the teacher is not in the classroom	Valid
Student to student	Students feel comfortable discussing with their friends	Valid
	Students behave considering their friends' feelings	Valid
	Students welcome new students at school	Valid
	Student laugh at classmates considered strange.	Not valid
	Students are willing to help their friends	Valid
	Students praise their high-achieving friends.	Valid
	Students help their friends without giving away answers	Valid
	Students contribute to group assignments.	Valid
	Students respect each other	Valid
	Students defend their friends who are bothered by other students	Valid
	Students respect their friends' property rights	Valid
	Student distinguish treatment towards their friends based on what they wear at school	Not valid
	Students respect their friends who receive prestigious awards	Valid
	Students choose to avoid arguments.	Valid
	Students involved in arguments are respected by their peers.	Not valid

Dimension	Item	Validity
Teacher to student	Teachers can be contacted outside of class hours	Valid
	Teachers praise students for good work	Valid
	Teachers help students improve their learning habits	Valid
	Teachers exemplify multiple perspectives to students in viewing a matter	Valid
	Teachers treat students with respect	Valid
	Teachers encourage students to ask questions	Valid
	Teachers provide opportunities for students to practice what they have learned.	Valid
	Teachers are prepared for teaching	Valid
	Teachers provide exemplary behavior for students	Valid
	Teachers and students cooperate well in the classroom	Valid
	Teachers respect students' cultures	Valid
	Teachers test students beyond the taught material	Not Valid
	Teachers serve students equally	Valid
	Teachers assist students with special needs	Valid
	Teachers praise students proportionally (appropriately)	Valid
	Teachers return assignments to students as feedback	Valid
	Students can inquire with their teacher about the grades they received from them	Valid
	Students feel comfortable asking for help from teachers outside of class hours	Valid
	Students can contact teachers when they experience school-related problems	Valid
	Students trust teachers to keep their personal information confidential	Valid
	Teachers encourage students to collaborate	Valid
	Students feel that teachers are less fair in evaluating exams or assignments	Not Valid
	Teachers follow up on feedback from students that is considered good	Valid
	Teachers provide opportunities for students to choose topics or forms of assignments	Valid
Teachers carefully listen when students express their opinions	Valid	
Teachers give students the freedom to have differing opinions from theirs	Valid	

Table 2: The Initial School Ethical Climate Questionnaire. \*Unfavorable question.

The validity and reliability of the student questionnaire were tested by involving 30 students. Based on the validity measurement technique using Corrected Item-Total Correlation, 44 of the 50 developed items were found to be valid. Six items had Corrected Item-Total Correlation scores lower than the r-table value of 0.2353. Meanwhile, the reliability test employed Cronbach's Alpha formula, with a test result of 0.927. The value exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.06, indicating that the questionnaire was



reliable.

On the other hand, the questionnaire for teachers was not tested like the questionnaire for students. It was tested only for readability to five teachers. The reason the readability test only involves teachers is efficiency, as the questionnaire's construct was tested on students to represent the properness of its use for teachers.

#### **III.4. Data Analysis Technique**

The data were analyzed descriptively based on various parameters, including dimensions of the school's ethical climate, respondent groups (teachers and students), and respondent clusters (Middle Schools A, B, C, and D). This analysis provided insights into the overall average achievement of the school's ethical climate score, the average achievement per item, and the average achievement per respondent group and school. Additionally, it allowed the researcher to identify the areas that were already strong and those in need of improvement.

The researchers employed an independent t-test to compare the questionnaire results among student and teacher respondent groups and between private and state schools. In this phase, SPSS software was utilized to assess differences between respondent groups (students and teachers), public and private schools, and among the four schools. To compare between the four schools, researchers utilized ANOVA with multiple comparison analyses.

#### **III.5. Qualitative Phase**

In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted, followed by a focus group discussion (FGD) that involved 20 teachers and 4 principals. The research questions in this phase were formulated based on the findings from the school climate survey. The data were analyzed using interactive models (Miles et al. 2014) with thematic analysis in data condensation. The validity of the research was ensured by examining its credibility, reliability, dependability, and transferability.

### **IV. Results**

#### **IV.1. The Quantitative Data: The Descriptive Data of School Ethical Climate at Middle Schools**

The descriptive data on the school ethical climate at Middle Schools revealed an overall average attainment of 3.285 out of a maximum of 4, equivalent to 82.125%. The score distribution for each school is presented in Table 3, which indicates that student scores were generally lower than the teachers. School B attained the highest overall average score at 3.348, while School A had the lowest at 3.195. Examining the respondent

groups, students at School D had the lowest score compared to the other three schools. Conversely, teacher perceptions at School D obtained the highest score among the four Middle Schools.

Middle Schools	Student's Mean	Teacher's Mean	General Mean
A	3.155	3.236	3.195
B	3.311	3.385	3.348
C	3.282	3.347	3.314
D	3.140	3.425	3.283

Table 3: The Comparison between Students' and Teachers' Rate of the School Ethical Climate.

Next, Table 4 explains the differences in the highest mean achievement between the two survey groups.

Group of Respondents	The Top 3 Highest Mean	Dimension	Item
Student	3.64	Student to teacher	Students show respect towards teachers
	3.50	Student to student	Students are willing to help their friends
	3.43	Student to teacher	Students actively engage in classroom discussions
Teacher	3.57	Teacher to student	Teachers provide exemplary behavior for students
	3.56	Teacher to student	Teachers praise students proportionally (appropriately)
	3.54	Teacher to student	Teachers treat students with respect

Table 4: The Comparison between Students' and Teachers' Highest Mean of Item.

The combined data from the four schools, as indicated in Table 4, reveals that the school ethical climate perceived most positively by students lies within the student-to-teacher and student-to-student dimensions. The three items garnering the highest scores from students' perspectives were their behaviors reflecting respect toward teachers, followed by their willingness to assist peers as the second highest, and their active engagement in discussions as the third highest. None of these items fall under the dimension of teacher-to-student.

In contrast to students, teachers tend to provide higher ratings in the teacher-to-student dimension. In contrast to students, teachers tend to provide higher ratings in the

teacher-to-student dimension. They assigned the highest ratings to items related to their behavior directly, namely exemplary conduct, praise for students, and respect for them.

Furthermore, this research also sheds light on items with the lowest scores. Table 5 presents this information.

Group of Respondent	The 3 Lowest Mean	Dimension	Item
Student	2.89	Teacher to student	Students feel comfortable seeking assistance from teachers outside of class hours
	2.94	Teacher to student	Teachers can be contacted outside of class hours
	2.94	Teacher to student	Teachers follow up on feedback from students that is considered good
Teacher	3.00	Student to student	Students help their friends without giving away answers
	3.04	Student to student	Students behave considering their friends' feelings
	3.06	Student to teacher	Students behave well even when the teacher is not in the classroom

Table 5: The Comparison between Students' and Teachers' Lowest Mean of Item.

As delineated in Table 5, the three indicators of the school's ethical climate that are most pressing to improve from the students' perspective are the extent to which they could seek assistance, contact teachers outside of class hours, and teachers' willingness to follow up on student feedback. These three aspects fall under the teacher-to-student dimension.

In the teachers' group, the three items with the lowest scores belonged to the student-to-student and student-to-teacher dimensions. Implicitly, these lowest scores revealed student behaviors teachers perceived as occurring frequently and needing correction. They pertain to behaviors such as cheating, low empathy towards peers, and misbehavior that occurs when students are unsupervised by teachers in the classroom.

#### IV.2. The Comparison between Teachers' and Students' Views of School's Ethical Climate

After scrutinizing the data descriptively, the researcher tested the hypotheses. Before testing the hypotheses, the researcher initially examined the data normality. The data normalization data are presented in Table 5. Based on the test, the Z kurtosis score was 0.041, and the skewness score was 0.090. Since both the kurtosis and skewness scores were less than 1.96, it could be said that the data followed a normal distribution.

Skewness		Kurtosis	
Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
0.090	0.129	0.041	0.256

Table 6: Data Normality Test.

The next step is to substantiate the first hypothesis, which states that there is a difference in perception regarding the level of school ethical climate between teachers and students. A comparison between the perspectives of teachers and students regarding the school’s ethical climate is outlined in Table 7. The latter indicates homogeneity in the data with a significance test result of 0.541 (greater than 0.05). Additionally, it reveals a disparity between teachers and students, with a significance value of 0.026 (less than 0.05). Hence, the first hypothesis suggesting a difference in perceptions of the school’s ethical climate between teachers and students was accepted.

		Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Teacher and students	Equal variances assumed	0.375	0.541	2.232	358	0.026	4.56946	2.04728	0.543	8.59567
	Equal variances not assumed			2.239	105.247	0.027	4.56946	2.04111	0.522	8.61649

Table 7: Independent Sample Test for Teacher and Student.

**IV.3. The Comparison between School Ethical Climate at Public and Private Middle Schools**

Both Middle schools A and B were public ones, whereas private foundations administered two other schools. The research findings in Table 8 indicate homogeneity in the groups, as evidenced by a Sig test of 0.208 (greater than 0.05). Moreover, Table 8 demonstrates that no distinction was found in the school’s ethical climate between public and private schools, as the significance value of 0.590 was greater than 0.05. Therefore, the second hypothesis was rejected.

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Private and public school	Equal variances assumed	1.593	0.208	-0.539	358	0.590	-0.90003	1.67078	-4.186	2.386
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.551	320.782	0.582	-0.90003	1.63320	-4.113	2.313

Table 8: Independent Sample Test for Private Schools and Public Schools.

#### IV.4. The Comparison of School Ethical Climates among Four Junior High Schools

To ascertain the potential disparity in the ethical climate across the four junior high schools, the subsequent analysis involved using ANOVA coupled with multiple comparison procedures using Least Significance Difference (LSD). Before the analysis, a homogeneity test was performed, revealing a significant value of 0.01. Since this value was less than 0.05, differences did exist among the four schools. As shown in Table 9, the third hypothesis of this research was accepted.

All Schools	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between groups	3866.088	3	1288.696	5.600	.001
Within groups	81923.512	356	230.122		
Total	85789.600	359			

Table 9. Anova Comparison Test among four schools.

To delve deeper into the distinctions between the four schools, multiple comparison tests were carried out, yielding a result as outlined in Table 10. According to these findings, three groups of schools exhibited differences, including variances between Middle Schools A and B at a significance of 0.00, Middle Schools A and C at a significance of 0.005, and Middle Schools B and D at a significance of 0.16.

(I) Group3	(J) Group3	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Middle School A	Middle School B	-7.33595*	2.05121	0.000	-11.3700	-3.3019
	Middle School C	-5.86425*	2.05121	0.005	-9.8983	-1.8302
	Middle School D	-0.16991	2.93452	0.954	-5.9411	5.6013
Middle School B	Middle School A	7.33595*	2.05121	0.000	3.3019	11.3700
	Middle School C	1.47170	2.08373	0.480	-2.6263	5.5697
	Middle School D	7.16604*	2.95734	0.016	1.3500	12.9821
Middle School C	Middle School A	5.86425*	2.05121	0.005	1.8302	9.8983
	Middle School B	-1.47170	2.08373	0.480	-5.5697	2.6263
	Middle School D	5.69434	2.95734	0.055	-0.1217	11.5104
Middle School D	Middle School A	.16991	2.93452	0.954	-5.6013	5.9411
	Middle School B	-7.16604*	2.95734	0.016	-12.9821	-1.3500
	Middle School C	-5.69434	2.95734	0.055	-11.5104	0.1217

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 10: Multiple Comparison Tests of Middle School's Ethical Climate Using LSD.

Some notable findings from Table 9 are the significant differences in the level of school ethical climate between Middle Schools A and B, both of which were public schools. However, no significant differences were found between Middle Schools C and D, which both are private Islamic-based schools.

#### IV.5. The Qualitative Data

The researcher proceeded with the qualitative phase to explore the findings of the quantitative results further. FGDs, which included four school principals and five teachers from each participating school, were used to collect data. In total, the FGDs were attended by 24 participants. The topics discussed in these FGDs were directed toward the strongest and weakest items based on the survey results in the quantitative research stage. Moreover, FGD aimed to confirm the results of hypothesis testing in the quantitative research phase, primarily related to the similarities and differences in ethical climates among the four schools. Below are the results of the thematic analysis of the Focus Group Discussion conducted with the 20 teachers and four principals.

#### IV.6. Teaching Good Manners Through Exemplarity and Observation Task

The descriptive quantitative data indicates that the item with the highest mean among student respondents is students' behavior showing respect towards teachers. On the other hand, the item with the highest mean among teacher respondents is exemplary behavior. FGD revealed teachers' views on instilling politeness in students, especially towards elders.

Most teachers in the FGD emphasized the cultural context of Indonesia, particularly in Javanese culture, prioritizing politeness. As part of Javanese society, teachers in Yogyakarta perceived Javanese individuals as known for their refined speech and behavior. Therefore, the introduction and cultivation of polite behavior, especially towards elders, stood out as patterns emphasized by teachers in students. This situation influenced the perspectives of the four schools regarding the importance of teaching politeness to students. These good manners at school were instilled since the school orientation period when students were introduced to the school environment for the first time. Learning contracts, dissemination of school rules, and reward and punishment systems were implemented in all four schools.

However, the majority of teachers agreed that teaching good manners to students was challenging. In relation to that, Teacher W from Junior High School A argued:

Children nowadays are smarter and can even know more things before us. They can watch YouTube, social media. We say something like this, but if the reality is different in other media, well, they can draw their conclusions. But, as teachers, we inform them, if you do this and that, the results will be like this later on. Look at successful people, why they can succeed, there must be hard work, and they listen to their parents. It's like that (Authors' data resources).

Some teachers believed that setting an example was more effective in instilling politeness. They acknowledged that students trusted actions more than mere lectures or advice. All teachers were aware of being constantly observed by students, prompting them to exercise caution in their actions, including their attire and speech. To engage students more effectively, teachers shared personal experiences or anecdotes from people they knew to inspire them.

Teacher S from Middle School D emphasized that as a teacher in charge of Social Sciences, she told her students about the norms and laws of social life. She admitted that she had never explicitly told her students on how to be polite towards teachers or older individuals. Instead, she assigned her students to study examples of societal norms as part of her teaching approach. Teacher S consistently reminded her students of the norms and laws governing social life in her subject. Similarly, Teacher N from Junior High School B shared the practice of online learning, including collectively correcting any inappropriate action when it was identified during this process.

#### **IV.7. A Personal Approach is Viewed as More Effective in Enforcing Discipline Compared to Physical Punishment and Harsh Warning**

The Municipal Education Office in Sleman Regency recently promoted student well-being to change teachers' mindset in shaping student discipline. One initiative was discouraging physical punishment and harsh warnings to students. Many teachers in the FGDs expressed their concerns about transitioning from traditional forms of punishment to an awareness-based approach. They were exploring alternative methods to shape student discipline.

Although teachers admitted to facing difficulties in shifting from old approaches to new ones, most believed that traditional methods were no longer relevant for changing student behavior. They felt more training was needed to replace punishment with approaches prioritizing personal well-being. The principals at Junior High Schools C and D echoed similar sentiments, urging teachers to avoid punitive measures in student development and instead adopt a more personalized approach. Both principals acknowledged the difficulty of this task, recognizing it as a contemporary challenge for teachers.

One of the teachers from Junior High School B, with the initial T, conveyed:

We can't do this and that like in the past. Students shouldn't be disciplined harshly; that's the current directive. Punishments are also strictly limited. If there's a student who doesn't do their homework or isn't serious enough, I'll comment, 'Wow, you're really smart, so smart that you're not serious about doing your homework'. I did it so that he would realize, you know (Authors' data resources).

The personal approach was considered more effective in raising students' awareness. About this, teachers confirmed that warmth in interaction with students was an important asset. One form of closeness between teachers and students was the use of nicknames given by students to teachers, such as calling a female teacher "my mom" as mentioned by Teacher A from Junior High School B.

#### **IV.8. Economic Disparity Impact the Social Interactions and Victimization**

Teachers strive to keep students engaged in discussions while working on school assignments. Teacher R, a physical education teacher from Junior High School B, emphasized the importance of cooperation in his lessons, such as during volleyball games. During group assignments, teachers promptly addressed students who needed to participate more actively in their groups. As a preventive measure, the teacher provided guidelines to students before assigning the project. Those who failed to engage actively might not receive optimal scores.

However, it was acknowledged that gaps or barriers were in the way of student interactions, preventing some study groups from being cohesive. In response, teachers proactively sought solutions by initiating discussions in groups of students that seemed to need some attention.

Furthermore, the FGD revealed that economic disparities sometimes hindered student interaction. In this regard, Teacher A from Junior High School C conveyed that student interactions between different learning groups in their school faced some obstacles due to the stiffness in the interaction between students in the special class and those in the regular class. Junior High School C is a private Islamic school that offers special classes, namely the Tahfiz class. Operating under the patronage of an Islamic organization, this school featured this distinctive program. Students in this class were targeted to memorize the 30 chapters or juz in the Quran. This specialized class adhered to



specific methodologies, emphasizing the proper *tartil*, as characterized by pronunciation precision, clarity, and a measured pace in reading the Quran.

The difference between these classes and regular classes was in the emphasis on Quran memorization and higher facility standards, leading parents of students in these classes to pay higher fees. In other words, students in Tahfiz classes mostly come from middle to upper-middle economic backgrounds. The school was concerned about fostering smoother interactions between students in Tahfiz and regular classes but was still actively seeking effective methods.

Still related to economic disparities, teachers in Junior High Schools A and B recounted that those perpetrators of victimization in their schools were often students from disadvantaged families. One form of victimization was coercing small food items from peers. However, according to these teachers, this behavior was not solely due to economic factors but also to insufficient attention from parents.

#### **IV.9. The Importance of Monitoring Student Behavior by Teachers and Parents at Home, as Well as Community Involvement**

Teachers commonly advocated for the prevention of negative behaviors, particularly juvenile delinquency and bullying, including extortion against younger students. From the FGDs, similarities in the situations faced by two state junior high schools (Junior High School A and B) were revealed. They acknowledged that they had to deal with stigma or an image tarnished by their students' misbehavior. Over the past two years, schools have benefitted from the COVID-19 pandemic, as it minimized opportunities for students to interact face-to-face with alumni with a history of problematic behavior.

Teacher R from Junior High School B said that the stigma attached to his school had now been firmly eroded by the school policy, which strictly prohibited students from using gang symbols and other negative associations, including once famous school aliases. Annually, the Indonesian National Army, whose headquarters is near the school, works with the school. They offer instruction to deter juvenile delinquency, particularly concerning adolescent criminal activity.

In contrast to other institutions, junior School D exhibited less pronounced distinctions before and after the pandemic. In an interview with the school's principal, Mrs. R, she noted that the students' behavior at her school remained relatively tranquil, with no significant challenges such as brawls or comparable actions. This stability was attributed, in part, to the students at Middle School D also attending an Islamic boarding school, which afforded them greater control over the students.

#### **IV.10. Pressure from Schools, Parents, and Local Government toward Student Influences the Cheating Behavior**

Cheating remains a prevalent form of negative behavior among students, as acknowledged by teachers despite their efforts to emphasize the importance of honesty.

Teacher A from Middle School D pointed out that the complexity of exam questions sometimes triggered students to resort to copying from their peers. He acknowledged that exam questions occasionally diverged from what was discussed in the classrooms, as the local education agency provided them. They might not necessarily be the same as the teacher's instruction. In response, Teacher A instructed his students that while the questions in the summative evaluation might differ, they remained within the coverage of what he had taught. This approach aimed to encourage students to rely on their notes and consult the textbooks to prepare for questions from the local education agency.

Teachers also perceived pressure from their parents as a contributing factor to the prevalence of cheating behavior among children. Teacher S from Middle School A, for example, noted that students' lack of self-confidence could sometimes be traced back to their family situations. In one instance, a student who served as a crew for the school's regular ceremony exhibited nervousness about reading the text of Indonesia's 1945 Constitution, fearing he might falter. The teacher provided guidance, encouraged the student to proceed, and offered reassurance.

Teacher S highlighted that students might harbor fear or embarrassment about seeking help from teachers when they struggled with homework or found the material challenging. Consequently, some students resorted to cheating because they felt they lacked the knowledge.

During the pandemic, as students engaged in remote learning beyond teachers' direct supervision, they might opt for shortcuts by accessing internet search engines to answer questions or complete assignments. Another area requiring improvement was student discipline in fulfilling assignments.

#### **IV.11. Teacher-Student Communication Outside Regular Class Hour**

When inquired about teachers' openness to communication with students beyond regular class hours, most teachers in the FGD expressed their willingness, albeit with some limitations. Teachers utilized WhatsApp groups that included students and even parents for communication outside of class hours. Through the messaging application, teachers engaged in communication, which might include reminders of assignments or homework. When giving the reminders, teachers provided questions or instructions along with the relevant page numbers in worksheets or books that students needed to focus on.

Teacher N from Middle School A, for example, noted that children were not hesitant to pose questions to the teacher. As a Mathematics teacher, she encouraged students not to fear or be traumatized by numbers. Beyond regular class hours, students from the ninth grade also received additional support to prepare for exams, a practice acknowledged by teachers at the three other schools. However, they acknowledged that they could not always reply to the questions via WhatsApp due to household responsibilities. They thought they would be more capable of providing comprehensive answers when meeting with students face-to-face. Teachers also recognized that many students were hesitant to

approach teachers directly and might prefer asking the class president or their peers for assistance.

#### **IV.12. The Prominent Actions to form the School Ethical Climate**

The hypothesis that public and private schools have different ethical climates was rejected. However, multiple comparison analyses found a difference, particularly between Junior High Schools A and B, both of which have public status. No significant difference was found between Junior High Schools C and D. Both share similar characteristics, including having fewer students than Junior High Schools A and B and being Islam-based.

The highest achievement in the level of school ethical climate was attained by Junior High School B. Although the FGD did not explicitly discuss this finding, implicitly, specific patterns were found to be carried out by teachers from Junior High School B to mitigate adolescent delinquency. These include:

- a. Preventing violence by inspecting students' belongings, including school gang attributes and gangs outside of school;
- b. Addressing and approaching students when they engage in disruptive behavior during learning (including during online learning);
- c. Avoiding punitive actions and preferring a personal approach to students who commit violations;
- d. Providing clear guidance on task completion, including group assignments so that teams can undergo smooth collaboration processes;
- e. Collaborating with community groups to anticipate violent behaviors exhibited by their students.

### **V. Discussion**

This research reinforces the findings of previous research that students' perception scores regarding the school climate were lower than the teachers. This discrepancy showed that teachers are more favorable to the school's ethical climate than the students. This difference could be attributed to the fact that teachers played a more dominant role in shaping the classroom and school climate. It is, therefore, reasonable to acknowledge that teacher characteristics and institutional roles significantly contribute to determining the ethical climate within the classroom (Brackett et al. 2009). Hence, this dominance naturally exerted influence over the observed disparities in perception. Various studies further corroborated this finding, indicating that the level of the teacher's perceived ethical climate tended to be high (Demirtas-Zorbaz & Hoard 2018; Torabian & Davoudi 2016).

Additionally, this finding signified an optimistic scenario for education, as a high teacher ethical climate contributed to fostering students' trust in their teachers (Çayak & Eskici 2023).

Moreover, when students' perceived ethical climate score is lower than that of teachers, their ethical behavior tends to be adversely affected. This correlation underscores the importance of addressing the gaps in perceived ethical climate to foster improved conduct among students (Birtch & Chiang 2014; Luo et al. 2007; Rothman 2017).

In Javanese society, adhering firmly to propriety, demonstrating proper respect towards others, and upholding politeness are esteemed cultural values that preserve a harmonious social milieu (Subandi & Good 2018). The research findings indicate that the values contributing to the formation of self-control among the Javanese include propriety or etiquette, honesty, discipline, and trustworthiness (Trismayangsari et al. 2023). Referring to these values, currently, what stands out prominently is etiquette, while other values still require significant cultivation.

One form of antagonistic behavior frequently cited by teachers is cheating. Peer cheating is recognized as a significant contributor to students' academic dishonesty. This behavior is caused, in part, by cultures characterized by high power distance and collectivism (Zhao et al. 2022). Therefore, addressing cheating behavior requires fostering academic integrity that involves peers and the cultural context in which students are situated.

From a policy perspective, the central government in Indonesia has flexible regulations regarding exams compared to before. The national exam is now more focused on assessing the quality of schools rather than being a determinant for graduation or the sole requirement for admission to the next level. However, local governments in the Special Region of Yogyakarta Province still implement regional-level exams. This exam has led to final exam questions perceived as not representative of the material teachers teach in all schools.

Despite the cultural influences and pressure from parents and local government to achieve good grades, academic dishonesty occurs partly due to low intrinsic motivation (Qiu & Li 2024). Intrinsic motivation is sustained when the three interrelated factors are fulfilled: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Competence entails effectively interacting with one's surroundings, employing one's talents and capabilities, and encountering proficiency and advancement in one's pursuits. Autonomy entails actions being self-supported and self-steered rather than enforced or pressured. Relatedness involves establishing significant relationships with others and nurturing a feeling of belonging and reciprocal assistance in social settings.

As student progress to higher levels in their education, their maturity increases, facilitating a more natural embrace of positive (Tartari 2018; Zuković & Stojadinović 2021). However, it is essential to recognize that junior high school-level children, like those in the present study, still require training to apply self-discipline effectively. Despite the expected increase in maturity, targeted education and guidance remain crucial to instilling the skills necessary for this age group's practical application of discipline.

Teacher oversight is imperative, as corroborated by previous research indicating

the indispensability of both teacher and peer support in mitigating the propensity for student victimization (Coyle et al. 2021). This view highlighted the imperative for strong positive discipline strategies within these educational institutions. The goal is to cultivate intrinsic motivation in students, encouraging adherence to established rules and social norms both within and beyond the school setting, thereby diminishing the reliance on continuous supervision or external enforcement.

However, cultivating awareness and intrinsic motivation is difficult to achieve through negative punishment (Martin & MacNeil 2024). Punishment hinders ethical development by undermining positive values and encouraging a fixation on self-interest rather than considering the impact on others. This cycle of punishment leads students to become excessively focused on finding loopholes and technicalities rather than actively engaging in problem-solving. In China, children experiencing a negative parenting style showed more aggressive behavior compared to those experiencing a positive parenting style (Afdal et al. 2020). Rather than punishment, it is recommended to teach students how to actively listen, self-soothe, and empathize with others' perspectives.

The FGD in this study found that a personal approach to students is more effective than punishment. The restorative approach, recommended by many educators, is slowly gaining acceptance among teachers in Indonesia. However, it must be acknowledged that this approach requires time and cannot yield instant results, necessitating a close relationship between students and teachers (Lewis-Pankratz 2020). Moreover, positive interactions and relationships between students and teachers held the potential to influence classroom dynamics and undoubtedly contributed to student achievement (Duta et al. 2015). Teachers' proficiency in effective communication and establishing positive communication channels allowed teachers to exert more influence on students as desired (Zhanabekova 2014). When students thought their teachers were approachable and easy to communicate with, this fostered an environment where student-teacher interactions cultivated mutual trust and respect (Brown et al. 2005; Dirks & Ferrin 2002).

On the other hand, feedback or suggestions from students received limited follow-up from teachers or schools. There was this perception that teachers were only approachable during working hours and outside of class hours. Consequently, students might feel uncomfortable seeking help from their teachers. However, recognizing teachers' genuine concern for students and their willingness to assist and support them could profoundly impact students' learning experiences and academic trajectories (Umarji et al. 2021; Zhang et al. 2019).

Moral education is the responsibility of teachers, parents, and society. The previous research mentioned that the relationship between parent-child interaction, gender, and aggression behavior in children is complex and heavily influenced by the cultural background of their family (Dewi et al. 2015). Furthermore, economic deprivation within the family can lead to depression in children (Tsheole et al. 2023). Families experiencing conflict have been found to influence the decline in adolescent subjective well-being

(Jiang et al. 2022). Schools should recognize the home situations of students and provide appropriate interventions. Schools can embrace the local community to recontextualize local values or philosophies to raise collective awareness of harmony to eradicate violence. Ethics is a subjective, institutional, and social value that enhances human capacities and well-being. Ethics encompasses dual realities. It may differ from the values of each individual and society. An individual's social and cultural backgrounds determine, guide, and control ethical awareness and responsibilities (Sherchan et al. 2024).

Lastly, schools have demonstrated effective practices in fostering a school ethical climate, including minimizing violence, managing student behavior during learning, utilizing restorative alternatives instead of punitive measures, and involving parents and the community. Overall, this research did not find differences in the ethical climate of schools between public and private schools. This finding could be attributed to the similarity in cultural settings among the four schools, which are based on Javanese culture. However, specifically, School B has a higher ethical climate level than one public school and two other private schools.

The efforts made by Junior High School B are under the direction of the school principal. The principal plays a crucial role in shaping school culture, as the moral climate of the school reflects the principal's modeling of ethical values, along with the faculty's character and commitment (Martin & MacNeil 2024). Teachers exhibit warm and open behavior at the classroom level, encouraging student participation, especially in group work. The willingness to collaborate in the classroom is closely linked to the teacher's role in fostering relationships. When teachers create a friendly and open environment, students are more likely to collaborate and support each other in the classrooms voluntarily (van Vemde et al. 2022). The ethical conduct displayed by teachers and principals is valuable in cultivating a favorable climate. It is anticipated that this positive atmosphere will positively contribute to students' academic performance and achievements in schools (Akman 2021; Cleveland & Sink 2017) and also their ethical climate (Brackett et al. 2009; Joseph et al. 2009; Peterson 2002).

## **VI. Conclusion**

The discrepancy between students' and teachers' perceptions of the school climate highlights the importance of addressing these gaps to improve student behavior and ethical conduct. This research encompasses various aspects that shape the school's ethical climate, such as teachers' and principals' roles, family and cultural influence, and policy. This research emphasizes the multifaceted nature of promoting ethical behavior and student well-being in educational settings. It underscores the importance of considering cultural, social, and institutional factors in designing effective interventions to support students' academic and ethical development.

Practical strategies for promoting academic integrity include minimizing punitive

measures, fostering positive peer relationships, and creating restorative alternatives to address misconduct.

While central government policies in Indonesia have aimed to create more flexible examination systems, challenges remain at the local level, particularly regarding regional-level exams. Addressing these challenges requires collaboration between central and local authorities to ensure fair and representative assessment practices.

## **VII. Research Implication**

The results of this study indicate the importance of teachers' knowledge and skills regarding inclusivity and creating a sense of safety in schools. This finding aligns with previous research that found a direct influence of victimization on teacher and peer support. For example, teachers need training in forming student groupings during lessons and extracurricular activities. Both are necessary to diminish exclusivity among students, mainly due to economic disparities. Teachers also need ongoing training on how to anticipate and handle conflicts and victimization among students.

The second implication is the importance of school principals and teachers building ethical leadership. The results show that ethical leaders positively affect educators' perceptions of an authoritative school climate, which in turn affects their classroom conditions and students' aggressive attitudes negatively.

The third implication is related to cheating behavior. Parents' pride in their child's good grades affects students' self-concept, leading them to try to achieve good grades. Parents need to reduce pressure on their children to achieve good grades consistently. Similarly, teachers need to change how they appreciate students so that they value their hard work more. Furthermore, educational policies in the Special Region of Yogyakarta must be improved, including organizing end-of-semester exams by the local Education Office. The exam does not always test the same material as the teacher taught because the teacher can develop their content flexibly. In other words, there are discrepancies between the material taught by teachers and examinations by the local government. There is a need to improve the mechanism for creating test items by involving teachers to ensure that the questions evaluate what the teacher has taught

The fourth implication is related to teacher and student communication. Schools have to establish agreements on timing and service hours to facilitate smoother communication between teachers and students, ensuring that each party understands their rights and responsibilities regarding homework or other school tasks.

The fifth implication of this study is that schools should prioritize children's physical and emotional well-being, particularly those from low-income households. In this study, poverty is identified as one of the primary causes of youth crime. To assist low-income families, local governments must apply economic initiatives in addition to disciplinary actions done by schools. The long-term solution is for schools to organize extracurricular

activities that focus on life skills and have economic value so that children may contribute to the wellbeing of their families later on. The recent free lunch offered by Indonesia's new president, which should prioritize these populations, may be a temporary solution.

As the last implication of this study, the local education authorities need to develop a framework together with schools and the community to anticipate adolescent delinquency leading to criminal acts by promoting and recontextualizing the local wisdom values. The formal approach needs to be integrated with a cultural approach so that the public has a collective awareness to safeguard their children from all forms of juvenile delinquency. One relevant Javanese philosophy that can be popularized is 'Rukun agawe santosa, crah agawe bubrah' (Harmony promotes peace, but conflict leads to destruction).

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