

# Analyzing Classroom Climate From Teachers' Perspectives: A Qualitative Study

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This study aimed to determine teachers' perspectives about classroom climate by investigating teachers' descriptions of a positive classroom climate, their practices towards a positive classroom climate, the challenges they encounter in creating a positive classroom climate, and their suggestions for a positive classroom climate. The research adopted the basic qualitative research design. The study group consisted of 45 teachers, and the data was collected via a questionnaire form composed of four open-ended questions. Based on the content analysis, sub-categories and categories were identified for each sub-problem, and frequencies were reported. Findings showed that teachers regarded classroom climate as a multidimensional construct and their descriptions of a positive classroom climate included a wide range of interrelated in-class and out-class variables. It was also determined that teachers substantially focused on instructional practices to enhance the classroom climate. The most frequently encountered challenge was related to students' disinterest, followed by uninvolved parenting. For a better classroom climate, teachers suggested improvements regarding all stakeholders, instructional practices, social, emotional, and physical environment, and rules. Findings are discussed based on previous research, and suggestions are offered for further studies.

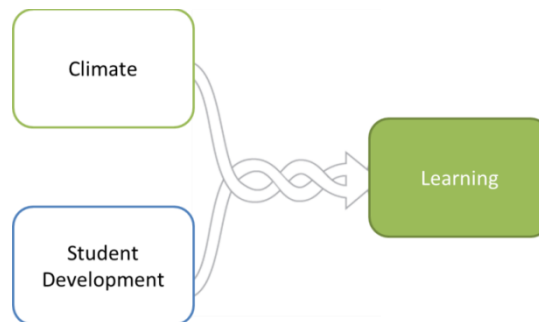
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## INTRODUCTION

The qualities that make some classes more challenging to teach than others or the differences in teacher-student relations have always been questioned. According to teachers, these differences stem from the fact that classes have a "climate" defined as the distinctive personality affecting learning (Anderson, 1970). The classroom climate is regarded as the learning environment where much of the academic and social learning takes place in schools (Rowe et al., 2010). Although teachers and researchers have remarkably focused on students' development regarding the desired learning outcomes and academic achievement, it was realized that those measures could not reflect the whole educational process. In this sense, the classroom environment is recognized as an essential component that may complete this picture. With a strong influence on the overall development of students, it cannot be disregarded by those who seek to enhance school effectiveness (Fraser, 2001).

For a long while, there has been a growing acknowledgment of the essential roles played by social and cultural factors in learning and development (Mahn, 1999). It is necessary to enhance students' intellectual and creative skills; however, it is also essential to acknowledge students as social and emotional beings. In this sense, holistic student development and classroom climate are two concepts at the core of the learning process, as their interaction within the classroom climate impacts learning and performance (Ambrose et al., 2010).



**Figure 1.** Interactive Effect of Student Development and Course Climate on Learning (Ambrose et al., 2010)

This interaction may be explained through humanistic psychology, which arose as a countermovement against the reductionistic approach in psychology that categorized human behavior into responses and instincts and overlooked what basically differentiated human beings (Hamachek, 1985). Humanistic psychologists and educators underline the positive influence of emotional integration on learning. Humanistic education necessitates interdependence of the cognitive and affective elements of learning since long-lasting learning occurs when knowledge is related to learners' affective states (Bell & Schniedewind, 1987).

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Social constructivist and sociocultural theory also account for the benefit of classroom climate in learning gains. As a social constructivist, Vygotsky (1934, 1986) argued that learning is a culturally embedded and socially mediated process, and discourse has a fundamental influence on learning (as cited in Murphy et al., 2011). According to Vygotsky, social interaction is expected to promote development through the guidance provided by interaction with people (Rogoff, 1999). Cognitive development theories also rely on social interaction for the analysis of cognitive growth and learning. As a constructivist, Piaget (1965) also asserted that children actively participate in their own developmental process and learn through activity and social interactions (as cited in Wentzel & Watkins, 2011). For Piaget, peer interactions contribute to the construction of social and moral feelings, values, and social and intellectual competences of children (DeVries, 1997).

Research on educational environments originated from the earlier work of Lewin and Murray and their followers (Fraser, 2012a). Lewin's (1936) work on field theory conceded that the environment and its interplay with the characteristics of people are principal determinants of human behavior (as cited in Fraser, 2012b). With the work of Walberg (Learning Environment Inventory) and Moos (Classroom Environment Scale), research on classroom learning environments has increased rapidly (Liu & Fraser, 2013). Following these pioneering studies, research as to two different programs of learning environments emerged, including the Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (Wubbels and Levy 1993) in the Netherlands and the Individualized Classroom Environment Questionnaire (Fraser and Fisher 1982) in Australia and this line of research began to develop in many parts of the world (Adamski et al., 2013; Fraser, 2012a; Fraser, 2012b).

Despite being simultaneously developed and logically linked concepts, classroom and school-level environments are substantially independent areas (Fraser, 2012a). The concept of classroom climate is also referred to as classroom environment, atmosphere, social atmosphere, or social-psychological environment in educational research (Dorman et al., 2006; Rowe et al., 2010). As a comprehensive construct, the researchers define a wide range of variables that contribute to the construct of classroom climate. According to Sinclair and Fraser (2002), cooperation, teacher support, task orientation, involvement, and equity are the components of classroom climate. On the other hand, Freiberg and Stein (1999) classified those variables as the physical environment, the social system in the classroom, the orderly classroom environment, and expectations on student outcomes. Muijs and Reynolds (2001) regarded classroom relationships and the physical environment as essential aspects of classroom climate. Based on the literature review, Çengel-Schoville et al. (2021) defined three variables that influence the climate within a classroom; namely, relationships, systems' maintenance, and change and goal orientation.

In the literature base, there is research with a focus on the development and use of classroom environment instruments (Fisher & Fraser, 1981; Fraser, 1998; Fraser & Fisher, 1986; MacLeod & Fraser, 2010), analysis of factors that influence classroom environment (Dorman, 2008; Fisher et al., 1997; Mucherah, 2003), relationships between student outcomes and the classroom environment (Allen & Fraser, 2007; Barksdale et al., 2021; Dorman, 2001; Spearman & Watt, 2013; Teh & Fraser, 1994), and investigation of teacher and student perceptions (Fisher & Fraser, 1983; Gillen et al., 2011). A review of the national literature indicates that research on classroom climate has substantially focused on its relationships with a range of teacher qualities such as classroom management styles (Yalçın, 2020), discipline approaches of teachers (Kaya, 2019), teacher stress (Kolaşınlı, 2019), and classroom climate. Additionally, some research focused on instructors' competences to create a positive classroom climate (Ekici, 2018; Ertuğrul, 2017). Some studies examined the relationships between classroom climate and student outcomes, including student achievement (Baştepe, 2012; Karşı, 2012; Kızılhan, 2016; Sungur & Güngören 2009), motivational beliefs and attitudes (Ansoy, 2007), self-efficacy (Örük, 2018), problem-solving skills (Canpolat et al., 2012) and bullying (Han & Demirtaş, 2021; Raskauskas et al., 2010). Furthermore, there are also studies performed to adapt or develop tools for determining perceptions on classroom climate in Turkey (Gezer & Şahin, 2017; Özüdoğru & Aksu, 2019; Sagkal et al., 2015). Overall, previous studies have yielded results that underline the critical role of classroom climate in student development. On the other hand, this research seeks to comprehensively analyze classroom climate by investigating teachers' perspectives, experiences, and suggestions to create a positive classroom environment. Revealing teachers' descriptions and practices is expected to give clues about their priorities in creating a positive learning environment. Additionally, seeking teachers' challenges and suggestions for a better learning environment may contribute to conceptualizing classroom climate by

revealing the variables influencing the learning environment. By offering recommendations based on the research results, it is also aimed to contribute to both practitioners and researchers in terms of in-class activities and classroom climate literature.

### Research Problems

This study aims to determine teachers' perspectives on the classroom climate. Within this main purpose, answers to 4 sub-problems were sought. These sub-problems are as follows:

1. How do teachers describe a positive classroom climate?
2. What are teachers' practices towards creating a positive classroom climate?
3. What are the challenges faced by teachers in terms of enhancing a positive classroom climate?
4. What are teachers' suggestions for a positive classroom climate?

## METHOD

### Research Design

This study sought to describe teachers' perspectives on classroom climate in detail. The research is designed as a basic qualitative study providing rich and deep information about the classroom climate. As the most common form, a basic qualitative study aims to reveal and interpret the meanings people construct while understanding their experiences, lives, and worlds from the participants' perspectives (Ravitch & Carl, 2019).

### Study Group

The maximum diversity, i.e., maximum variation, sampling technique was adopted, and teachers with different branches, years of experience, education levels, and school types were included in the study group to enrich data. The study group consisted of 45 teachers. The data saturation was considered in determining the number of teachers in the study group. Table 1 presents the demographics of the teachers in the study group.

**Table 1.** Teachers' Demographics

Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	33	73.3
Male	12	26.7
Education level		
Undergraduate	34	75.6
Graduate	11	24.4
Branch		
Mathematics	9	20.0
English	6	13.3
Classroom	5	11.1
Science	3	6.7
Turkish	3	6.7
Social studies	3	6.7
Other branches*	16	35.5
Experience		
0-5 years	10	22.0
6-10 years	12	26.7
11-15 years	11	24.4
16-20 years	4	8.9
21 years and more	8	17.8
School type		
Primary school	9	20.0
Secondary school	27	60.0
High school	9	20.0

\*Note: Other branches include Physical Education, Geography, Religious Culture, and Moral Knowledge, Physics, Visual Arts, Chemistry, Technology, and Design, and Turkish Language and Literature

## *Data Collection Tool*

A questionnaire composed of two parts was used in the study. The first part included demographic questions to elicit information about teachers' branches, years of experience, education levels, and school types, while the second part was composed of four open-ended questions. Open-ended questions were preferred in order to obtain flexible and rich data. Thereby, all possible answers related to the research questions could be examined and analyzed in depth. Although responses to open-ended questions are longer and more detailed, the analysis is more difficult due to the unsystematic and unstandardized quality of the data (Patton, 2002). The questionnaire form was prepared by the researchers and sent to three experts in curriculum and instruction, three experts in measurement and evaluation, and an expert in the Turkish language. While all curriculum and instruction experts stated that the form was suitable in terms of content, one of them suggested revising an item to enhance understandability. Similarly, one of the measurement and evaluation experts offered a suggestion related to the understandability of an item, while the other two experts suggested no changes. The Turkish language expert found the form understandable and suggested adding a punctuation mark. Considering the experts' suggestions, the researchers revised the questionnaire form. Finally, two teachers were asked to examine the intelligibility and applicability of the form, and the form was considered applicable without any changes. Before collecting data, ethics committee approval was obtained. For data collection, the teachers in the study group were informed about the purpose of the research, and the questionnaire form was sent to voluntary teachers via e-mail in the spring term of the 2021-2022 academic year.

## *Data Analysis*

Content analysis was carried out to analyze the data. In content analysis, the goal is to identify the concepts and relationships obtained from the data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Qualitative content analysis has been defined as "any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings" (Patton, 2002, p. 453). In this research, themes were created based on the content of the open-ended questions. Sub-categories and categories were identified based on the answers under each theme. Sub-categories and categories were identified by examining the literature and teacher responses under each item in the questionnaire. While determining the sub-categories, the researchers performed the content analysis individually.

Some stages should be followed for reliability and validity in qualitative research. In this study, dependability was examined to ensure internal reliability and confirmability to ensure external reliability. For the sake of internal validity and external validity, credibility and transferability were examined respectively (Arslan, 2022; Guba, 1981; İlhan, 2021; Patton, 2002; Ravitch & Carl, 2019; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). The procedures followed to this end are presented below based on the literature.

The consistency between the codes created by the researchers was examined for dependability. Dependability refers to consistency regarding data collection, coding, and interpretation. Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula  $[(\text{Agreement} / (\text{Agreement} + \text{Disagreement}))]$  was used for the calculation of the consistency in coding. The intercoder agreement was found to be 85%. As the percentage was over 80%, it can be stated that the coding was consistent (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researchers discussed the differences in coding, and a consensus was reached on the related sub-categories. The sub-categories were counted, and categories were arranged and presented in descending order. Since confirmability requires examining objectivity, the opinion of a field expert was also obtained for some of the codes.

Credibility is closely related to triangulation (Guba, 1981), and in this study, multiple researchers were involved for the consistency of codes. Additionally, obtaining expert opinions is also considered within the scope of credibility. For transferability ensured for external validity, the data collection and analysis processes were reported in detail. All participants were carefully identified for collecting a rich data set, and the demographics of the participants were also presented in a detailed table (Table 1).

## **RESULTS**

This section presents the results based on the sub-problems of the research. Accordingly, teachers' descriptions of the positive classroom climate, their practices, the challenges they faced, and their suggestions for creating a positive classroom climate are examined.

*Sub-problem 1: How Do Teachers Describe a Positive Classroom Climate?*

For the first sub-problem, six categories were identified under the theme of teachers' descriptions of a positive classroom climate. The categories and sub-categories are displayed in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The Theme of Teachers' Descriptions of a Positive Classroom Climate

Category	Sub-Category	f
The social and emotional environment	Democratic class	16
	Supporting learning	3
	Safe and peaceful	2
	Solution-oriented	2
	Welcoming interest and emotions	2
	Enhancing the sense of belonging	1
	Disciplined class	1
Students	Motivated to learn	12
	Relaxed and happy	9
	Student preparedness to learn	3
	A homogenous group of students	1
Instructional process	Active student participation	6
	Enhancing student cooperation/group work	6
	Clear and effective instruction	4
	Student-centered	3
	Enhancing higher-order thinking skills	2
	Gamification	1
Relationships	Parent support for students	7
	Teacher-student	6
	Student-student	6
	Cooperation among school administration-parents-teachers	1
Physical environment	Well-designed physical environment	3
	Technological facilities	2
	Uncrowded classroom	1
Teachers	Motivated to teach	2
	Able to understand students	1

Table 2 indicates six categories regarding teachers' descriptions of a positive classroom climate: social and emotional environment, students, instructional process, relationships, physical environment, and teachers. According to teachers, social and emotional qualities are the most important qualities of a positive classroom climate. To depict a positive classroom environment, teachers mention a democratic environment where students' thoughts and differences are welcomed and valued. A safe and peaceful classroom environment based on students' interests and emotions is among the essential qualities of a positive learning environment. This environment, where the focus is always on the solution rather than on faults, is expected to contribute to student learning, a sense of belonging, and discipline. Teachers assert that students are highly motivated to learn and feel relaxed and happy in a positive classroom climate. In terms of instruction, students' active participation and cooperation with their classmates are essential indicators of a positive climate in the class. In this learning environment, the interaction between students and their teachers is also deemed influential for classroom climate, besides the support of parents. In terms of the physical environment, some teachers emphasize the general qualities of the learning environment, technological facilities, and the number of students that may also influence the climate. A teacher's competency in understanding students and motivation to teach is also regarded as necessary for a positive classroom climate.

*Sub-problem 2: What Are Teachers' Practices Towards Creating a Positive Classroom Climate?*

For the second sub-problem, six categories were obtained under the theme of teachers' practices toward creating a positive classroom climate. Table 3 presents the categories and sub-categories encountered as a result of the analysis.

**Table 3.** The Theme of Teachers' Practices Towards Creating a Positive Classroom Climate

Category	Sub-Category	f
Instructional practices	Gamification	8
	Cooperative learning	4
	Discussion	4
	Developing higher-order thinking skills	4
	Question answer method	3
	In-class assignments	2
	Less lecturing	2
	Projects ( e-twinning, Erasmus, Tübitak)	1
	Learning by doing	1
	Brainstorming	1
The social and emotional environment	A wide range of opportunities for expression	11
	Respect and equity for all	5
	Promoting tolerance	4
	Positive student-teacher interaction	3
Student enthusiasm	Informing students about the goals of the lesson	5
	Supporting students' motivation to learn	5
	Highlighting the importance of learning for life	4
	Effective warm-up activities	3
	Using stories & videos (motivational speeches, films, animations)	2
	Awarding	2
Teacher influence	Teacher caring	8
	Increasing the frequency of contact with parents	7
	Enhancing cooperation and competency	2
	Using positive reinforcement	2
Student attention	Relating the content to daily life	4
	Planning the course based on students' individual differences	4
	Using appropriate materials & technology	3
	Giving short breaks during the lesson	2
Classroom rules	Adherence to rules	5
	Determining rules with students	4

As presented in Table 3, instructional process, social context, student enthusiasm, teacher influence, student attention, and classroom rules are the defined categories for teachers' practices to create and ensure a positive classroom climate. Findings reveal that teachers substantially focus on their practices in the instructional process to create a positive climate in the classroom. To this end, teachers use gamification as the most important instructional method. Enhancing cooperation and discussion is also deemed to contribute to the class climate. Moreover, teachers note that they put effort into developing higher-order thinking skills such as creative thinking and problem-solving. Giving students in-class assignments, using projects, creating opportunities for learning by doing, brainstorming and drama are among teachers' crucial techniques and methods.

Findings execute that teachers strive to improve the social and emotional environment by creating a wide range of opportunities for expression, while respect and equity are the main principles of the class. In order to increase students' enthusiasm to learn, which is also accepted as a crucial contributor to the class climate, teachers inform the students about lesson goals, try to increase their motivation to learn, and help them understand the importance of learning for their lives. Focusing on the importance of student attention,

teachers often relate the content with daily life, plan their courses based on individual differences of students, use appropriate materials and technological tools, and give short breaks during the lesson. Furthermore, teachers also underline the importance of caring behaviors and effort to know and understand each student. Considering the influence of parents, teachers also indicate that they try to increase and enhance their contact and relations with the parents. In terms of classroom rules, teachers highlight the importance of adhering to them and applying them for every student in all circumstances, in addition to determining the rules with the students.

### *Sub-problem 3: What Are the Challenges Faced by Teachers in Enhancing a Positive Classroom Climate?*

Six categories were identified regarding the theme of challenges faced by teachers while creating and maintaining a positive classroom climate. Table 4 presents the categories and sub-categories.

**Table 4.** The Theme of Challenges Faced by Teachers

Category	Sub-Category	f
Students	Disinterest	15
	Student misbehavior	11
	Unwillingness & incompetency in effective communication	5
	Heterogeneity	5
	Short attention spans	3
	Social relations-friends	3
Parents	Uninvolved parenting	10
	The upbringing that causes student misbehavior	9
	Excessive parent intervention	3
	Raising unhappy children	2
Physical environment	Physical qualities of the classroom	4
	Lack of instructional materials and equipment	3
	Crowded classes	3
	Lack of technological facilities	1
Teachers	Low motivation	4
	Inefficient time for student participation	2
	Incompetency in classroom management	2
	Incompetency in achieving the goals of the course	1
Administrators	Inconsistent decisions	3
	Administrator qualities	2
	Lack of support from the administration	1
Rules	Students' difficulty in obeying the rules	3
	Inconsistent practices of stakeholders	2
	Difficulty in the determination of rules	1

Table 4 indicates that the challenges experienced by teachers are as mainly related to students, parents, physical environment, teachers, administrators, and rules. A substantial number of the challenges teachers face are related to students' attitudes and behaviors. The main difficulty is students' disinterest and misbehaviors. Teachers think students are unwilling to learn with low motivation and enthusiasm for learning and school, which substantially influences the classroom climate. Moreover, teachers argue that students' misbehaviors affect all students in the classroom and teachers' attitudes and behaviors, including instructional practices. Additionally, teachers assert that some students do not want to communicate while some do not have practical communication skills, which are crucial for understanding each other. Teachers also note that students in the class have different backgrounds, preparedness, interests, and needs that should be carefully considered in the classroom since this heterogeneity results in problems in the dynamics of the social system in the class. Students' social relations are also among the student-related challenges teachers face in creating a positive classroom climate. Another essential part of the challenges faced by teachers is related to parents. Teachers mainly focus on parents' unwillingness to cooperate with the teachers

and school and their neglectful approach to students' needs and development. Moreover, teachers also regard parents as responsible for the misbehavior of students. According to the teachers, students live in an unhappy environment and have insufficient relations with their parents, leading to increased misbehavior. Furthermore, some challenges stem from the physical environment, such as class qualities, instructional materials and equipment, and the number of students in each class. Additionally, teachers' low motivation levels, school administrators' inconsistent decisions, and students' difficulties in obeying the rules are among the challenges in creating and maintaining a positive classroom environment.

*Sub-problem 4: What Are Teachers' Suggestions for a Positive Classroom Climate?*

Under the theme of teachers' suggestions for creating a positive classroom climate, seven categories were found. The categories and sub-categories identified are given in Table 5.

**Table 5.** The Theme of Teachers' Suggestions for a Positive Classroom Climate

Category	Sub-Category	f
Stakeholders	Increasing stakeholder relationships	8
	Using programs for parent education	5
	Respect for the teaching profession	3
	Improving school administration	2
	Increasing support of school counseling services	2
Instructional practices	Considering students' interests and needs	5
	Based on learner preparedness and developmental stages	5
	Increasing students engagement	2
	Using a wide range of activities	2
	Related to daily life	2
Teachers	Developing teacher knowledge and skills	7
	Increasing positive teacher behavior and attitudes	3
	Should be planned and prepared for the lesson	2
The social and emotional environment	Students feel relaxed and valued	6
	Effective teacher and student relationship	3
	Bullying and misbehavior should be prevented	2
Rules	Consistency among all stakeholders	4
	Informing students about the rules	4
	Defining rules with students	1
Students	Increasing student motivation	5
	Enhancing school belonging	2
	Improving students' communication skills	2
Physical qualities and facilities	Enriching school facilities	3
	Limiting the number of students	3
	Increasing technology integration	2

Table 5 shows that teachers offer suggestions related to the stakeholders, instructional practices, teachers, social and emotional environment, rules, students, physical qualities, and facilities. A substantial proportion of suggestions are about enhancing the potential contribution of the stakeholders. Within this perspective, teachers suggest increasing the relations between the main stakeholders, including parents, teachers, administration, and students. Some teachers believe that programs and seminars should be prepared for parents' education to inform them about their potential influence on their children and help them raise children in a happy environment. Furthermore, teachers think that it is necessary to show respect for the teachers as professionals, to improve the quality of practices of school administration, and to benefit from the school counselling services by increasing its support to enhance classroom climate. In terms of the instructional process, teachers underline the importance of students' individual differences and argue that for a positive classroom environment, it is necessary to consider students' interests and needs, their preparedness for the course, and their developmental characteristics. Accordingly, teachers also highlight the importance of professional development, stating that teachers should develop their knowledge and skills



for a better classroom climate. Teachers have suggestions for the social and emotional environment. Teachers believe it is necessary to help students feel relaxed and valued in the class and build healthy relationships with their teachers. Furthermore, according to teachers, bullying and other student misbehaviors, which influence classroom management and instructional processes in addition to other students' feelings and engagement, should also be prevented. Teachers believe that informing students about classroom rules before and during the term is required for a positive classroom climate. Moreover, consistent behaviors of all stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and school administration, are also deemed important since inconsistent decisions and feedback might negatively influence students' adherence to classroom rules. Additionally, teachers suggest increasing student motivation, improving school facilities, including classroom infrastructure and technological facilities and instruments, and limiting the number of students for a better learning environment.

## **CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION**

The present research provided a detailed analysis of teachers' perspectives and experiences in classroom climate. Within this study, first of all, teachers' descriptions of a positive classroom climate were examined. According to the teachers, the most critical component of a positive classroom climate was related to the social and emotional environment in the class. Therefore, considering students' individual differences in the classroom, supporting their interests and abilities, respecting their ideas, and creating a safe and peaceful atmosphere can be regarded as contributors to a positive classroom climate. The second essential component of a positive classroom climate was related to the attitudes and behaviors of students, as their motivation and happiness were also found to be among the indicators of a positive classroom climate. According to research participants, in a positive classroom climate, teachers prioritize students in instructional planning, fulfill students' needs, focus on improving student engagement, and develop higher-order thinking skills. For a positive classroom climate, teachers also underlined the benefit of healthy relations between stakeholders. Particularly the support of parents and the relationships with teachers and students were considered crucial. Regarding the physical characteristics of the classroom, the number of students was found to be an influential factor in the classroom climate, while teachers also indicated the necessity of an organized and neat classroom equipped with the necessary technological facilities. The least frequently emphasized component was the potential effect of teachers' characteristics, including their ability to understand students and their motivation levels. It is worthy of note that these findings that reflect the multidimensional nature of the construct of classroom climate are consistent with those of Gillen et al. (2011), who investigated the factors students perceived as important in creating a positive learning climate and found that students focused on physical aspects, order, organization, lesson content and delivery, peer relationships, and relationships between the staff and student. Similarly, Yenen and Dursun (2018), who examined teacher candidates' opinions on the ideal education environment, found that the views were related to factors including the physical and psychological environment. Gabryś-Barker (2016), examining teacher candidates' perceptions of classroom climate, also found that participants focused on both the physical aspects of the instructional process and the social aspects, including the interaction between students and teachers.

Secondly, investigating teachers' practices to create or support a positive classroom climate revealed that the fundamental focus of teachers was on instructional practices. Teachers reported that they often used gamification and cooperative activities, created discussion opportunities, gave importance to developing higher-order thinking skills, and helped students learn by doing. In addition to improving students' cognitive development, the teachers considered their social and emotional development as students' self-expression ability, and their adoption of values such as respect and tolerance were also prioritized. Increasing students' awareness about the goals and importance of the course, enhancing their motivation to learn, and supporting them in developing a lifelong learning approach were also among teachers' practices deemed to increase learner engagement while decreasing the frequency of misbehaviors. Furthermore, teachers also put effort into maintaining students' attention during the course. To this end, some teachers relate the course content with daily life, consider students' individual differences, and sometimes give breaks. Moreover, it was found that teachers demonstrated caring behaviors to understand students' feelings and lives, developed professional competences, and increased contact with parents and colleagues. According to Rubie-Davies (2015), the classroom climate is a combination of the interrelated instructional

and socioemotional climate, and teachers' beliefs contribute to the classroom climate via the instructional and socioemotional climate. While teachers' pedagogical decisions constitute the instructional climate, the socioemotional climate of a classroom is built upon the interactions with the teacher and among the students. In this sense, the results of this study suggest that teachers' practices include enhancing both of these components influencing the classroom climate. Teachers aim to improve classroom climate by increasing students' active participation, motivation, and effective relations during the course rather than creating a quiet environment based on a teacher-centered approach. Research also indicates that supporting the interaction with the teacher and among students contributes to student participation (Frisby & Martin, 2010; Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2010). MacSuga-Gage (2012) asserted that the student-student and teacher-student relations contribute to student participation, and increasing students' active engagement helps decrease students' challenging behaviors.

Thirdly, teachers stated that the most critical challenges while creating a positive classroom climate stem from student-related factors. Variables such as students' reluctance and indifference to the lesson, misbehaviors, and communication problems were some of the most significant difficulties for teachers. A similar finding belongs to Bozan and Ekinci (2020), who evaluated teachers' views on problems in classroom management and determined that the most critical challenge was related to students' attention. Although teachers have focused on how students' characteristics and behaviors influence the classroom climate, it is well known that the climate also influences students. Han and Demirtaş (2021) argued that classroom climate negatively and significantly affected alienation from school. Moreover, Buyse et al. (2008) also asserted that the most behaviorally challenging children are more susceptible to the influences of the classroom than others, while emotionally supportive teachers decrease the risk of student misbehavior in terms of relationships. Hence, it can be concluded that teachers' attitudes and behaviors have the potential to decrease student misbehavior, and if the teacher does not give the necessary support, a negative class climate may increase the frequency of misbehavior that, in turn, affects the development of all students. On the other hand, there is also a relationship between students' attitudes and teachers' emotions. In the study of Hagenauer et al. (2015), students' engagement and discipline were found to be significant predictors of teacher emotions, including joy, anxiety, and anger, and teachers' negative experiences in teaching may increase the likelihood of teachers' alienation and burnout while decreasing the quality of teaching and teacher-student relations. When other challenges were considered, it was observed that teachers mentioned some challenges related to parents, including uninvolved parenting, raising children in an unhappy environment resulting in student misbehavior, and excessively intervening with teachers' decisions and practices. These findings suggest that teachers attribute student misbehavior to their parents, which is consistent with the results of Kulinna (2007-2008), who argued that teachers' attributions for student misbehavior were out-of-school, followed by student, teacher, and school. Cothran et al. (2009) similarly indicated that teachers most often attributed student misbehavior to unknown or home factors. The findings related to the opinions about uninvolved parenting are also consistent with the prior work on parental involvement. Research shows that teachers criticize parents' unawareness and unwillingness for involvement (Argon & Kıyıcı, 2012) and ineffective approach to the children (Selanik Ay & Aydoğdu, 2016). Erdoğan and Demirkasımoglu (2010) also asserted that teachers complain about parents' unawareness of parent involvement in the education process and excessive inference and pressure from some parents.

Overall, this research has given a detailed framework for a positive classroom climate by analyzing teachers' perspectives and experiences. It was concluded that teachers have a comprehensive approach to classroom climate, focusing on the importance of a wide range of in-class and out-class variables with direct and indirect influences on the climate. Those findings offer many implications for enhancing the classroom climate. Some suggestions are provided by considering teachers' recommendations examined within the fourth sub-problem of the research, teachers' overall perspective, and the theoretical framework in the literature. First, considering teachers' views, effective relationships should be established between teachers and students. As argued by Muijs and Reynolds (2001), the most critical aspect of classroom climate is the relationship between teacher and pupils. Moreover, it should be noted that effective relationships should be built among all stakeholders, which necessitates taking specific steps and establishing mechanisms that regulate and obligate these relationships. As important stakeholders, parents' characteristics and awareness should be enhanced. As suggested by teachers, face-to-face or online programs and seminars can be used to inform parents about the holistic development of students. Parents could be involved in relevant activities or

projects in the school. Additionally, a learning environment where students have positive feelings should be considered a prerequisite for all courses. For an effective learning process, educators should create a learning climate that is supportive and friendly without being threatening and condescending. In this environment, respect and acceptance should be enhanced to help students express their ideas (Penn, 2008). Students learn better when they perceive the learning environment more positively (Dorman et al., 2006). Ambrose et al. (2010) asserted that emotions and social processes hamper the students' capacity for engagement and learning. Furthermore, in a socially and emotionally positive environment, students should also be supported in developing communicative competence, which is a key competence for lifelong learning. Student-student relationships should be enhanced through both in-class activities and extracurricular opportunities. Research shows that extracurricular activities help students develop communication skills (Keser et al., 2011; Narkabilova & Khujamberdiyeva, 2021). Moreover, as mentioned by teachers, their professional development also needs consideration. Identifying teachers' needs and preferences in terms of professional development activities is necessary. Teachers should be offered national and international professional development opportunities by cooperating with the universities.

## **LIMITATIONS and FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

The current study was limited to teachers' opinions; therefore, further research might be performed based on in-class observations. It is also recommended to investigate the perspectives of other stakeholders as well. Moreover, action research might offer further insights into overcoming the challenges teachers face. While content analysis has been used in this study, the relationship of the variables can also be examined using different analysis methods (correlation and regression, structural equation modeling, hierarchical linear modeling, etc.). Experimental studies may be carried out by creating a model for a positive classroom climate based on the results of this research. It is also necessary to examine the relationships between the variables that influence the classroom climate, including the characteristics of teachers and students.

## **Declarations**

### **Conflict of Interest**

No potential conflicts of interest were disclosed by the authors with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

### **Ethics Approval**

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### **Research and Publication Ethics Statement**

The study was approved by the research team's university ethics committee of the Gazi University (Approval Number/ID: 08/2022/939). Hereby, we as the authors consciously assure that for the manuscript is fulfilled:

- This material is the authors' own original work, which has not been previously published elsewhere.
- The paper reflects the authors' own research and analysis in a truthful and complete manner.
- The results are appropriately placed in the context of prior and existing research.
- All sources used are properly disclosed.

### **Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article**

The authors provide equal contribution to this work.

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