THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND CHARACTERS OF SCHOOL STAKEHOLDERS: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The present study was designed to identify the level of organizational culture in Iranian schools. Moreover, this paper aims at investigating the relationship between the characters of school stakeholders and school organizational culture based on students' perception. The researchers conducted multivariate regression analysis to explore the relationship between the variables in the study. The participants in this study were 400 secondary school students in Lorestan province, Iran. The results of the current research show that the practice of organizational culture in schools is at medium level. This study found a moderately strong relationship between character of stakeholders and school organizational culture. In spite of various researches on school organizational culture in education, no research has been found to demonstrate the relationship between characters of school's stakeholders and its organizational culture. Therefore, the results of this research can be beneficial for the country's educational system to explain a new path of future research in school organizational culture. In addition the outcome of this study also can help school stakeholders including principals, teachers, and parents to have more effect and contributions in improving school organizational culture.

Keywords: **School organizational culture, School Stakeholders, Teaching and Learning Process, Education, Iran**

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INTRODUCTION

School organizational culture is a wide term referring to the norms, values, behaviors, climate, and attitudes of principals, teachers, and students toward learning and teaching (Rampa, 2004). More recently, Johnson and his colleagues developed this definition with some added factors such as assumption and relationship within the school community (Johnson et al., 2015). Hoy and Miskel (2013) defined culture as *"a distinct element that affects the behavior of the school and its interaction"*. Schools with positive culture present some characteristics such as an attractive classroom climate, teachers who are committed to teaching, student involvement in teaching and learning activities, the prevalence of order and discipline, existence of good relationship between school staff and students, effective management, and teamwork in the school and classroom. Consequently, the necessary infrastructure and facilities are in place and are neat and safe for teaching and learning. Lastly, principals and teachers maintain high professional standards (Rampa, 2004).

In the Iranian education system, school organizational culture refers to factors such as attitude of principals, teachers, students and parents about the teaching and learning process, and school climate (ensuring secure and healthy environments). It also involves using new teaching techniques, responsibility and commitment of principals and teachers, involvement of teachers, parents, and students in making decisions for the school, confirming the accessibility of stationery, books, laboratories, and library, and establishing a culture of punctuality at school. In this study, school organizational culture refers to the attitude of principals and teachers about the teaching and learning process, school environment and school process.

On the other hand, there are many stakeholders in the education system and school such as: principals, teachers, parents, students, Ministry of Education (MoE), and school community. All of them need to play their role effectively to help students learn better (Goods, 2014). In this study stakeholders refer to principals, teachers, parents, and students.

In spite of the good intentions and concerted attempts to reconstruct the education system and improve the quality of education, school organizational culture in Iran did not improve as expected. Poorly prepared principals and teachers, unpunctual principals, late arrival of teachers, the use of traditional teaching techniques, old school buildings, overcrowded classrooms, unmotivated teachers, and weak leadership are some negatives of school organizational culture in Iranian schools (Behnamjam & Shahhossini, 2011; Hajforoush, 2011; Yazdkhasti, Khedmatkar, & Shayanfard, 2011). Therefore, the education system in Iran attempted to improve culture in schools. These negative symptoms of culture in schools suggested the need for a different approach or strategy.

As a result, how the characters of stakeholders affect the culture is not clear in Iranian schools, including those in the province of Lorestan. In reality, this topic is new and still open for more research. Thus, this research attempts to determine the students' perceptions about the school organizational culture as practiced in their school and also to investigate the relationship between the character of stakeholders

in school and the level of school organizational culture based on students' perception. Therefore, the research questions in this study are as follows:

- What is the current level of school organizational culture practiced based on students' perception in schools?
- Is there any statistically significant relationship between the character of the stakeholders and the school organizational culture as seen from the point of view of the students?

The Character of School Stakeholders

In order to improve culture in school each stakeholder has some responsibilities and tasks. One of the principal tasks is to build and create a quality culture in schools (Oakland, 2003). Bond (2001) argues that it is the responsibility of principals to inspire, support, sustain, improve and promote a culture of school's performance excellence. Rampa (2004) pointed out that excellent performance in the school context would mean that principals ensure that teachers and students are doing their best in managing teaching and learning; that principals represent commitment to a culture of performance, providing support and appropriating resources and assistance and create cooperation among teachers, students and parents.

The primary task of a teacher is to teach but for teaching tasks to be didactically and pedagogically effective, teaching has to be properly managed. Teachers must know their students and also their students' needs. They must try to focus on establishing a relationship with their students. Consequently, they build a relationship of trust in which students are respected, understood, and recognized for what they are. Teachers prepare themselves to identify students' expectations. It is essential to create an environment conducive to teaching and learning strategies such as learning tools and methodology to provide the chance for students to practice their skills and to establish a cooperative learning climate in which they understand the activities of team work and are able to give and take in a team (Rampa, 2004). Teachers who create such classrooms contribute to the creation and maintenance of an environment, atmosphere or spirit, conductive to school organizational culture. Through the teachers' dedication and commitment, students' negative attitudes can be transformed and they can be motivated to take charge of their learning through diverse cultures that need to be connected by common values (Miller, 2011).

In school, students are regarded as the primary customers (Silins & Murray-Harvey, 2000). Consequently, self-concept of the student is valued as an element facilitating attainment of outcomes related to academic achievement since it determines academic self-concept. The latter, if good, may lead to ownership of learning by learners. Student academic success has an impact on the quality of school life which leads to students feelings good about themselves. Silins and Murray-Harvey (2000) provided evidence that the experience of school environment can shape the plans of students for their future and influence their learning. Therefore, the crucial elements for improving school performance are the positive approach of students on the quality of school life as well as the sense of achievement. Two important indicators of quality schooling with the attitude of the students toward studying and learning are belonging to the school community and learning how to learn. These elements are being linked to their learning quality and academic achievement. If students want to be successful in learning,

they must be punctual at school, listen to and be tolerant of others' opinions, accept responsibility for securing their own safety, possessions and respect the personal property of others, and not damage school property.

Parents play one of the major roles in school organizational culture (Cronje, Jacobs, & Murdoch, 2002). However, parents' contribution to the quality of teaching and learning is hard to detect and often goes unrecognized. Parents could help to sustain positive school organizational culture by keeping students busy during the teachers' absence, assisting in practicing skills such as reading and writing, checking work and revising homework. Parents may eventually assist with administrative tasks such as completing stock lists and drawing up budgets, filing forms such as applications for excursions and fundraising. Parents' involvement in their children's education is necessary for full partnership in education (Rampa, 2004). Brannon (2008b) believed that parents are primary teachers of their children; their responsibilities are summarized in taking care of their children, their development and education. Nevertheless, they may not have time, knowledge or training to provide all of this to their children. Schools are therefore established for planned and specialized teaching and learning.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

According to Mounton (2001) and DeVos (2002), research design is a plan of how to conduct research. Several theorists (Babbie & Mouton, 2012; Cohen & Manion, 2000; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2002) argue that surveys are appropriate for educational research because they can be used to describe, explore and interpret existing relationships, prevailing practices, perceptions and points of views including attitudes. They maintain that a survey can generate new insights into, and specific details on the targeted survey setting.

Therefore, this is a descriptive research aligned with a quantitative approach that attempts to address the research questions of the study. In this survey, the researchers sought to describe the relation between the independent variables (character of stakeholders) and the dependent variable (school organizational culture). The researchers applied descriptive research to collect the necessary information to make appropriate decisions in this study.

Population and Sampling

The research respondents for this study were secondary school students in Lorestan province, Iran. A total of 42,870 students from 10 cities of this province formed the target population. For the aims of this study, the sample size based on the Cochran (1977) formula is 400 students. All the participants in this research study were in the second and third grade of secondary school from 4 different cities namely Khoramabad, Borojerd, Kohdasht and Azna in Lorestan province, Iran. In order to choose the participants, the researchers used simple random sampling method. Simple random sampling was used to select 40 schools from four cities in this province. From each selected school, 10 students were selected via simple random sampling.

Instrument

A four (4) point Likert scale questionnaire by Rampa (2004) was used as the main instrument for the study. This questionnaire consists of 72 items, 7 of which represented the level of school organizational culture (part B_5), 9 are related to the character of principals (part B_1), 23 are related to teacher character (part B_2), 16 for student character (part B_3), and 17 were for parents' character (part B_4).

Since participants in this study are Iranian students and Farsi is the official language in Iran, the questionnaire was translated to Farsi with back-to-back method. The Cronbach's alpha value was .907. It means that that the questionnaire has excellent reliability (George & Mallery, 2001). In order to ensure instrument validity, the questionnaire was certified by three lecturers as a panel of experts from University Putra Malaysia (UPM). In addition, the validity of the Farsi version was certified by two lecturers as a panel of experts from Islamic Azad University (IAU) and Lorestan University (LU).

Data Collection Process

The "Administering the survey instrument live to a group" method was used to collect data in this study. In order to ensure that items in the questionnaire were understandable by students, one of the researchers was in attendance in each selected class to provide more details to students who wanted clarification.

Data Analysis Procedure

In this study, the researchers analyzed the data using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Descriptive statistics were used to measure the current situation of school organizational culture. Multivariate regression analysis was employed to predict the level of school organizational culture using the characteristics of principals, teachers, students, and parents.

FINDINGS

Demographic Information of the Participants

The research was conducted on 400 students who are studying in secondary school in Lorestan province, Iran. The demographic variables in this study included: gender, grade, location, and age of the participants. Table 1 presents the details of the demographic information.

Table 1
Frequency Distribution and Percentage of Respondent Profile

Variables		Num. of Respondent	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	190	47.5
	Female	210	52.5
Grade	Second	172	43
	Third	228	57
Age	12	34	50
	13	188	30
	14	155	12.5
	15	23	7.5

As shown in Table 1, the majority of the participants in this study were female with 210 female students (52.5%) and 190 male students (47.5%). The average age of students in this study is 13.42 years old, with 172 respondents (43%) in the second grade and 228 respondents (57%) in the third grade.

The Level of School Organizational Culture among Students in Various Cities

Table 2 presents the overall score of efforts undertaken by the students. The overall level of effort to improve school organizational culture in Lorestan province is medium (mean = 2.80; SD = 1.05). This indicates that the students in Lorestan view the effort in improving school organizational culture in their schools at medium level.

Table 2
Mean Distribution of students' perception regarding the level of School Organizational Culture

City	Mean	SD	Level	Rank
Khoramabad	3.00	.98	Medium	1
Kohdasht	2.97	.96	Medium	2
Borojerd	2.74	1.11	Medium	3
Azna	2.48	1.14	Medium	4
Overall	**2.80**	**1.05**	**Medium**	

Note: Low (1.00< M ≤2.00), Medium (2.01 <M ≤3.00), High (3.01 <M ≤4.00)

Table 2 also illustrates the mean score of efforts to improve school organizational culture in different cities. As perceived by students, the highest level of school organizational culture is in Khoramabad (mean = 3.00; *SD* = .99), followed by Kohdasht (Mean = 2.97; *SD* = .96), Borojerd (Mean = 2.74; *SD* = 1.11), and Azna (Mean = 2.48; *SD* = 1.14). This data means that the highest level of effort to improve school organizational culture was in Khoramabad and the lowest was in Azan.

The Relationship between School Organizational Culture and the Stakeholders' Character

To answer the second research question of this study (Is there any statistically significant relationship between the character of the stakeholders and the school organizational culture as seen from the point of view of the students?) a multivariate regression analysis was used to investigate the correlation between the characters of stakeholders (the explanatory variable) and dependent variable considered as school organizational culture. In order to check the multicollinearity among the independent variables, VIF was used. The VIF values in this research are less than 10.00 (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2010) (See Table 5). Thus, there was no multicollinearity problem between predictor variables in this study. As discussed earlier, stakeholders are principals, teachers, students, and parents. In this study, B_1, B_2, B_3, and B_4 are serially used to represent the character of principals, teachers, students and parents.

The multiple correlation coefficient is .463 (R = .463), meaning there is a positive and moderate relationship (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2006) between the character of stakeholders and school organizational culture (see Table 3).

Table 3
Model Summery of School Organizational Culture

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.463[a]	.214	.206	.753
a: Predictors: (Constant), stakeholders characteristic. * Dependent Variables: school organizational culture				

In this study R^2=0.214 (coefficient of determination). That means about 21.4% of variations in the school organizational culture are explained by the set of predictors. In other words, the exactness of the variables of characters of principals, teachers, students and parents in predicting the school organizational culture is 21.4%.

The ANOVA table (Table 4) reports how well the regression equation fit the data (i.e., predicts the school organizational culture as dependent variable) and is shown below:

Table 4
ANOVA result based on students' perception

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	61.007	4	15.252	26.896	.000[a]
Residual	223.987	395	.567		
Total	284.994	399			

As shown in Table 4, the overall regression model is significant with F-ratio=26.896. ($F_{4, 395}$)=26.896, $p<.05$, R^2 = .214, $R^2_{Adjusted}$ = .206).

Table 5 indicates the parameter estimates of the regression that illustrated the regression coefficients or slope of each predictor variable. The *t* statistics indicates the significance of the constant and each of the parameter estimates.

Table 5

Estimates of Coefficients for School Organizational Culture Based on Students' Perception

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	*t*	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**			**Tolerance**	**VIF**
(Constant)	.213	.286		.747	.455		
B_1	.282	.093	.166	3.039	.003	.670	1.494
B_2	.249	.100	.145	2.491	.013	.588	1.700
B_3	.063	.083	.042	.766	.444	.679	1.474
B_4	.410	.082	.257	4.992	.000	.751	1.332
a. Dependent Variable: B_5 (school organizational culture)							

The regression model has a constant of .213 and is not significant at the .05 level (*p* = .455). Parameter estimates for characters of principals, teachers, students and parents are .282, .249, .063 and .410 respectively. The *t* statistics demonstrate the significance of each parameter estimate and that the character of parents is the most significant explanatory variable in predicting school organizational culture in the students' perception. The significant level of 0.000 for this variable indicates 0% error. Principal character is a significant predictor at the .05 level (*p* = .003). Teacher's character is a significant predictor at the .05 level (*p* = .013) while student character is not significant at all (*p* = 0.444). The derived model is:

$$\text{School Organizational Culture} = .213 + .282 \cdot B_1 + .249 \cdot B_2 + .063 \cdot B_3 + 0.410 \cdot B_4$$

Therefore, school organizational culture, in students' perception, has a positive correlation with character of principals (B_1), character of teachers (B_2), character of students (B_3) and character of parents (B_4).

The prediction equation of perceived school organizational culture is as follows:

$$Y = b_0 + B_4(X_4) + B_1(X_1) + B_2(X_2) + e$$

$$\text{School Organizational Culture} = .213 + .410 \text{ (character of parents)} + .282 \text{ (character of principals)} + .249 \text{ (character of teachers)} + e$$

The prediction equation depicts overall contribution of three out of four characters of stakeholders including principals, teachers, and parents in predicting school organizational culture in Iranian secondary schools based on students' perception.

The perceived school organizational culture model is presented in Figure 1. The model indicates that the remaining dimension (character of students) is not a significant predictor of perceived school organizational culture based on students' perception.
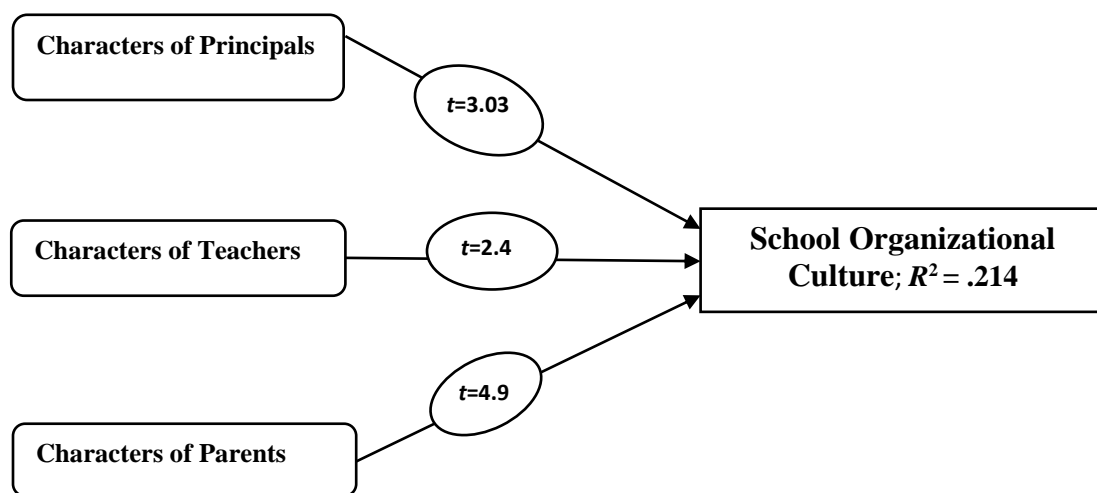

Figure 1: Perceived school organizational culture model based on students' perception

It can be concluded that, from the students' perception, there is a moderately strong relationship (R = .46) between characters of principals, teachers, students, and parents and school organizational culture. It means students believed that character of stakeholders can improve school organizational culture and the characters of parents and principals have a more important role; the next variable comprises the characters of teachers and students respectively. All characteristics of stakeholders have a positive relationship with school organizational culture.

DISCUSSION

This study asked students to express their perception of school organizational culture practices in their schools. The findings of this research illustrate that the level of school organizational culture as viewed by students is medium (Mean = 2.80). Improving the school organizational culture is one of the factors in improving the quality of education (Kruger, 2003). All of the stakeholders in school can be effective in improving the level of school organizational culture.

To increase the level of school organizational culture, teachers and principals have to fulfil some responsibilities (Pourrajab & Ghani, 2014). Teachers can try using correct evaluation methods. Student learning is measured in various ways which are not restricted to standardized test marks, the periodic assessment of class homework, and the final exam results (Alobiedat, 2011). This indicates that school principals and teachers must understand student needs and expectations (Alobiedat, 2011) to achieve a student-oriented system. Another reason for the perception of medium level of school organizational culture among students is overcrowded classrooms (Kruger, 2003; Owoeye & Yara, 2011). The average number of students in each classroom is 30 in secondary schools in Iran, instead of 1-20 students in each class (Owoeye & Yara, 2011). Glasser (1992) pointed out that the majority of students in his study believed that based on current content of textbooks there is no value in attempting to learn from the text books. There is no significant reason for teachers to teach the textbook content, if the quality of the content is not high and cannot satisfy the students in the classroom. The result is that students will not study hard to learn their subjects.

The characters of parents are the most significant explanatory variable in predicting school organizational culture in the students' opinion. The first teachers of children are their parents and their role remains unchanged until their children go to school. The next step begins with the entrance of children to school which introduces the role of teachers and principals in shaping the views and deeds of the children along with their parents. The higher academic achievement of students (Fan & Chen, 2001) the provision of positive views about homework, and improved awareness of their own competence are some results of parental involvement in school (Brannon, 2008a). Bryant, Peisner-Feinberg, and Miller-Johnson (2000) argue that students' success in school requires parental involvement. In spite of the work of schools and parents together to develop the students' character, the beliefs and identity of students about right and wrong have already been shaped before their educational career has started (Brannon, 2008b).

Epstein (1992, 1994) developed six levels of school-related opportunities for a parental involvement typology including: assisting parents in child rearing skills, school-parent communication, involving parents in school volunteer opportunities, involving parents in home-based learning, involving parents in school decision-making, and involving parents in school-community collaborations (in Fan & Chen, 2001).

Teachers' and principals' characters are significant explanatory variables in predicting school organizational culture. However, parents and teachers spend the most time with their children, and thus they have more opportunity to make an impact (Brannon, 2008b). The results suggest that the reason for parental involvement in the students' homework is positive difference and the willingness of the children to involve themselves in their homework (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). The activities of parents' involvement can be in the form of establishing structures for homework achievement or in the form of developing strategies of learning and teaching for understanding. The positive effect of parental involvement in students' academic success leads to asking policy makers, school principals, teachers, and parents to continue the process of parental involvement (Fan & Chen, 2001).

In order to add value in an academic environment, the students expect to access effective lessons and practices which consists of the assurance of a well-equipped library and laboratory, provision of materials such as books, videos, maps (principals' duty), preparation for final exam (teachers' duty) which requires knowledgeable teachers, and support from all parties to enable them to achieve the hoped-for grades (Barone & Franco, 2009).

Consequently, student satisfaction with the lessons and academic activities with the related content constitute the output of teaching process which leads to direct benefits for the students. In terms of teaching, if the students are active in the learning process, then this process will be effective (Barone & Franco, 2009). To emphasize, students are considered as customers in modern educational systems (Thakkar, Deshmukh, & Shastree, 2006). It is worth paying more attention to student needs.

CONCLUSION

The aims of the current study were to determine the school organizational culture level, and to examine the relationship between the stakeholders' characters and school organizational culture. It was shown that the level of school organizational culture for students is medium. This shows that students are less satisfied with the current situation. There are so many ways to improve culture in schools. The students' needs should be realized by principals and teachers in order to switch into a student-oriented system. Overcrowded classrooms are another reason for this medium satisfaction level. Teachers must measure student learning in ways such as periodic classroom assessments and apply correct evaluation methods.

An important finding in this research was a moderately strong relationship between character of stakeholders and school organizational culture based on students' perception. This proved that there is a positive effect of stakeholders on school organizational culture. Student learning is everyone's responsibility: principal, teachers, students, parents, school staff, society, and media. Based on students' opinion the characters of parents play a more important role for school organizational culture.

Principals and teachers are people who are available in daily school life. As academics who can guide students correctly, principals and teachers must try to have a greater effect on school organizational culture for the sake of the students. Therefore it is important to give students what they need and what they expect. They need beneficial lessons and academic activities, and opportunities to add value to their education. Such added value primarily consists of support to ensure a well-equipped library and laboratory, materials such as books, videos, maps (principals' duty), and enough preparation for their final exam, which needs good and knowledgeable teachers (teachers' duty). Principals must involve parents in school decision-making more than before; they must be a part of decision making in schools.

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