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Quellenangabe/ Reference:

Reis-Jorge, José; Pacheco, Patricia; Ferreira, Marco; Barqueira, Ana; Baltazar, Isabel: School climate and teachers' professional wellbeing in Portugal. A School Climate Analytical Framework (SCAF) - In: Martinsone, Baiba [Hrsg.]; Jensen, Maria Therese [Hrsg.]; Wiesner, Christian [Hrsg.]; Zechner, Kerstin Angelika [Hrsg.]: Teachers' professional wellbeing. A digital game based social-emotional learning intervention. Bad Heilbrunn : Verlag Julius Klinkhardt 2024, S. 81-104 - URN: urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-299120 - DOI: 10.25656/01:29912; 10.35468/6091-04

<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-299120>
<https://doi.org/10.25656/01:29912>

in Kooperation mit / in cooperation with:



<http://www.klinkhardt.de>

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School climate and teachers' professional wellbeing in Portugal: A School Climate Analytical Framework (SCAF)

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Abstract

The study reported in this chapter is part of an Erasmus KA3 project about teachers' professional wellbeing. The aim of the study is to gain a better understanding of how Portuguese school teachers perceive the contribution of the school climate to their professional wellbeing. For this purpose, we conducted a qualitative interpretive study with a group of 57 Portuguese teachers. The data were collected through focus group interviews and the thematic analysis followed a hybrid approach. The deductive approach to the analysis, which was guided by a five-factor school climate model, indicated the sufficient adequacy of the teachers' testimonials to the theoretical model. An inductive approach looking for latent meaning led to the inclusion of a new dimension related to Social and Emotional Literacy as a potential new factor impacting school climate. Accordingly, we propose a School Climate Analytical Framework (SCAF), which can be used and validated in future research. We hope to contribute to filling a gap in the empirical literature on school climate in the Portuguese context.

1 Introduction

The concept of school climate has been a topic of discussion in the relevant literature for a long time. School climate is a multidimensional concept that has been analysed and discussed from different perspectives according to the specific interests of researchers and academics. Some studies have focused on the objective characteristics of school climate, while others have placed the emphasis on the subjective elements of the concept. From an empirical point of view, school climate has been addressed mainly from the perspectives of school personnel, parents, and younger and older students in studies of a quantitative nature (Martinsone et al., 2023). Less attention has been paid to the study of school climate through the lenses of teachers, especially in what concerns the relationships between school climate and teachers' professional wellbeing. It is thus important to listen to the teachers' voices on a topic of interest to themselves and ultimately to their students.

The qualitative interpretive study reported in this chapter is part of a larger Erasmus KA3 research project titled "Teaching to Be - supporting teachers' professional growth and wellbeing in the field of social and emotional learning". It builds upon the testimonials and experiences of Portuguese teachers to explore and gain a better understanding and greater awareness of how the characteristics of school climate can contribute to promoting teacher professional wellbeing. These teachers contributed to the development of professional wellbeing resources through involvement in a participatory action-research methodology as part of the larger project. We used Johnson et al.'s (2007) five-factor model as a conceptual framework for data analysis, as follows: 1. Collaboration; 2. Instructional innovation; 3. School resources; 4. Decision-making; 5. Student relations. The choice of Johnson et al.'s (2007) model resulted from the literature review and the recognition that it is the theoretical framework that best fits the Portuguese school climate context.

School climate – a multidimensional concept

Research into school climate started in the early twentieth century (Dewey, 1927; Perry, 1908) and has been the subject of systematic studies since the 1950s with a notable research interest in the last 30 years. School climate was initially a concept with unclear boundaries. However, it should be noted that much of the research that has been undertaken on the topic does not relate specifically to school climate. A study aimed to scrutinise the keywords used by researchers in association with school climate over the last decades (Avi Astor & Benbenishty, 2018) revealed the use of a variety of terms such as school reform, social and emotional learning, life competencies, school mission and values, school organisation, leadership and school administration, teacher-student relationships, and school safety. This terminological diversity is revealing of the number of the many different dimensions and perspectives that have been adopted to define and characterise

school climate. Anderson (1982) showed how challenging it is to define school climate, as each professional employs a wide range of representations, more or less implicitly on the subject according to their own interests and work contexts. For example, there is a common misunderstanding between school climate and school safety. However, the quality and atmosphere of school life go beyond safety concerns. School climate has a variety of meanings and significance. Brookover et al. (1977) posit that the school climate includes the social system of shared norms and expectations. West (1985) relates school climate with the set of norms and expectations that teachers have for students; Brown and Henry (1992) place the focus on teachers' morale; Short and Rinehart (1992) emphasise the level of teachers' empowerment; Johnson et al. (1996) highlight the students' perceptions of the "personality of a school"; and Bernstein (1992) addresses the environment for students, measured by the amount of negative student behaviour.

More recently, the adoption of a systemic and contextual approach has led to a common agreement shared among researchers and academics about school climate as the result of multifaceted and dynamic procedures and logistics inside the organisations. This common agreement is best captured in the definition of the National School Climate Center (Cohen et al., 2009), according to which school climate reflects the judgments of parents, teachers and students concerning their experiences of life, learning, and work within the school, rather than resulting from a straightforward individual perception. This notion of school climate encompasses the different educational actors who participate in school life and interact systematically with the school's natural environment. The definition of school climate must include the experiences and perceptions of all members of the school community (Johnson et al, 2007). Therefore, it must concern not only the safety of teachers and their social and emotional relationships with colleagues and school principals, but also the perceptions of parents, students and teachers (Kutsyuruba et al., 2015). This diversity of indicators shapes the understanding of school climate and determines actions to improve it.

According to the School Climate Center (Cohen et al., 2009), school climate refers to the quality and lifestyle at school. School climate is based on the models that people have of their life experience at school. It reflects the standards, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, management practices and organisational structure included in the life of the school (p. 180).

Cohen et al. (2009) highlight five elements that shape school climate: Relationships, Teaching and Learning, Security, Physical Environment, and Feeling of Belonging. Relationships are concerned with respect for diversity, shared decisions, student participation, teachers' collaboration and support, engagement in the school community, and shared vision between parents and teachers on learning and behaviour. Teaching and Learning are related to quality of instruction, high expectations for success, differentiated teaching, creativity, social and emotion-

al learning, ethical values, professional development, support, and availability of the school leaders. Security goes beyond the feeling of physical security to include emotional security supported by predictability, crisis plans, psychological control, clear consistent rules, tolerance for difference, responses to harassment, and conflict resolution (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018). Physical Environment involves cleanliness, adequate space and equipment, appropriate learning materials, aesthetics, and extracurricular offers. Feeling of Belonging is about being connected to the school community, commitment, and enthusiasm of teachers and students.

According to the OECD (2013), school climate depends on a set of factors which, although differentiated, work interconnectedly about the quality of the school buildings, equipment and spaces; the relationships between teachers, students and families; the teacher's level of morale, commitment and involvement in the work; and leadership, shared values and common goals.

There is empirical evidence to support the relevance of school climate in schools at different levels. Several studies indicate that an encouraging and optimistic school climate increases teacher effectiveness (Bryk et al., 2010), results in more productive learning time, enhances a culture of school improvement (Johnson et al., 2012), increases teacher satisfaction (Kraft & Papay, 2014), and promotes a professional environment that supports staff stability (Papay & Kraft, 2017). Research has also shown that a positive school climate correlates positively with academic achievement, adaptive psychosocial adjustment, satisfaction with school, sense of belongingness, sharing of academic values, motivation to learn, reduced behaviour problems, parent-school engagement, reduction of teachers' burnout, and increased wellbeing (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008; MacNeil, et al., 2009; Roeser et al., 1999; Vieno et al., 2005; Wang et al., 2010; Zullig et al., 2011).

Based on what we have been discussing so far, within the scope of the study presented in this chapter we can define school climate grounded on determining factors of the quality, attributes and character of school life. School climate is grounded on the value systems and agency of all educational actors, which reflect the experiences and levels of involvement of teaching and non-teaching staff, students, and parents in school life as well as the norms and regulations that guide interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organisational structures.

School climate and teachers' professional wellbeing

Teachers' wellbeing is a crucial element for the success of schools and educational systems (Dreer, 2022). Teachers are a highly qualified professional group whose working circumstances have become more and more challenging in the last decades. Besides the growing number of bureaucratic duties, they have to deal with increasingly heterogeneous groups of students requiring the adoption of

differentiated and inclusive practices (Ferreira et al., 2023; Ferreira & Reis-Jorge, 2022). These factors, along with the calls for the digitalisation of schools require constant adjustments in teachers' routines (Ferreira, 2022). Research shows that teachers who are more stressed are less likely to establish close interactions with students which, in turn, can influence student achievement (Roorda et al., 2011), and have a direct effect on school climate (Fernet et al., 2012).

Ryff (1989) identified some aspects that can help a better understanding of the concept of wellbeing. According to the author, autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, awareness of self-potential, and self-acceptance are components of teacher wellbeing. Diener and Suh (1997) considered that wellbeing consists of three interrelated elements: life satisfaction, pleasant affection, and unpleasant affection. Viac and Fraser (2020) defined teacher wellbeing as "teachers' responses to the cognitive, emotional, health and social conditions about their work and their profession" (p. 18).

Teaching can be a fulfilling job that involves meaningful, influential, and significant work. However, due to its multifaceted character, teaching can also be difficult to manage and an overwhelming job (Ferreira, 2022). Nowadays, when schools are trying to increase student attainment with a reduced budget, teachers' wellbeing can be underestimated, not being considered a priority for the functioning of the school (Collie et al, 2011). Research has shown that stressful and challenging working conditions have a massive impact on teachers' purposes and professional engagement (Collie et al., 2012; Klassen et al., 2013).

Yao et al. (2015) highlighted the importance of teachers' perceptions of the school climate as a determining factor of teacher turnover. Furthermore, the authors stated that the teachers' negative views of the school climate also concur with emotional exhaustion which leads to poor work engagement. Ozdemir and Cakalci (2022) found a moderate relationship between school climate, individual innovativeness, and teacher autonomy. Certain contextual factors have been identified as relevant to teachers' wellbeing and school climate such as teacher teamwork and cooperation, student-teacher bonds and work autonomy (Aloe et al., 2014; Collie & Martin, 2017; Dreer, 2022; Roorda et al., 2011; Weiland, 2021). All these dimensions appear to be captured in Johnson et al. 's (2007) five-factor school climate model:

- **Collaboration** – teachers' feelings of belongingness and cooperation within the school community;
- **Instructional innovation** – the openness of the school towards new teaching methods and professional development;
- **School resources** – adequate school equipment, such as teaching materials and media;

- **Decision-making** – constructive choices and open-mindedness, as well as teachers' autonomy and participation in school decisions;
- **Student relations** – effective communication supported by trustful teacher-student and student-student relationships.

These five factors are significant to teacher wellbeing (Gray et al., 2017; Thapa et al., 2013), although contextual factors relating to school climate are moderately stable and require substantial effort from school agents to change them positively (Rhodes et al., 2009; Yao et al., 2015). Dreer (2022) argues that the wellbeing of teachers is not only dependent on contextual factors but is also influenced by teachers' job crafting, that is, teachers' ability to adjust their working conditions to suit their capabilities and needs (Seppälä et al., 2020). This is in line with the expectations created by prior findings that highlight the importance of job crafting for teacher wellbeing (Peral & Geldenhuys, 2016; van Wingerden & Poell, 2019). A constructive school climate has the potential to contribute to teachers' wellbeing and professional development and create an environment that facilitates student achievement and growth (Gray et al., 2017). A better understanding of the factors that influence school climate and how they are related to teachers' wellbeing is critical to delineate and implement mediation interventions aimed at supporting teachers and students as they strive to ensure success and wellbeing. The empirical study reported in the remainder of this chapter builds upon the teachers' voices to explore the relationship between school climate and wellbeing based on their testimonials and experiences.

2 Method

Research objectives and type of study

Our research aimed to gain a better understanding of how Portuguese school teachers perceive the contribution of the school climate to their professional wellbeing. More specifically, our objectives were twofold: (i) to understand how teachers characterise the climate in their schools, and (ii) to identify the factors of school climate that teachers consider most relevant to their professional wellbeing. In order to achieve our objectives, we conducted a qualitative interpretive study based on the teachers' answers to focus group interviews. Interpretive research builds upon ontological and epistemological views of reality as socially constructed through the experiences of social actors (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). This approach is well suited to investigate human behaviours and experiences within their social, cultural and professional contexts (Pulla & Carter, 2018). We expected to use rich data to produce detailed descriptions and interpretations of the teachers' experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon under investigation.

Participants

The participants in the study were selected by convenience sampling method (Cohen et al., 2018) of the teachers in five schools (1 private and 4 public schools) from different regions of Portugal who responded positively to the invitation to participate in the research. The group is composed of 57 teachers, of which 4 males and 53 females. 36 participants were primary school teachers (grades 1 to 4) and 21 middle school teachers (grades 5-9). Most of the teachers (n=43) were 30-54 years of age. 39 teachers had a Bachelor's degree, 17 had a Master's degree, and 1 had a Doctorate. In terms of professional experience, most of the participants (n=38) had between 21 and 25+ years in the teaching profession. It can be asserted that the group of participants were suitable for the research in terms of academic qualifications, teaching experience, and grade levels taught. Participation in the research was on a voluntary basis. The teachers obtained permission from their principals to participate in the study. For informed consent, the teachers were given the rationale for their participation in the study and were assured of confidentiality and anonymity.

Data collection and analysis

Focus group interviews (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009; Smithson, 2000) were chosen as the method of data collection. We conducted 3 semi-structured rounds of interviews with each school, in a total of 15 focus group interviews. Table 1 shows the number of teachers in each focus group per school.

Table 1: Distribution of the teachers by focus group per school (N=57)

Schools	City	Nº of Teachers
School A- public	Lisboa	11
School B- public	Lisboa	11
School C- public	Évora	8
School D- public	Golegã	16
School E- private	Lisboa	11

Three semi-structured interview protocols (Patton, 2015) were developed building on the theoretical background from the relevant literature and the research objectives. The alignment of the topics for each focus group discussion was chosen to allow further exploration of relevant topics emerging from previous rounds. The following are examples of questions included in the interview protocols which were developed for the larger Teaching to be Erasmus project.

- What are the characteristics that you consider most relevant and salient in the climate of your school? Please give example(s).
- How do your school leaders involve the teachers in the decision-making process? Please give examples.
- In your school, how do teachers contribute to a positive school climate?
- How do you characterise your relationship with students in your classrooms?

The focus group interviews were online via ZOOM and each round lasted 60-90 minutes. The interviews were conducted by all the authors (2 authors per focus group). The focus group interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants and then transcribed *verbatim* for the purpose of analysis. In order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity the transcripts were coded T1 to T57 and the direct quotes used as evidence in this study are coded as in the following example: (T1/R2/P5), where T1 stands for Teacher number 1, R1 stands for Interview Round number 2, and P5 for Page number 5 of the transcription.

The data were analysed following the six-step method of thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006) as “a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data” (p.78). A hybrid approach was adopted for the analysis which unfolded into two stages: a deductive stage followed by an inductive stage (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Swain, 2018).

In the deductive stage the data were analysed in the light of the analytical framework derived from Johnson et al.’s (2007) described above. After familiarisation with the entire body of data, the second step involved the generation of initial codes in a systematic manner. Given the concern with analysing the data with the research objectives and analytical framework in mind, a code was assigned to each segment of the data that was relevant and meaningful. A chart for the themes, sub-themes, and units of meaning was created and underwent several revisions.

This was followed by a data-driven inductive stage of analysis looking for patterns likely to complement the analytical framework and which might remain otherwise unnoticed. At this stage the analysis involved looking for latent meaning in the data following an iterative and reflexive process of qualitative inquiry described by Tobin and Begley (2004) as the overarching principle of “goodness”. The data collection and analysis were undertaken progressively as the data collection unfolded. The analysis was conducted by three authors of the study. At first, it was conducted individually following the procedures described above. The comparison of the results of the individual analyses allowed some adjustments and the elaboration of a final chart. This strategy, involving more than one researcher observing the same data, is described by Denzin (2009) as ‘investigator triangulation’ as a way of validating the analysis and the findings.

3 Results and Discussion

As explained earlier, in the first stage of analysis we adopted a deductive approach. The deductive coding allowed us to look at the data through a tightly focused lens to identify and categorise the relevant information in the teachers' testimonials for each of Johnson et al.'s (2007) factors. This process resulted in a matrix of analysis illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Illustrative examples of the teachers' testimonials about school climate distributed by Johnson et al.'s (2007) five-factor framework

Factors	Evidence from the teachers' testimonials
1. Collaboration	<p>"Sharing materials and strategies, on a personal and professional level" (T14/R1/P2).</p> <p>"Sharing problems, ideas, creating opportunities" (T28/R1/P4).</p> <p>"We work a lot together, they're very creative, in a good mood" (T43/R1/P8).</p> <p>"We all work well together, we come up with new strategies and we have the ability to overcome the problems that arise" (T51/R1/P11).</p> <p>"What's most important to me is the mutual help between teachers" (T11/R2/P5).</p> <p>"There is a lot of cooperation between colleagues, even though this is a profession in which there is sometimes competition" (T51/R2/P6).</p> <p>"Sharing of good practices, and cooperation and respect between colleagues" (T3/R3/P3).</p> <p>"The team is fundamental to satisfaction in the workplace" (T4/R3/P12).</p>
2. Instructional innovation	<p>"We have an innovation plan that gives me the freedom to do what I need" (T1/R1/P8).</p> <p>"This school is very open to innovation and proposals. We suggest and substantiate our proposals and move forward" (T16/R1/P15).</p> <p>"We are persistent and daring in certain situations where we feel the need to use active teaching methodologies" (T20/R2/P3).</p> <p>"When the team is innovative, it's easier for them to be accepted and validated by management" (T17/R2/P7).</p> <p>"We all have creativity, innovation, accepting challenges and connecting with colleagues, children and parents" (T28/R3/P4).</p>

3. Decision-making	<p>“The Director has leadership, but gives autonomy” (T13/R1/P4).</p> <p>“Sometimes we suffer some mediation in our autonomy. Sometimes it has to do with the time and space in which we want to do things” (T1/R2/P5).</p> <p>“I have autonomy to change things, autonomy and confidence and motivation” (T39/R3/P7).</p> <p>„Teachers make decisions for themselves. Everyone can make mistakes, but only those who make decisions make mistakes“ (T56/R3/P9).</p>
4. School resources	<p>“It’s a school with a lot of human resources” (T4/R1/P3).</p> <p>“Lack of technical and human resources to deal with all the children” (T19/R2/P2).</p> <p>“In emotional literacy, the biggest stress is not having enough resources” (T31/R2/P4).</p> <p>„The lack of internet sometimes leads to situations with interference that greatly affects the teacher’s wellbeing“ (T44/R2/P5).</p>
5. Student relations	<p>“What we do for them and to them; seeing the students’ happiness; making every day a special day” (T9/R2/P7).</p> <p>“We have to adapt to the students’ interests, try to get the best out of each student and develop their abilities” (T40/R2/P11).</p> <p>“The relationship with the students. What the students give us every day is our emotional salary)” (T19/R3/P6).</p> <p>„A climate of honesty and trust in which students feel they can rely on their teachers“ (T34/R3/P10).</p>

Collaboration

As can be seen in Table 2, our teachers considered Collaboration as an important factor of school climate. In this respect, they emphasised sharing with colleagues relevant aspects of their teaching practices (materials and strategies) and affective aspects inherent to the work carried out at school (teamwork, cooperation, mutual help). As one of the teachers said,

There is a sharing and dedication on the part of the teachers in the activities to involve the students and colleagues, since everyone wants to add something. Knowing how to listen and be attentive to others is very important and the strong point is wanting to collaborate and not being afraid to share (T21/R1/P8).

According to Ozdemir and Cakalci (2022), group work and collaboration among peers is an aspect valued by teachers. Collaboration fosters a positive school climate, paving the way for the school to develop an organisational culture of cooperation guided by common goals.

Instructional innovation

The teachers also considered Innovation to be an element associated with good practices and creativity, and a stimulus for their work, especially in a climate of openness and acceptance on the part of colleagues and school leaders. The following statement is illustrative of the feelings shared among the participants:

This group is very open to innovation and proposals, what we suggest and substantiate is accepted and we move forward. We all have creativity, we use diversity in the application of strategies, we have the ability to improvise in different situations, and we are persistent and daring in certain situations (T18/R2/P11).

Innovation is a relevant dimension of development and the basis of education (Baharuddin et al., 2019; Ozdemir & Cakalci (2022). According to Baharuddin et al. (2019), three arguments justify the need for, and the importance of innovation in teachers' work: 1) the constant evolution and development of society, so teachers must adopt an innovative and up-to-date stance; 2) developments in teaching and learning require teachers to innovate and adopt appropriate and challenging strategies to enhance students' motivation and better learning; and 3) the fact that the school, as an educational organisation is a model of innovation for society in general. Therefore, teachers have a crucial role as initiators and implementers of innovation in education (Ozdemir & Cakalci, 2022).

Decision-making

Decision-making appears in the teachers' testimonials closely linked to Autonomy. Our participants claimed that trust in the leaders about their work as teachers favours their decision-making as professionals and consequently motivates them to take more initiative and be more autonomous. For example, one teacher pointed out that:

If there is a relationship of respect and trust between everyone, there will be autonomy. In the school where I work, I've never felt that autonomy is in question. We feel we have autonomy and it allows us to do better work in the classroom and the relationship with management is better (T42/R2/P9).

The opinions of our teachers echo the claims made in the literature about the importance of autonomy as a catalyst of teachers' commitment to the schools in which they work, giving them the opportunity to show their potential as professionals and develop a more positive attitude towards their work (Ozdemir & Cakalci, 2022). Autonomy at work also increases the feeling of responsibility, which in turn leads to more proactive behaviour, new ideas and suggestions (Baharuddin et al., 2019).

School Resources

For our teachers, school resources are fundamental and often insufficient to meet all the students' educational needs. This view is best illustrated in the following testimonials:

The lack of resources, on the part of the school, sometimes generates negative experiences. Resources are important for the teaching-learning process and make all students participate in everything, such as projects (T5/R1/P3).

In concrete terms, the problems with materials in the school that are requested, and because they don't exist, generate a bad feeling; the lack of internet leads to situations with interference that really messes with the teacher's wellbeing (T23/R1/P7).

Material resources as a topic has been mentioned in previous research as essential tools for teachers to carry out effectively their work, thus contributing to professional wellbeing. According to Johnson et al. (2012), administrative support, school facilities and class size appear to be more important than teachers' salaries or the demographic characteristics of the students. The authors point out that working conditions have a critical influence on teachers' career plans and consequently on their professional wellbeing.

Student relations

In reflecting on the factors that contribute to their professional wellbeing the teachers placed some focus on affective and emotional aspects which point to the importance of happiness and wellbeing of the students and themselves. Our teachers also stressed the importance of establishing a relationship with students based on trust and honesty, as well as valuing the qualities and abilities of each student:

Today students feel that the teacher is human, they see teachers as friends they can talk to and this helps to maintain discipline (T34/R3/P2).

It is therefore important to train good people, to promote experiences (in and out of school) and training that is more global in nature. Teachers are predisposed, and the conditions exist, to establish positive relationships (T52/R3/P4-5).

For teachers, interpersonal relationships with students can be a source of satisfaction and belongingness, contributing to their wellbeing (Farhah et al., 2021). Thus, the perception of a constructive school climate promotes cooperative learning, group cohesion, respect and mutual trust, thus increasing students' level of involvement in the school activities and the quality of learning (Thapa et al., 2013).

Social and Emotional Literacy – an emerging theme

School climate is about the connections and exchanges among all members of the school community. This includes the school culture, structure, resources and how individuals appraise experiences and interactions within the school. School climate and social and emotional learning (SEL) have often been treated separately by researchers and practitioners, although they are co-influential, benefit each other, and both are necessary to build healthy schools (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The social and emotional competence of each member of the school community, both individually and collectively affects the school climate and creates the conditions for SEL and professional wellbeing (Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2016; Osher et al., 2004). The recognition of social and emotional skills as an important resource for individuals in the different domains of their lives is based on the consensus among researchers that the learning of relevant social and emotional skills influences wellbeing (e.g. Fernández-Martín et al. 2021; Llorent Garcia et al., 2022; OECD, 2013; UNICEF, 2021).

The outcomes of empirical research on the relationships between social and emotional literacy and school climate may have informed a significant move towards coordinated, systematic schoolwide programming that is ecological, integrates school climate and SEL approaches, and prioritises the engagement of the larger school community (CASEL, 2017; Osher et al, 2015). This new movement includes energies to join in and build positive school climates that support SEL (Domitrovich et al., 2017; Yoder, 2014).

The testimonials of the Portuguese teachers in our study are in line with the five factors identified by Johnson et al. (2007). However, in the second stage of analysis, i.e. the inductive one, another theme stood out in the teachers' testimonials expressing the value they accorded to social and emotional aspects which, in their views, impact the school climate and professional wellbeing. This new theme, which we called "Social and Emotional Literacy" is divided into three sub-themes: Empathy, Self-Regulation, and Social Awareness, as represented in Table 3.

Table 3: Illustrative examples of social and emotional literacy – an emerging theme

Theme	Sub-themes	Evidence from the teachers’ testimonials
Social and emotional literacy	Empathy	<p>“We have someone who listens to us and we can talk to” (T18/R1/P7).</p> <p>“There’s a safe harbour between colleagues at school” (T23/R1/P8).</p> <p>“Sympathy is a factor that helps create empathy”(T39/R2/P4).</p> <p>“A good working environment favours empathy between colleagues” (T8/R2/P6).</p> <p>“Empathy requires availability of others around you” (T51/R3/P7).</p> <p>“Empathy is an essential factor for positive relationships” (T42/R3/10)</p>
	Self-regulation	<p>“Sharing our expectations with colleagues helps to control our emotions” (T44/R1/P14).</p> <p>“Sometimes it is difficult to manage our emotions in the classrooms”</p> <p>“Well, I think it’s very important to hear the other’s opinion on your problem or your current point of view. Because that also puts some things into perspective” (T38/R2/P3).</p> <p>“The teachers work together as partners, and that helps greatly to manage those emotions and behaviours” (T20/R2/P9).</p>
	Social awareness	<p>“An environment of honesty and trust in which students feel they can trust teachers” (T3/R1/P3).</p> <p>“To raise good people; to promote adequate social experiences inside and outside the school” (T12/R1/P7).</p> <p>“Our school culture allows us to be with people who share values and teaching beliefs” (T33/R3/P9).</p> <p>“The team is fundamental to satisfaction in the workplace, and to our engagement and well-being” (T22/R3/P12).</p>

Empathy

Empathy plays a fundamental role in interactions between people and social relationships, as it helps to provide an adaptive response, perceiving the emotional states of others, and not becoming overwhelmed (emotional disconnection) (Martinsonė & Žydžiūnaite, 2023). This type of response involves and mobilises the ability to regulate one's own emotions, inhibit automatic reactions and adapt the response accordingly. For Marques et al. (2020) being empathetic contributes to better quality of social relationships, increases teacher satisfaction, improves communications, and supports interactions (Martinsonė & Žydžiūnaite, 2023). Empathy is valued in our participants' testimonials. In characterising the relationships that they establish within the school there seems to be unanimity among our teachers in considering that taking others' perspectives, showing respect for and trusting others, and recognising strengths in others are crucial for personal and professional satisfaction and, consequently, for teacher wellbeing:

For me, empathy is one of the basic principles of my pedagogical work. I have to be able to empathise with my counterpart to a certain extent to actually be able to move what I want to change in him. This is a basic pedagogical principle, what others can do more or others less and is more necessary in some subjects and less in others (T14/R2/P3-4).

Uncertainty in present items makes mutual conversations among teachers helpful, and sticking together supports us psychologically. And that also has to do with friendship somehow (T26/R2/P9).

In stressing the importance of an empathetic relationship between teachers and students one participant highlighted the figure of the teacher as a role model in the following terms:

As a teacher, one of the most important things is to be empathetic, because today you have to be able to empathise with students. Especially nowadays it is important to be able to put yourself in the shoes of others. Children are also expected to be empathetic. Then you have to be able to set an example (T44/R3/P5)

Self-regulation

Yin et al. (2016) state that trust between peers plays an important role in teachers' emotional regulation processes. Teachers feel more comfortable being themselves when there is a perception of a safe and positive environment, which leads to freer and more relaxed performance, and the reduction of stress levels. In addition, teachers who trust their colleagues tend to be more authentic, thus reducing the use of confrontational strategies, and favouring cooperative strategies.

Effective school principals play an important role in creating a school environment where teachers' concerns are taken seriously, and where they are encouraged to learn from their peers and solve problems together in an atmosphere of mutual

accountability (Johnson et al., 2012). Cooperative work and mutual support, opportunities for self-initiative and having a word to say in the decision-making processes are recurrent topics in our teachers' discourses about their emotional wellbeing as illustrated in the following passages:

The great closeness between colleagues sometimes generates conflicts that are resolved in the end. So, the most important thing for me is the mutual support between teachers, the atmosphere and friendship that is created, what each one can give, and does give (T27/R1/P11).

It is necessary to revisit the rules throughout the year. It is necessary to define very concrete and clear rules, managing emotions and behaviours is work in progress (T57/R2/P12).

Different classes have very different behaviours. Teachers must be aware of themselves emotionally to respond to this diversity (T1/R3/P4).

I also find it extremely pleasant at our school that we can take initiative and participate more actively in setting objectives for the school and for ourselves, and that contributes to our emotional wellbeing (T18/R3/P10).

According to one participant, teachers would appreciate being involved in initiatives on emotional literacy: *"These relationships come through experience. It would be important for our school to have projects on emotional literacy for teachers, just as there are for students"* (T44/R3/P9). Emotional literacy helps in the development of self-regulation skills (Yin et al., 2016). This points to the relevance of including training in emotional literacy as part of ongoing professional development programmes for teachers.

Social awareness

School climate seems to be strongly influenced by school leadership practices, such as promoting positive relationships and interactions, respect for all members of the school community, and effective communication. Thus, fostering supportive relationships between peers and between leaders and teachers helps to promote emotional wellbeing and create a school culture guided by values (Johnson et al., 2012; Lester et al. 2020; Yin et al., 2016). These findings of previous research are echoed in the following testimonials of our participants:

Theoretically, we all start from a predisposed mindset in which there are conditions conducive to positive relationships between teachers and students (T37/R2/P2).

Students' behaviour influences the classroom climate but we need to be careful because it is many times shaped by the behaviour of the teachers (T53/R2/P6).

The ability to recognise situational demands and opportunities on a day-to-day basis appears to be crucial and has an impact on the quality of interpersonal relationships and the school climate. In this way, the culture of the school, the type of leadership and its relationship with teachers play a relevant role in professional satisfaction and development (Johnson et al., 2012). As some of our participants put it,

When we are in trouble we know whom to turn to. We share the difficulties with our colleagues. Working in partnership helps a lot to overcome difficulties. It is natural to share good and bad situations because we work in partnership (T27/R1/P5).

Whenever we knock on the door of the principal it is always open, and the middle management is also available to help and encourage us (T32/R2/P4).

According to Cohen et al. (2009), the teaching and learning process is fundamentally relational, and norms and values regulate the interactions that take place at school and are an essential component of the school climate. The authors add that one of the most important aspects of relationships is the way people feel connected to each other and how they understand the influence of organisational climates on behaviour.

**4 An extension to Johnson et al.'s (2007) model –
A Social Climate Analytical Framework (SCAF)**

Following on from the analysis and discussion of the testimonials of the teachers who took part in this study, we propose a framework for analysing school climate which is based, above all, on the factors in Johnson et al.'s model (2007). However, we added two elements to the authors' model as represented graphically in Figure 1.

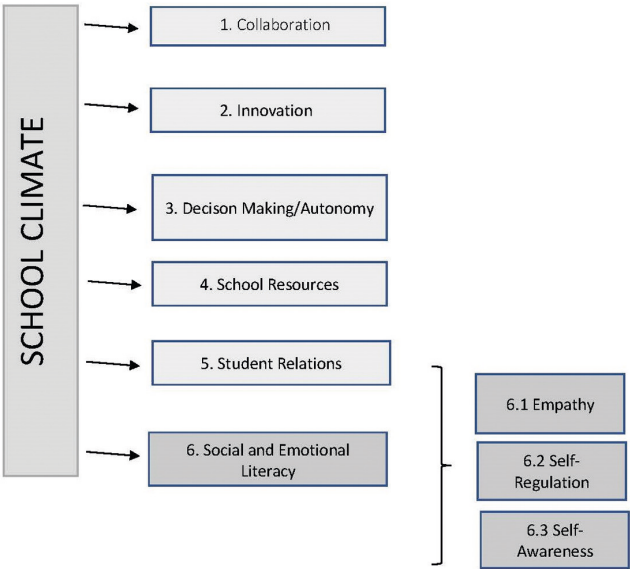


Figure 1: School Climate Analytical Framework (SCAF); self-drawn

As an extension to Johnson et al.'s model we added the term "Autonomy" to the authors' "Decision Making" given that the former concept was valued by our participants in association with the latter one. In general, the concept of "Decision Making" does not seem to be clearly defined and distinct from the concept of "Autonomy" in the extant literature. In previous studies, these two concepts appear discussed either as part of a single dimension (e.g., Johnson et al., 2007) or as two separate dimensions (e.g., Ozdemir & Cakalci, 2022). For our participants, decision-making stems from and reflects the degree of autonomy granted to teachers. As argued by one of our participants *"being recognised as autonomous professionals helps us to be more proactive and feel more confident in our choices and decisions"* (T43/R3/P12).

A more significant addition to Johnson et al.'s (2007) model was the inclusion of a new theme designated as "Social and Emotional Literacy" which emerged from our participants' testimonials and is supported by the specialised literature. As discussed above, this is a recurrent theme in recent literature (e.g. Cohen et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2012; Lester et al., 2020; Yin et al., 2016) which has the potential to become a sixth factor likely to enrich Johnson et al.'s (2007) school climate model.

5 Conclusions

School climate is a broad and multifaceted concept that involves many aspects of the educational experiences of teachers, students and other educational agents. A positive school climate is critical to the effective performance of teachers and the success of students.

The realities and experiences reported by the Portuguese teachers in our study are in line with some of the proposals outlined in the Report of the International Commission on the Futures of Education (UNESCO, 2021) pointing to the construction of the school climate based on the view of teaching as a collaborative profession.

Creating a school climate that encourages relationships of respect, trust and affection among the school community members and favours diversity and flexibility should be a major aim of today's school system. School efforts should be made to foster resilience-building interactions through inclusive school-level policies and initiatives, as well as comprehensive, multi-tiered, whole-school approaches to improve social and emotional literacy and develop social and emotional competencies in students and teachers.

Johnson et al.'s model (2007) is an important contribution to the theoretical and conceptual discussion of school climate. The five factors in the model represent the psychosocial context in which teachers work and teach. In our research,

we used Johnson et al.'s (2007) model as a conceptual framework to explore the relationships between school climate and teachers' wellbeing based on the perceptions and experiences of our participants. The deductive approach to the analysis of our data allowed us to ascertain the sufficient adequacy of the teachers' testimonials to the model.

The qualitative analysis of the data from an inductive perspective suggested an addition to the model with the inclusion of the concept of autonomy in Johnson's et al.'s (2007) "Decision-making" factor. At a more substantive level the emphasis placed by our teachers on aspects such as empathy, self-regulation and social awareness led to the inclusion of a new dimension related to Social and Emotional Literacy as a potential sixth factor impacting school climate.

The use of our six-factor School Climate Analytical Framework (SCAF) in future research will serve to further validate the extended model in both qualitative and quantitative studies. One possibility is, for example, the design and validation of a tool that integrates the six factors and allows a factorial analysis aimed to find potential correlations among the various factors. At another level, the use of SCAF to further explore the relationships between school climate and SEL in different settings will contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon considering the specificities of the different school contexts.

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