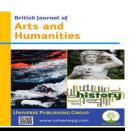


Publisher homepage: www.universepg.com, eISSN: 2663-7782

British Journal of Arts and Humanities

Journal homepage: www.universepg.com/journal/bjah





OPEN ACCESS | Research Article



Work Environment and Relational Trust: Its Influence on Teachers' Performance

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Received Date: 10 June 2025 Accepted Date: 11 July 2025 Published Date: 18 July 2025

Abstract

In a profession, which motivation and collaboration are pivotal to success, this study unveiled how a highly favorable work environment and strong relational trust shape teachers' lived experiences. Yet, intriguingly, neither factor directly determines performance, revealing the intricate interplay of elements that contribute to true instructional excellence. This descriptive-correlational study investigated the influence of the work environment and relational trust on teachers' performance among 165 teacher participants. A structured questionnaire served as the primary research instrument, specifically incorporating the Work Environment Questionnaire and the Relational Trust Questionnaire, while the Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF) results were utilized as secondary data to measure teacher performance. Descriptive statistics, using the mean, provided an overview of participants' perceptions, while Pearson's r, set at a .05 alpha level, was employed for inferential analysis. The findings revealed that teachers generally perceived their work environment to be very good, encompassing organizational culture, interpersonal relationships with both administrators and co-teachers, the quality and availability of school facilities, the prevailing school culture, autonomy in their roles, and access to professional development opportunities. Similarly, relational trust among teachers was found to be very high overall - particularly among co-teachers, while trust in administrators was rated high. Moreover, the teachers demonstrated very high levels of performance based on IPCRF data. While a significant positive relationship existed between the work environment and relational trust, neither variable showed a significant direct relationship with teacher performance. These results underscore the complexity of factors influencing teacher effectiveness beyond environmental and relational dimensions.

Keywords: Work environment, Relational trust, Teacher, Performance, School, Culture, and Administrator.

1. Introduction

The work environment is a critical factor in any organization, profoundly influencing employees' wellbeing, job satisfaction, and productivity. As a teacher, the researcher has come to understand that a positive work environment and mutual trust among colleagues and school leaders greatly influence not only the UniversePG | www.universepg.com

performance but also a motivation and sense of purpose. The researcher realized that trust between colleagues and administrators are not just a soft skill, but a powerful factor that directly impacts how effectively teachers can perform and grow professionally. The work environment includes aspects such as organizational culture, leadership style, colleague

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relationships, and physical conditions. A healthy work environment with clear communication, a collaborative culture, and supportive leadership is likely to increase relational trust among teachers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023; Sultana and Yoko, 2021).

In educational settings, the work environment includes physical conditions, administrative support, resource availability, and staff members' interpersonal interactions. A happy work environment promotes collaboration, reduces stress, and increases teachers' enthusiasm and dedication to their roles, which is critical for creating a favorable setting in which instructors may thrive, collaborate, and create. Such environments provide teachers with the incentive and support they need to accomplish their tasks effectively, eventually improving their students' educational experiences. Teachers who work in a supportive and well-resourced setting are more likely to provide high-quality education, which contributes to improved student outcomes (The Condition of Education, 2023).

The belief that educators have in the dependability, honesty, and kindness of their organization is known as relational trust. Relational trust at work creates a supportive, safe, and respected atmosphere for teachers, which increases their commitment and job satisfaction (Mayer *et al.*, 2015; Asis, 2025).

In the workplace, relational trust is a crucial element that supports efficient organizational operation. Relational trust between educators and administrators, as well as between educators and their peers, is essential to fostering a cooperative and cohesive school culture. Relational trust promotes the exchange of ideas and best practices, lowers conflict, and allows for open communication. Teachers are more willing to participate in professional development events, ask for feedback, and collaborate to achieve shared objectives when they have relational trust with their leaders and peers. The entire effectiveness of the teaching team is increased by this feeling of relational trust, which results in better teaching methods and better learning opportunities for students. Teachers are more willing to have open discussions, exchange resources, and collaborate to achieve shared objectives when they

have relational trust with their administrators and colleagues. The smooth operation of any school depends on a sense of relational trust, which lowers workplace stress, minimizes conflicts, and creates a cohesive working environment. Teacher performance includes a number of factors, such as teaching effectiveness, job satisfaction, commitment, and retention. By creating a feeling of psychological safety, lowering job stress, and increasing motivation and engagement, relational trust in the workplace is thought to have a good impact on teacher performance (Tschannen-Moran, 2021).

The level of education that children receive is directly correlated with the performance of teachers. Lesson planning, classroom administration, instructional delivery, and student assessment are just a few of the many tasks that make up performance. In addition to having solid topic knowledge and pedagogical abilities, high-performing teachers are able to motivate and inspire their students. The degree of relational trust they encounter in their professional community and the assistance they receive from their workplace frequently reflect how effective they are. Thus, it is critical for educational reform to comprehend the elements that affect teacher performance (Hattie, 2019).

The interplay between the work environment, relational trust, and teacher performance is a critical area of study for several reasons. First, examining how the work environment impacts relational trust and, in turn, how both factors influence performance can provide insights into creating supportive educational settings. Second, understanding these relationships can help school administrators develop strategies to foster a positive and relational trusting work atmosphere, ultimately leading to enhanced teacher performance. Finally, improving teacher performance through better work environments and relational trust can lead to significant gains in the teaching and learning process, thereby improving student outcomes and overall educational quality.

Studying these three interconnected elements - work environment, relational trust in the workplace, and teacher performance - are very much essential for developing comprehensive and sustainable strategies to effectively enhance overall educational effectiveness. By exploring these dynamics, educational stakeholders can identify key areas for intervention and support, ensuring that teachers are well-equipped to deliver the highest standards of education. This research aims to contribute to the body of knowledge by elucidating the complex relationships between these factors and offering practical recommendations for improving the teaching and learning process. The work environment, relational trust in the workplace, and teacher performance are integral components that collectively shape the educational experience.

As an educator, the researcher has observed first-hand the profound impact that the work environment and relational trust among co-teachers have on both individual performance and overall school effectiveness. In early years of teaching, the researcher worked in a school where the work environment was far from ideal. The physical conditions were challenging, with outdated resources and insufficient administrative support. Communication among staff was often strained, and there was a noticeable lack of relational trust between teachers and the administration. This environment made it difficult for her to focus on teaching, and the constant stress and lack of support significantly affected her performance and job satisfaction. Later, the researcher joined a school where the work environment was highly supportive and collaborative.

The administration was proactive in addressing teachers' needs, providing ample resources, and fostering a culture of open communication. There was a strong sense of relational trust and mutual respect among the staff. Both experiences greatly impacted her life as a teacher, which led to conduct a study to explore the interrelationships among these variables. The researcher also observed that when teachers feel valued and trusted by their colleagues and leaders, they become more motivated and committed to their work. This trust fostered open communication, collaborative decision-making, and a supportive work culture within the school. Over time, the researcher noticed that these positive dynamics not only improved teacher morale but also enhanced student

learning outcomes. The experience inspired a deeper curiosity about how these factors interact and influence one another in different school settings. This study aims to provide insights that could inform policies and practices to strengthen teacher performance by nurturing a healthier work environment grounded in trust.

The main purpose of this study was to examine how the work environment and relational trust levels in an educational setting impact the performance of teachers.

2. Methodology

This was a descriptive-correlational research, aimed at examining the relationship between work environment, relational trust, and teachers' performance. Through this approach, the study detected significant associations between dimensions of the work environment, levels of relational trust, and teacher performance outcomes. The results offer practical recommendations for school leaders to enhance working conditions and cultivate trust, thereby boosting teacher effectiveness.

This was conducted in the 20 schools in the District of Pontevedra, Division of Capiz.

The respondents were 165 out of 286 public elementary teachers of the district of Pontevedra.

The Raosoft sample size calculator was used to determine the sample size, the proportional allocation formula was used to determine number of teachers to be included from each school and stratified random sampling using the lottery technique was used to identify the respondents.

A questionnaire was used in gathering the data needed for the study. Before the questionnaire was utilized, it was submitted to the members of the examining and advisory committee for face and content validation. Their corrections were incorporated in the final questionnaire before it was pilot-tested to 30 teachers in the District of Maayon. Result of the pilot test showed a Cronbach's alpha of .990 signifying that the questionnaire was reliable since the value was higher than 0.8 but not higher than 1.0 for the teachers' performance, secondary data of their Individual

Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF) results filed at the District Office was used.

The researcher asked permission from the office of the Schools' Division Superintendent of Capiz, the School District Supervisor of Pontevedra and the Dean of the College of Education for the conduct of the study. Upon approval, the researcher distributed the questionnaires through Google Forms linked to her email address. The respondents accessed and completed the questionnaires online. Once the respondents completed the questionnaire, the researcher downloaded the responses from the Google Form and submitted them to the statistician for data analysis. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyze the data.

The mean was used to describe the level of the work environment, relational trust and performance of the teachers. The Spearman's rho, set at 0.05 alpha level, was used to measure the strength and direction of a monotonic relationship among work environment, relational trust, and teachers' performance.

3. Results and Discussion

Teachers experience a very good work environment. Key factors, such as organizational culture, interpersonal relationships, job autonomy, and professional development were also rated very good, reflecting a supportive and collaborative workplace. However, resources, physical facilities, and especially administrative support were rated slightly lower as good, suggesting areas for potential improvement.

The result indicating that teachers are experiencing a very good work environment suggest that schools foster a professional setting where collaboration, autonomy, and opportunities for growth are emphasized. However, while most components received a very good rating, certain areas, such as administrative support, physical facilities, and availability of resources scored slightly lower, indicating potential areas for improvement. The high rating of organizational culture and interpersonal relationships suggests that teachers feel a strong sense of belonging and collegiality in their workplace.

This result supports the findings of Hargreaves and Fullan, (2018) stated that teachers' perceptions of their work environment predict their engagement, commitment, and effectiveness in the classroom. A strong organizational culture with supportive leadership and collegial collaboration fosters a positive school climate. Their work emphasizes that sustainable school improvement is deeply rooted in building relational trust and professional capital among educators. They argue that when teachers feel respected, supported, and part of a collaborative professional community, they are more likely to invest emotionally and intellectually in their work. Further-more, Hargreaves and Fullan highlighted that leadership practices that prioritize teacher voice and collective efficacy lead to greater innovation and resilience within schools.

It also aligns with Johnson *et al.* (2018) that a positive and well-structured work environment plays a crucial role in enhancing teacher performance, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. He emphasized that collaborative relationships, supportive leadership, and adequate resources contribute to high levels of teacher performance and job satisfaction.

The results showing that work environment is rated as very good, reflects a school culture that prioritizes collaboration, autonomy, professional development, and access to quality resources, all of which contribute to teacher satisfaction, commitment, and effectiveness.

Research by Reid et al. (2022) explored how participation in leadership roles and decision-making processes can empower teachers and contribute to their professional growth. In line with this, Day and Gu, (2019) found that work environments characterized by supportive leadership and collegial relationships predict higher levels of teacher job satisfaction, commitment, and instructional effectiveness. Their study emphasized that the emotional and professional support teachers receive from school leaders and colleagues plays a crucial role in sustaining their motivation and performance. Furthermore, the research highlighted that when teachers feel valued and supported, they are more likely to remain in the profession and continuously improve their instructional practices.

Furthermore, it also supports a study by Siswanto *et al.* (2023) examines the effects of transformational leadership on job satisfaction and teacher performance in vocational schools. The findings indicate that transformational leadership positively influences both job satisfaction and teacher performance.

Collectively, these findings demonstrated that a positive school culture, strong leadership, and collaborative relationships create an environment where teachers feel valued, supported, and empowered, leading to greater job satisfaction and effectiveness. When educators operate in a culture of mutual respect and shared responsibility, they are more likely to engage in continuous learning and instructional innovation. Furthermore, such an environment contributes to improved student outcomes, as motivated and supported teachers can deliver higher quality education. This culture fosters a sense of professional purpose and belonging, which enhances teacher morale and retention. Teachers who feel trusted and empowered are also more open to collaboration and trying new pedagogical approaches. Over time, this creates a positive cycle of growth and improvement within the school community.

The overall level of relational trust was very high. Trust among colleagues was rated very high, indicating strong collegial bonds, while trust in administrators is rated High, suggesting generally positive but less robust trust in leadership.

A conductive work environment plays a crucial role in building relational trust. Schools that provide high-quality facilities, sufficient resources, professional development opportunities, and autonomy create an atmosphere where teachers feel valued, secure, and respected. This sense of support enhances relational trust by fostering positive interpersonal relationships, teamwork, and a shared sense of responsibility for student success. When teachers experience a supportive, well-structured, and resource-rich environment, their confidence in their colleagues and administrators increases, leading to higher levels of collaboration, open communication, and collective commitment to institutional goals. This trust-driven atmosphere promotes professional growth and shared responsibility

for student success. Ultimately, such a culture enhances both teacher morale and school-wide performance.

The result agreed with Hargreaves and Fullan, (2016) who highlighted the crucial role of school leaders in shaping the work environment and trust levels by ensuring transparency, fairness, and responsiveness to teachers' needs. When administrators engage teachers in decision - making, recognize their contributions, and provide consistent support, trust levels naturally rise, resulting in better communication and a more cohesive school culture. This inclusive leadership approach fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among teachers, further strengthening their commitment to school improvement.

Moreover, collective teacher efficacy - the shared belief that educators can positively impact student outcomes - is strongly linked to relational trust (Hattie, 2019). A school environment that supports teachers fosters stronger trust, which translates into collaborative teaching, innovative instructional methods, and higher student engagement. This enhances the overall learning experience and contributes to academic success.

Given these findings, policymakers and school leaders may prioritize initiatives that improve school environments, such as increasing access to resources, providing continuous professional development, and fostering inclusive leadership practices. Strengthening the work environment will naturally lead to stronger relational trust, which can significantly impact teacher performance, collaboration, and institutional growth. A trust-driven culture enhances not only teacher satisfaction and retention but also student achievement and overall school success.

Investing in a positive school environment is a key strategy for building trust, improving teacher performance, and fostering long-term educational excellence.

However, the test of the relationship between work environment and performance (r = 0.021, Sig = 0.791) was not statistically significant. This suggests that while a supportive environment strengthens relational

trust, it does not directly translate to higher performance levels. The results indicate that the relationship between work environment and teacher performance is not statistically significant, suggesting that while a positive school atmosphere enhances trust, autonomy, and collaboration, it does not automatically lead to higher teacher performance. This finding is essential because it challenges the common assumption that simply improving the work environment will directly boost teacher effectiveness. Instead, it implies that teacher performance is influenced by other factors beyond environmental conditions, such as intrinsic motivation, pedagogical skills, student engagement, and external policies.

However, this study indicates that while the work environment plays a role, its influence may be mediated by other variables such as motivation, professional development, or relational trust. However, the non-significant correlation here implies that while a conducive work setting is beneficial, it may not directly lead to higher performance.

This result supported the findings of Skaalvik and Skaalvik, (2017) that a positive work environment provides the foundation for teacher well-being, professional collaboration, and job satisfaction. Their research suggests that performance is driven more by individual competence, student needs, and instructional strategies rather than just the conditions in which teachers work.

This suggests that enhancing teacher performance requires a dual approach: improving external working conditions and investing in teachers' internal capacities. Professional development programs tailored to equip teachers with evidence-based instructional methods, culturally responsive practices, and differentiated instruction strategies are essential. Additionally, cultivating reflective practice and a growth mindset enables teachers to adapt to the evolving needs of their students. Therefore, while a supportive environment lays the foundation, sustained performance improvements stem from a continuous commitment to pedagogical excellence and personal development.

On the other hand, the test of the relationship between performance and relational trust (r = 0.006, Sig = .936) showed no significant results as well. This means that relational trust does not appear to be a defining factor of teaching performance. These findings emphasized the complexity of teacher performance, which may be influenced by various other factors beyond the school environment and interpersonal relational trust.

The relationship between teacher performance and relational trust as not statistically significant suggests that trust among educators and administrators, while crucial for collaboration and workplace harmony, does not directly impact teaching performance. This challenges the assumption that strong relational trust alone leads to improved instructional effectiveness, emphasizing that teacher performance is a multifaceted construct influenced by a combination of individual competencies, student dynamics, professional development, and systemic factors rather than trust alone.

Vangrieken *et al.* (2015) discussed the benefits and challenges of teacher collaboration, including its impact on instructional effectiveness. The review highlights that trust among teachers is a crucial factor in fostering effective collaboration and improving teaching practices. The lack of a significant relationship suggests that trust may not directly affect performance but instead underlies factors like teamwork, job satisfaction, and communication. This implies that trust acts as a foundational condition that enables other mechanisms - such as collaborative planning and peer support - to influence teacher outcomes more tangibly (Rodriguez and Hernandez, 2022).

Trust, therefore, may serve as an essential precondition that supports the development of strong interpersonal dynamics and a positive school culture. Without trust, initiatives aimed at improving collaboration or professional development may be less effective or even counterproductive. Rodriguez and Hernandez further noted that environments lacking in trust often experience communication breakdowns and resistance to change, which can hinder school-wide progress. On the other hand, when trust is present, teachers are more likely to take instructional risks, engage in reflective practices, and invest in long-term school improvement efforts.

Teachers demonstrated a very high level of performance, as evidenced by their IPCRF ratings. There was a significant positive relationship between the work environment and relational trust. However, no significant relationship was found between work environment and teacher performance, or between relational trust and teacher performance. A professional development plan entitled TEACHER Program towards Empowered and Committed Holistic Educators for result was created as an output of this research.

Output Developed Based on the Findings of the Study

A professional development plan entitled TEACHER Program towards Empowered and Committed Holistic Educators.

The TEACHER Program is a groundbreaking, research-based intervention developed in response to a study conducted in the District of Pontevedra (SY 2024-2025), which explored the critical influence of work environment and relational trust on teacher performance. The findings of this study were revealing: while relational trust does not directly predict teacher performance, it plays a pivotal role in supporting key elements such as collaboration, communication, and overall job satisfaction - factors that have a profound and indirect effect on teacher effectiveness. This innovative program seeks to harness the power of relational trust by creating an environment where teachers feel valued, supported, and empowered. By fostering strong professional relationships, the TEACHER Program encourages open communication, collaborative problem-solving, and the sharing of best practices among educators. These are the building blocks that elevate teaching quality, inspire professional growth, and ultimately enhance student learning outcomes.

At its core, the TEACHER Program is designed to create a sustainable, positive work culture within schools. It focuses on leadership development, ensuring that administrators are equipped with the UniversePG | www.universepg.com

tools and strategies necessary to nurture trust and respect among their teaching staff. Through targeted professional development and continuous support, teachers will have the resources to thrive, increasing their sense of belonging, engagement, and motivation. By promoting relational trust, this program will lead to improved collaboration and cooperation, enabling teachers to work together towards common goals and share their expertise. This will not only strengthen the professional community but also create a dynamic school culture where innovation, continuous learning, and excellence in teaching are celebrated. With the backing of research, the TEACHER Program provides a roadmap for transforming the work environment, enhancing teacher well-being, and improving educational outcomes.

The impact of this program goes beyond just improving teacher performance. It creates a long-lasting shift in the way schools function, elevating the role of educators and fostering a climate of trust and mutual respect. The resulting empowered workforce will not only feel more competent and confident but also more committed to the success of their students.

With clear benefits for teachers, students, and the broader educational community, the TEACHER Program is a compelling and essential intervention that promises to make a lasting impact on teaching and learning. This is an opportunity that no educational institution can afford to miss - it's not just a proposal, but a pathway to the future of education. In response, the TEACHER Program aims to strengthen these areas through strategic initiatives focused on professional development, collegial support, resource access, and improved school leadership, ultimately fostering a more conducive and empowering teaching environment.

Program Objectives

- 1) To promote a culture of trust and collaboration among teachers and school leaders.
- 2) To improve the availability and accessibility of instructional and material resources.
- 3) To strengthen professional development and wellness support.

- 4) To enhance administrative support and foster participative leadership.
- 5) To create a conducive and improved teaching-learning environment.

TEACHER Program Overview, Core Components and Objectives.

| Program | The TEACHER Program (Towards Empowered and Committed Holistic Educators for Results) is a |
|-------------|---|
| Overview | research-based initiative developed in response to a study conducted in the District of Pontevedra (SY |
| | 2024–2025), which explored the relationship between work environment, relational trust, and teacher |
| | performance. The study revealed that while trust may not directly affect performance, it plays a critical |
| | role in fostering a supportive environment that influences collaboration, job satisfaction, and instructional |
| | effectiveness. The TEACHER Program addresses these findings by implementing targeted strategies |
| | across seven core components aimed at improving the physical, professional, and relational dimensions of |
| | the school environment to enhance teacher performance and well-being. |
| Objective 1 | To promote a culture of trust and collaboration among teachers and school leaders. |
| Objective 2 | To improve the availability and accessibility of instructional and material resources. |
| Objective 3 | To strengthen professional development and wellness support. |
| Objective 4 | To enhance administrative support and foster participative leadership. |
| Objective 5 | To create a conducive and improved teaching-learning environment. |

Core Components: The program's acronym, TEA-CHER, itself outlines its key components

- T Trust-building: Begin by fostering a culture of trust and collaboration through team-building activities, workshops, and leadership development. This sets the foundation for the entire program.
- E Empowerment: Empower teachers through autonomy by establishing teacher-led committees and promoting participative decision-making. This increases teacher engagement and ownership.
- **A** Access to Resources: Improve access to essential teaching resources by developing a material repository, allocating budgets, and collaborating with local governments and stakeholders.
- C Collaboration: Enhance collaboration through professional learning communities (PLCs), peer mentoring, lesson studies, and interdisciplinary initiatives.
- H Holistic Professional Development: Invest in teachers' professional growth and well-being through training, workshops, wellness modules, and partnerships with higher education institutions.
- E Environment Enhancement: Create a conductive learning environment by renovating and maintaining facilities, involving teachers in the design process, and promoting sustainable practices.

R - Responsive Administrative Support: Provide responsive administrative support through feedback mechanisms, coaching, and teacher recognition programs. This ensures teachers feel valued and supported.

4. Conclusion

Teachers in the District of Pontevedra generally experience a positive and supportive work environment. They have a workplace where they likely feel comfortable, valued, and able to perform their duties effectively. The very good ratings for organizational culture, interpersonal relationships, job autonomy, and professional development may significantly contribute to a positive work experience that likely foster collaboration, a sense of belonging, and opportunities for growth. Resources, physical facilities, and administrative support could be improved to further enhance the teachers' work experience that could lead to even greater job satisfaction and efficiency. They have a strong foundation of mutual respect and confidence within the school community. There is a strong collegial relationship and a supportive professional culture that fosters collaboration and teamwork. The teachers have a generally positive perception of leadership, although not as strong as the trust shared among peers. School leadership is viewed favorably, but there may still be opportunities to strengthen trust between teachers and administrators, particularly in areas such as transparency, communication, and

shared decision-making. They consistently meet or exceed performance standards, reflecting a strong commitment to professional responsibilities, instructional effectiveness, and the achievement of educational goals. A supportive, collaborative, and well-structured work environment contributes meaningfully to the development of trust among teachers and between teachers and school leaders. While work environment and trust are essential components of a healthy school climate, they may not directly influence measurable aspects of teacher performance in the context of this study.

5. Acknowledgement

The researcher is grateful to those who extended help to pursue this research, especially to the respondents, who took time and shared their insights and to the Main Campus of Capiz State University.

6. Conflicts of Interest

The author affirms no conflict of interest.

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Citation: Valcarcel CAB. (2025). Work environment and relational trust: its influence on teachers' performance, *Br. J. Arts Humanit.*, 7(4), 553-562. https://doi.org/10.34104/bjah.02505530562

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