

Improving Teachers' Motivation Through Supportive Work Environments

Mehak Nayab Ahmad

Executive Summary

Teacher motivation is essential for effective teaching, job performance, well-being, and the quality of education. Inadequate physical work environments, on the other hand, can negatively affect teachers' motivation, satisfaction, productivity, and overall well-being. This brief examines how a supportive physical work environment, particularly appropriate temperature, adequate lighting, manageable noise levels, physical comfort, and regular rest breaks, can contribute to improving teachers' motivation. Existing research shows that workplace environmental conditions influence employees' psychological experiences, performance, and well-being, and that uncomfortable temperatures and poor physical workspace conditions can reduce productivity and increase dissatisfaction and turnover intentions. In educational institutions, creating comfortable and supportive working conditions can help fulfil teachers' psychological and workplace needs and strengthen job satisfaction and commitment. This brief therefore recommends that educational institutions and policymakers prioritize improvements in school infrastructure, safety standards, teacher welfare policies, and classroom conditions. These measures can contribute to healthier work environments, more motivated teachers, and improved educational outcomes.

RECOMMENDED CITATION

Ahmad, M. N. (2026). *Improving Teachers' Motivation Through Supportive Work Environments*. Intern Research Brief, PIVRA Research Internship Programme 2026 (Cohort 1). Pakistan Institute for Vision Research and Action.

This brief was written by Mehak Nayab Ahmad as part of PIVRA's Research Internship Programme (Cohort 1: Research and Policy Writing, July to August 2026).

How a Supportive Work Environment Improves Teachers' Motivation

The physical work environment is a critical factor influencing employees' activities and, through them, productivity, efficiency, satisfaction, and absenteeism (Kok & Alia, 2024). Employers play a substantial role in shaping the physical workplace environment, which in turn affects employee focus and productivity (Oyedemi et al., 2025). A well-designed, comfortable, and conducive workplace has a positive influence on employee satisfaction and recognizes employees as a vital asset in achieving organizational success. Consequently, creating an excellent physical workplace environment can significantly enhance employee productivity, which encourages employers to prioritize and provide such an environment, contributing to sustainable environmental health and safe workplace practices (Abdul Hamed et al., 2023).

The relationship between the physical work environment and work motivation is complex and interconnected. The physical work environment includes elements such as office layout, lighting, noise levels, temperature, ergonomics, and the overall ambiance of the workplace. These elements can significantly influence employees' motivation, performance, and overall job satisfaction (Candido et al., 2024).

Teacher Well-Being Influences Educational Quality and Development

Work motivation is considered an essential catalyst for organizational success, as it promotes employees' effective performance. To achieve an organization's objectives, employers depend on the performance of their employees. However, insufficiently motivated employees perform poorly despite being skilful. Employers therefore need their employees to work with full motivation rather than simply showing up at the workplace (Wang et al., 2024). The study of work motivation also helps explain the individual and social conditions that optimize people's performance and wellness (Šilinskas & Raižienė, 2024).

Physical Work Environment and Teachers' Motivation

The physical work environment plays an important role in shaping employees' psychological experiences, performance, and motivation. Workplace factors such as temperature, lighting, noise, and physical comfort can shape employees' satisfaction, well-being, and productivity (Page & Tolmie, 2024). School teachers spend a significant proportion of their time in classrooms, so environmental factors such as temperature, lighting, and rest breaks may influence their motivation (Zhou et al., 2024).

Evidence from Previous Research

Work Environment, Work Motivation, and Job Satisfaction

Prillia and Marianti (2024) studied the influence of the work environment on job satisfaction, mediated by work motivation, among employees of the Bank BRI Dago Bandung Branch. The study examined the impact of physical and non-physical work environments on work motivation and job satisfaction, and the role of work motivation as a mediator. The results show that both the physical and non-physical work environments have a significant influence on work motivation. Both affect job satisfaction indirectly, by raising work motivation, rather than directly.

Physical and Non-Physical Work Environment and Employee Performance

Arilaha et al. (2020) investigated the effects of motivation, the physical and non-physical work environments, and job satisfaction on employee performance within the Ternate City government. Their findings show that the physical and non-physical work environments, as well as job satisfaction, positively influenced performance, while motivation did not have a significant effect. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of the factors influencing employee performance, particularly in public sector contexts.

Impact of Physical Workspace Environmental Factors on Employee Performance

Tabassum, Siddiqui, and Shabbir (2021) studied the impact of physical workspace environmental factors on employee performance and turnover intention. The study treated five physical factors (air quality, temperature, noise, lighting, and workstation arrangement) as independent variables, and employee performance and turnover intention as dependent variables. Primary, cross-sectional data were collected from

public and private educational institutions in Karachi. The results showed a strong and significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Where physical conditions were good, they were positively associated with employee performance and reduced employees' desire to leave; where they were poor, performance suffered and the desire to leave increased.

Implications

The evidence reviewed in this brief has significant implications for educational institutions, school administrators, and policymakers, as it emphasizes the importance of creating supportive and comfortable work environments for teachers. Understanding the role of temperature, lighting, and rest breaks can help school management teams develop strategies to enhance teachers' motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment. Supportive environmental conditions can also facilitate positive motivational outcomes by fulfilling individuals' psychological needs and enhancing work engagement (Yu et al., 2024). The evidence further supports the development of improved classroom designs, workplace standards, and teacher welfare policies, ultimately promoting healthier school environments and better educational outcomes (Eryilmaz et al., 2025; Paloniemi Lindström, 2026).

Recommendations

1 Improve School Infrastructure

Educational institutions should improve school infrastructure to provide teachers with a comfortable and functional working environment. Schools should ensure proper ventilation, sufficient natural and artificial lighting, comfortable furniture, and appropriate temperature control. Improving these facilities can reduce physical discomfort and allow teachers to concentrate more effectively on teaching. Recent research on school buildings indicates that the architectural and ergonomic characteristics of school spaces can influence teachers' well-being and self-efficacy, and that classroom configuration and visual and acoustic conditions are relevant to teachers' workplace experiences (Vermeulen Steyaert, 2026). Infrastructure should therefore be treated as an important part of teacher support, rather than focusing exclusively on student facilities.

Schools should also regularly inspect classrooms and staff facilities to identify problems such as damaged furniture, poor ventilation, inadequate lighting, excessive heat, and insufficient staff-room facilities. Improvements in infrastructure can contribute to a more comfortable working environment and support teachers' physical and psychological well-being.

2 Establish Physical Workplace Standards for Temperature, Lighting, and Noise

Educational authorities should establish and monitor standards for classroom temperature, lighting, ventilation, and noise. Teachers should not be expected to work for long periods in excessively hot, poorly ventilated, excessively noisy, or inadequately lit classrooms. Environmental standards should be incorporated into routine school inspections so that problems can be identified and corrected before they negatively affect teachers.

Physical classroom conditions should also be included in school-quality and occupational well-being policies. Schools should monitor environmental conditions and provide practical solutions such as improved ventilation, appropriate lighting, acoustic improvements, shading, fans, or cooling systems according to local requirements.

3 Provide Regular and Adequate Rest Breaks for Teachers

Institutions should provide teachers with regular opportunities to rest during the working day.

Teaching is a highly demanding job that requires continuous concentration, communication, classroom management, lesson preparation, and administrative work. Without appropriate rest, teachers may experience fatigue and find it difficult to maintain their energy throughout the day.

Recent research on teachers' occupational well-being indicates the importance of school-related factors and working conditions in shaping teachers' cognitive, physical, mental, subjective, and social well-being (Nwoko et al., 2025). Providing opportunities for rest should therefore be considered part of an effective teacher welfare strategy.

4 Strengthen Occupational Health and Safety Standards

Educational institutions should focus on occupational health and safety standards for teachers. Management should regularly assess potential workplace risks, including poor ventilation, excessive heat, unsafe furniture, inadequate sanitation, electrical hazards, excessive noise, and other physical conditions that might affect teachers' health and comfort.

Occupational health policies should also include mechanisms through which teachers can report unhealthy working conditions. Administrators should respond to these concerns promptly and maintain appropriate records of identified risks and corrective measures.

5 Create Supportive and Comfortable Classroom Environments

Schools should create supportive and comfortable classroom environments that promote teachers' motivation, well-being, and job satisfaction. A supportive classroom provides adequate lighting, appropriate temperature, sufficient ventilation, comfortable furniture, manageable noise levels, and the teaching resources required for effective instruction.

Physical improvements should also be combined with organizational and interpersonal support. Administrators should communicate respectfully with teachers, recognize their contributions, involve them in relevant decisions, and provide assistance when difficulties arise in the workplace. Nwoko et al. (2025) show that social support from school principals contributed significantly to positive occupational well-being among teachers, which suggests that supportive leadership should accompany improvements in the physical school environment.

Educational institutions should also regularly obtain feedback from teachers on classroom conditions and workplace facilities. Teachers are directly exposed to the school environment and can identify problems that may not be apparent during administrative inspections. Their feedback can help administrators determine which infrastructure and workplace improvements need attention.

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