



# Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) in Educational Centers and Office Buildings: A Review

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**Abstract:** Air standards have surpassed the prescribed limits around the world and violations are the worst in urban areas. Most of the people living and working in urban areas lives unhealthy glamorous life neglecting their health. Substantial population mainly in urban centres are affected by air pollution related diseases. Air comprises of oxygen, which is vital for survival of human beings. The oxygen less air circulating in poorly air conditioned buildings with indoor pollutants is causing serious health problems. The physical conditions are having effect on teaching and learning process in education centres. Similarly, the physical conditions are having effect on work rate of the workers in offices. In the recent decade various researchers all around the world have monitored the indoor pollutant levels and their effects on the inmates in educational centres and offices showing indoor pollutants as silent invisible killer. In education centres and offices, indoor air pollutants have crossed the prescribed limit due to use of new emerging materials in decorating the interiors of these campuses. The indoor air pollutants should be within prescribed limit being more susceptible to its pollution impacts on inmates. In this review study, impacts of various indoor pollutants on inmates of education centres and offices are distinguished, and inmates in these environments is concentrated on and expressed. The review paper suggests the urge of controlling the increasing indoor pollution in the education centres and offices for a healthy environment.

**Keywords:** Indoor Air Quality, Educational Centre, Office building, ASHRAE.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In present decade, environmental awareness has made human beings aware of the various pollutions and their possible health effects. Air comprise of few gases. There are some fix percentages of gases present in the air. Anything in air other than the natural composition of air is a pollutant. Approximately 21% of oxygen gas is naturally present in the air. Oxygen is vital for respiration process and considered as life on earth. However, some air conditioned buildings are not equipped with mechanical ventilation systems, and thus natural ventilation and air infiltration are fresh air supplies. [1,2]. There is an increase in the ratio of buildings that do not confirm to the standards of relative humidity, room temperature and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) concentration in the last decade.[14]. Oxygen less environment has an adverse effect on the health of human being. The health problems due to indoor air pollution and oxygen less environment are not known ordinarily to the exposed population and usually neglected as the effects on health are assumed to be not instantaneous in some cases. In recent time, there is more existence of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) all over in the environment. The development and urbanization all over the globe has caused building related symptoms (BRSs), called the sick building syndrome, has come up as an occupational and environmental health affair, since the early 1970s [13]. Since there are many sources (e.g., traffic and industrial ejections as outdoor sources, building and furnishing materials, arts and crafts materials, cleaning agents, and personal care commodities as indoor sources) [3,4]. High rate of VOC concentrations were measured more in indoor than outdoor.[12]. Other factors that control indoor air quality are: Schools generally have high students density, poor ventilation, lack of maintenance, and not good enough cleaning [5,6].



## LITERATURE REVIEW

Temperature, humidity, air exchange rate, air movement, ventilation, particle pollutants, biological pollutants, and gaseous pollutants are the factors which largely affect indoor environment [19]. The causes responsible for health problems in educational centres and offices are oxygen less environment and indoor air pollutants. In recent years few studies were carried out across the world to monitor the current status of indoor pollutants in educational canter & offices.

Source	VOCs
Adhesives/sealants	Formaldehyde, butylether, vinyl cyclohexane, 2-propenoic acid, propylene glycol
Carpet	4-Phenylcyclohexene, vinylacetate, styrene, dodecanol, acetaldehyde
Cleaning chemicals	Limonene, isopentane, isopropanol, butoxyethanol, 1,4-dichlorobenzene
Linoleum	Acetic acid, hexanal, hexanoic acid, pentanoic acid, decane
Millwork	formaldehyde, 2-pentylfuran, benzaldehyde, hexanal, pentanal
Office furniture	formaldehyde, acetaldehyde, butylacetate, hexanal, cyclohexanone
Building occupants	Benzene from tobacco smoke (ETS) and attached garages, limonene (a terpene) and various siloxane compounds (eg. decamethylcyclopentasiloxane) from personal care products including antiperspirants and deodorants, tetrachloroethylene from dry-cleaned clothing, and C12 to C16 alkanes from hand and body lotion, moisturizing soaps, and cosmetics
Paints	Toluene, propylene glycol, ethylene glycol, butyl propionate, methyl propyl alcohol
Printers/copiers	Styrene, ethylbenzene, xylenes, benzene, 2-ethyl-1-hexanol
Resilient/rubber flooring	Styrene, dodecane, benzothiazole, vinyl acetate, cyclohexane
Textiles	Formaldehyde, acrylonitrile, acetaldehyde, decane, tetradecane
Wallcovering	Naphthalene, methylpyrrolidinone, styrene, phenol, ethylhexanoic acid
Window shades	Ethylhexanoic acid, decanol, dodecene, ethylhexanol, naphthalene

Table 1. Vocs and their sources [39]

## A. Educational Centres

Location of the building and environmental quality, and various building-related factors, such as the condition, maintenance, and cleaning of the school are responsible for influencing Indoor Environmental Quality of school building [27]. The ASHRAE Standard 62-1999 (ASHRAE, 1999) suggests a minimum ventilation rate of 8 l/s-person (15 cfm/person) for classrooms. Given usual occupant density of 33 per 90 m<sup>2</sup> (1000 ft<sup>2</sup>) and a ceiling height of 3 m (10 ft), the current ASHRAE standard suggests an air exchange rate of about 3 air changes per hour (ACH) for a classroom. Indoor CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations more than 1000 ppm indicates the ventilation rates that are objectionable with respect to body odours. Concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> below 1000 ppm do not forever guarantee that the ventilation rate is sufficient for removal of air pollutants from other indoor sources [40]. High concentrations of indoor gaseous pollutants as Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) and radon have been measured in classrooms across the world, these pollutants worsened the indoor air quality in schools. [45]. Because of the higher breathing rate comparative to the body size, and ongoing growth school children's are more susceptible to indoor air pollutants than adults [7], this exposes into higher health risk levels. Moreover, according to researchers, there are studies relating poor indoor environmental quality (IEQ) in schools to the performance of students [8], and poor ventilation to health symptoms [5]. IEQ is also affected by pollutants that are generated indoors.

## B. Office Building

Health problems and non-specific symptom complaints apparently related to buildings or indoor air, sometimes referred to as "sick building syndrome" or "tight building syndrome," have been recognized for over 15 years [23]. Most people understand that good air conditioning is just the control of temperature or ventilation which gives up comfort but there are many other people in such environment who suffer for nose irritations, stuffed



nose, rainy nose, eye irritations, cough, tightness in the chest, fatigue, headache, rash and a lot more symptoms [32]. Indoor air quality (IAQ) may significantly affect human health and comfort because people spend around 90% of their time indoors in offices, shops, public premises and homes. In this circumstance, offices are of concern, as they represent the majority occupational environment in developed countries. IAQ has been identified as a major concern in terms of its potential impact on human health[15]. Office buildings have widely evolved to become controlled environments with refined ventilating and air- conditioning systems. However, little is known about IAQ in these premises. Office buildings have not been broadly studied compared to other indoor environments in terms of time spent by the inhabitants, such as schools and dwellings According to [World Health Organization [WHO], 2010], the indoor environmental quality in offices may affect cognitive performance and even subclinical disturbances may lead to losses in work productivity due to indoor air pollutants [25]. Symptom increases found to be associated with air- conditioned buildings may more appropriately be considered as associated with air-conditioned, sealed buildings. The prevalence of some work-related symptoms was strikingly high in several studies even in the least problematic office buildings [36]. The researchers reported that higher overall symptom prevalence was associated with air-conditioned buildings, independently of associations also found between symptom prevalence and various individual, psychological, occupational, and architectural factors [36,37].

## II. HARMFUL EFFECTS OF INDOOR AIR POLLUTANTS

The quality of indoor air was recognized as amongst the most influencing concerns in context of health effect. In fact, people were normally exposed to high concentrations of pollutants indoors, which resulted in large dosage received with considerable health related effects [30].Scientific literature paid great attention on the micro environments where more pollutants were emitted typically located within offices (e.g. Printers, scanners and other workplace environments (e.g. industrial activity, schools. However, a crucial dose (and then a considerable health risk) can be also received during long exposures in non-occupational indoor microenvironments such as schools [31].

### A. Educational Centers

A number of serious health effects [4,9] and symptoms such as asthma and allergic reactions are linked with some of the VOCs. It has been reported that there were 6.8 million children with asthma [10] in the US, which was the major cause of school absenteeism accounting for 20% of lost school days in elementary and high schools [11]. Building Related Symptoms are related with poor quality of indoor air and may have other causes, particularly psycho-social stress. They consist of general, mucosal, and skin infection that some individuals experience when spending time in certain buildings [13]. In class rooms with low ventilation there is a particular concern for potential increased risks of contracting certain communicable respiratory illness, such as influenza and common colds [41].The formaldehyde (HCHO), Total volatile organic compounds (TVOC), and biological contaminants were the majority pollutants commonly measured in schools. The SBS is suspected to be caused by VOCs. TVOC concentrations, which are above 1 – 2 mg/m<sup>3</sup>, indicate that strong VOC sources and/or low ventilation are present [42]. The California Air Resources Board states that HCHO concentrations should be as low as possible as a caution for the possible cancer risk from repeated exposures [43]. A statistically significant partial correlation between symptoms of headaches, dizziness, heavy headed, tiredness, difficulties concentrating, unpleasant odor, and high CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations (1500 – 4000 ppm compared with concentrations below 1500 ppm) was found out by investigators [44]. Discussing about the classroom conditions, the factors causing daily nuisance in classrooms were noise and poor quality of indoor air [47].

### B. Office Buildings

Office Buildings various symptoms and diseases have been increasingly attributed to non-industrial indoor environments during the past few decades. The term sick-building syndrome (SBS) means the non-specific complaints, including upper- respiratory irritation symptoms, rash, fatigue and headaches which are commonly related with a particular building by their secular pattern of occurrence and grouping among inhabitants or colleagues. It is reported that the frequency of SBS has increased since the 1970s, as older naturally ventilated buildings have been replaced by new energy- efficient buildings[22].A mong the various categories of compounds found in indoor environments, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and aldehydes are found to repeatedly reach higher indoor concentrations as compared to the subsequent outdoor values. In this circumstance, probable health effects arising from indoor exposure to VOCs have been acknowledged recently [16]. Since, the environment inside the poorly air conditioned buildings becomes dry. The dry



eye-like symptoms is developed due to visually demanding tasks and relatively low humidity at workplaces [17, 18]. Case studies on epidemiology suggests that there is a direct effect of relative humidity on cell membrane which is in connection with respiration, contraction, nose tissue inflammations or influenza and fever [33]. The spreading rate of influenza virus increases considerably in environment where the relative humidity is less than 50% [34]. Researchers analyzed recent studies and found that there was an increase in the sick building syndrome (SBS) between 30% and 200% in the buildings with air-conditioning systems as compared to natural ventilation systems. A serious warning for indoor environment problems related to air conditioned systems is being given from the above events. It is not wrong to say that indoor environment problems still exist in today's mechanically conditioned buildings, even though present standards are met [20]. The combined effect of low ventilation rates and the presence of numerous synthetic chemicals results in elevated concentrations of indoor particle pollutants and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) (e.g. benzene, toluene, and formaldehyde). This is considered to be a major contributing factor to compound hypersensitiveness [21]. In urban areas with hot and humid climate the artificial air-conditioning is a issue of concern for respiratory symptoms. Researchers documented this study and evaluated the relationship of respiratory symptoms of full-time workers from buildings with air-conditioning without humidification systems in comparison with naturally ventilated buildings in a city with hot and humid climate [26]. Sealed buildings with air-conditioning are related with a higher chances of work-related upper respiratory symptoms as compared to buildings with natural ventilation, irrespective of being a tropical country with high relative and absolute humidity rates all around the year [38].

### III. STANDARDS LIMITS OF INDOOR AIRPOLLUTANTS

The design and installation of air conditioning system to control thermal environment to achieve human thermal comfort and health inside a buildings should comply with the ashrae standard which is the most appropriate [35].

Table2.  
Standard,  
for Acceptable  
Quality

Contaminant	Long Term		Short Term	
	Level	Time	Level	Time
Carbon Monoxide			40mg/m <sup>3</sup>	1hr
			10mg/m <sup>3</sup>	8hr
Lead	1.5 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	3 Months		
Nitrogen dioxide	100 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	Yr		
Oxidants (Ozone)			235 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	1hr
Particulates	75 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	Yr	260 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	24hr
Sulfur dioxide	80 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	Yr	365 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	24hr

ASHRAE  
Ventilation  
Indoor Air

Table3. ASHRAE, Additional Ambient Air Quality Guidelines

Contaminant	Long Term		Short Term	
	Level	Time	Level	Time
Acetone - O	7mg/m <sup>3</sup>	24hrs	24 mg/m <sup>3</sup>	30min
Acrolein - O			25 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	C***
Ammonia - O	0.5 mg/m <sup>3</sup>	Yr	7 mg/m <sup>3</sup>	C
Beryllium	0.01µg/m <sup>3</sup>	30 Day		
Cadmium	2.0 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	24 Hrs		
Calcium Oxide (Lime)			20-30 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	C
Carbon Disulfide- O	0.15 mg/m <sup>3</sup>	24 hrs	0.45 mg/m <sup>3</sup>	30min
Chlorine - O	0.1 mg/m <sup>3</sup>	24 hrs	0.3 mg/m <sup>3</sup>	30min
Chromium	1.5 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	24 hrs		
Cresol-O	0.1 mg/m <sup>3</sup>	24 hrs		
Dichloroethane-O	2.0 mg/m <sup>3</sup>	24 hrs	6.0 mg/m <sup>3</sup>	30min
Ethyl acetate -O	14 mg/m <sup>3</sup>	24 hrs	42 mg/m <sup>3</sup>	30min



Formaldehyde-O			120 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	C
Hydrochloric acid-O	0.4 $\text{mg}/\text{m}^3$	24 hrs	3 $\text{mg}/\text{m}^3$	30min
Hydrogen sulphide-O	40.50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	24 hrs	42 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	1 hr
Mercaptans-O			20 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	1hr
Mercury	2 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	24 hrs		
Methyl alcohol-O	1.5 $\text{mg}/\text{m}^3$	24 hrs	4.5 $\text{mg}/\text{m}^3$	30min
Methylene	20 $\text{mg}/\text{m}^3$	Yr	150 $\text{mg}/\text{m}^3$	30min
Chloride-O	50 $\text{mg}/\text{m}^3$	24 hrs		
Nickel	2 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	24 hrs		
Nitrogen monoxide	0.5 $\text{mg}/\text{m}^3$	24 hrs	1 $\text{mg}/\text{m}^3$	30min
Phenol-O	0.1 $\text{mg}/\text{m}^3$	24 hrs		
Sulfates	4 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	Yr		
	12 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	24 hrs		
Sulfuric acid-O	50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	Yr	200 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	30min
	100 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	24 hrs		
Trichloroethylene-O	2 $\text{mg}/\text{m}^3$	Yr	16 $\text{mg}/\text{m}^3$	30min
	5 $\text{mg}/\text{m}^3$	24 hrs		
Vanadium	2 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	24 hrs		
Zinc	50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	Yr		
	100 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	24 hrs		

Note :

\* unless otherwise specified ,all air quality measurements should be corrected to standard conditions of 25°C (77°F) temperature and 760 mm. of mercury pressure.

\*\* These materials marked "O" have odours at concentrations sometimes found in outdoor air. The tabulated concentration levels do not necessarily result in odourless condition.

\*\*\* Ceiling ,or maximum allowable concentrations

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The studies reflect that indoor air pollutants persist in the education centers and office buildings. The oxygen less environment and exposure to higher levels of indoor pollutants with certain exposure time can have serious health impacts on the inmates. Indoor Air Quality should be monitored frequently to check the pollutant levels and take necessary safety measures for a superior domain.

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