Impact of Organizational Climate and Politicization on Commitment of College Teachers

Organizational climate is essential for the effectiveness of an organization. Climate is indicative of how well the organization is realizing its full potential. High-performance organizations tend to make optimal use of everyone’s capabilities. An accurate assessment of the climate can identify the unnecessary obstacles to employees contributing their best. Thus, it is of vital importance for every one to measure organizational climate factors, which affect members of the organization positively and negatively in order to create a climate, in which job satisfaction and effectiveness is supplied in an organizational environment.

5.1 CONCEPT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

Organizational climate is a set of measurable properties of the work environment, perceived directly or indirectly by people who live and work in this environment and assumed to influence their motivation and behaviour. Traditionally, organizational climate alms to capture a snapshot of an organization at one point in time. Organizational climate research has had a long and active history, with much of its foundation drawn from psychology. The concept of organizational climate has been assessed by various authors, of which many of them published their own definition of
organizational climate. For those interested in understanding organizational climate, it is important to make some distinctions. First, climate and culture are both important aspects of the overall context, environment or situation. Culture tends to be shared by all or most members of some social group; is something that older members usually try to pass on to younger members; shapes behavior and structures perceptions of the world. Cultures are often studied and understood at a national level, such as the American or French culture. Culture includes deeply held values, beliefs and assumptions, symbols, heroes and heroines, and rituals. Culture can be examined at an organizational level as well. The main distinction between organizational and national culture is that people can choose to join a place of work, but are usually born into a national culture.

Organizational Climate is a very popular subject for research in the domain of industrial and organizational psychology. The origin and the use of the specific term are found to be as old as the original concept of management itself. However, over a long period of time there appeared various frameworks, conceptual as well as operational, different sets of dimensions, techniques of measurements, and research findings that are highly diverse and often contradictory. It created considerable ambiguity in the particular area. Up to a certain point of time it had been even confused with another very important concept, ‘Organizational Culture’.

The earliest reference of Organizational Climate is found in the article of Lewin, Lippitt and White (1939). This article is focused on the experimentally created social climates on a number
of groups of teenage boys. But astonishingly the authors failed to provide any conceptual framework or the technique of measurement of Organizational Climate. The article mainly emphasized on the relationship between leadership styles and so-called 'Social Climate'. Climate was again mentioned in an article by Fleishman (1939). This article discussed the development of leadership attitude and its implication through the measurement of behavioural scales. In that article Fleishman discussed 'Leadership Climate' as a construct but he did not explain the concept of climate very elaborately.

Climate was first very comprehensively defined by Argyris (1958). In his attempt to diagnose the group dynamics in a bank, Argyris introduced the concept of organizational climate. In that paper Argyris defined climate in terms of formal organizational policies, employee needs, values, and personalities. This paper also triggered off the popular ambiguity between culture and climate that persisted till late 70's in the realm of organizational studies. The famous book 'The Human Side of Enterprise' (1960) opened a new horizon of management science. It introduced many pioneering concepts of organizational and industrial psychology. McGregor in this book elaborated the concept of managerial climate. He argued that the climate is primarily determined by the managerial assumptions and the relationship between the managers and their subordinates. There were drawbacks on the conceptual framework. First, McGregor did not present any technique of measurement of organizational climate. Second, it is culture, not climate which are measured by the sets of assumptions. Climate is more dependent on perceptions rather than assumptions. Apart from these principal
research works there were also other studies and the collection of all the research work ultimately provided the initial framework of organizational climate. In their research work Forehand and Gilmer (1964) defined organizational climate as a 'set of characteristics that (a) describe the organization and distinguish it from other organizations, (b) are relatively enduring over time and (c) influence the behaviour of people in the organization.' Gregopoulos (1963) defined organizational climate as a 'normative structure of attitudes and behavioural standards which provided a basis for interpreting the situations and act as a source of pressure for directing activities.'

In their extensive research work Litwin and Stringer (1966) introduced a very comprehensive framework of Organizational Climate. They provided six dimensions of Organizational Climate that include i) structure ii) responsibility iii) reward iv) risk v) warmth and vi) support. In another book by Litwin and Stringer (1968) emphasis was given on the concept of climate and its influence on the McClelland's 'need factors' of motivation i.e. n. power, n. achievement, and n. affiliation. Attempts were also made to establish the operationalization of climate through the assessment of members' perceptions. During this time the actual concept of Organizational Climate began to take shape. In a study by Schneider and Bartlett (1968), attempts were made to develop a measure of climate. The authors conducted extensive empirical study on the employees in life insurance companies by developing two sets of separate dimensions, one managerial level and another for the field agents of the companies. During this time the studies of organizational climate has established the fact that it can be
conceptualized and measured through the shared perceptions of the organizational members and almost all the contemporary studies embraced the concept. Another study titled 'Managerial behaviour, performance, and effectiveness' (1970) made an extensive survey of the existing literature and presented four compact dimensions of organizational climate.

In their unique effort, James and Jones (1974) reviewed all the previous relevant researches, definitions, conceptual frameworks, and measurement approaches and differentiated them into three principal categories. According to them, all the major theoretical concerns and relevant researches related to organizational climate can be divided into three approaches:

1. MMOAA (Multiple measurement-organizational attribute approach),

2. PMOAA (Perceptual measurement-organizational attribute approach) and

3. PMIAA (Perceptual measurement-individual attribute approach).

Each of these approaches carries a number of research works under its belt. The concept of organizational climate was established separately under each of these approaches. The categorization has resulted in the re-conceptualization of climate construct and the domains of researches have become differentiated. As recommended by James and Jones, the distinction should be made between organizational attributes and individual attributes approach. They also emphasized on the use of the phrase 'Psychological Climate' instead of organizational climate in case of individual attribute approach.
Organizational climate, however, still proves to be hard to define. It is a concept that enables the industrial/organizational psychologist to identify how the organization is a psychologically meaningful environment for individual organization members. Descriptively, it represents the individual member’s perceptions of the conditions, factors, and events that occur in the organization. It can also be defined as the global assessment of the interaction between the task-achievement dimension and the needs satisfaction dimension within the organization, or in other words, of the extent of the task-needs orientation. In general usage, the term has a psycho-social flavour which reflects more concern with the needs satisfaction dimension than with the task achievement dimension but the meaning that gives relatively equal attention to both is preferred. It can also be said as “merely as a some-what blurred esprit score.” Organizational climate can be conceived as a cathetic patterns giving identification to sub-group and the interpersonal relations in a living organization.

There are two especially intractable and related difficulties: how to define climate and how to measure it effectively on different levels of analysis. Furthermore, there are several approaches to the concept of climate, of which two in particular have received substantial patronage: the cognitive schema approach and the shared perception approach. The first approach regards the concept of climate as an individual perception and cognitive representation of the work environment. From this perspective climate assessments should be conducted at an individual level. The second approach emphasizes the importance of shared perceptions as
underpinning the notion of climate (Anderson and West, 1998; Mathisen and Einarsen 2004). Reichers and Schneider (1990: 22) define organizational climate as “the shared perception of the way things are around here”.

A number of studies by Dennis Rose and colleagues (2001, 2002, 2004) have found a very strong link between organizational climate and employee reactions such as stress levels, absenteeism and commitment and participation. A study by Heidi Bushell (2007) has found that Hart, Griffin et al.’s (1996) Organizational Climate model accounts for at least 16 per cent single-day sick leave and 10 per cent separation rates in one organization. Other studies support the links between organizational climate and many other factors such as employee retention, job satisfaction, well-being, and readiness for creativity, innovation and change. Hunter, Bedell and Mumford (2007) have reviewed numerous approaches to climate assessment for creativity. They found that those climate studies that were based on well-developed, standardized instruments produced far higher effect sizes than did studies that were based on locally developed measures.

5.2 IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE ON COMMITMENT OF TEACHERS

Educational institutes are social institutions. Within these institutions there are students, teachers, administrators, and many kinds of service personnel. Members of each of these groups occupy distinctive positions and are expected to behave in certain ways. The role expectations of these groups and norms ascribed to them are different from each other. Clearly, the relationships among
many kinds of people in these institutions are varied and complex. Only if those relationships are understood and generally accepted can these institutional organization function effectively.

Every educational organization has a climate that distinguishes it from other institutions and influences behaviour and feelings of teachers and students for that institution. The concept of climate has evolved during the past 45 years as a result of growing realization that the interactions of people with the environment is a two-way process and is shaped both by the environment and the psychological characteristics of the individual. Organizational climates are the manifestations of the behavioural responses of all the participating individuals with the environmental constraint; therefore, organizational climate must be viewed as a 'living-system' with its own personality virtue and peculiarities.

Institutions differ from each other in many aspects. In one college one may notice a very high spirit of affection and the pleasure of being in it, whereas the other may be marked by incompetence, frustration, despair and psychological sickness. A third may be just carrying on the ritual of class teaching and examinations without there being any life in it. Some exude warmth and welcome to members and visitors, others convey the feeling of suspicion of distrust, aloofness, coldness or indifference. Just as individuals can be identified by personality characteristics, institutions may also be done so. In some colleges teacher-principal and teacher-teacher relationships are typically genuine and authentic or thin and superficial.
Organizational climate is the way in which organizational members perceive and characterize their environment in an attitudinal and value-based manner (Moran and Volkwein, 1992; Denison, 1996; Verbeke, Volgering, and Hessels, 1998). It has been asserted as an important and influential aspect of satisfaction and retention, as well as institutional effectiveness and success in higher education. As a result of its subjective nature and vulnerability to control and manipulate by individuals within an organization's decision-making mechanism, the organizational climate is greatly influenced by organizational leadership (Smart, 1990; Cameron and Smart, 1998; Volkwein and Parmley, 2000; Johnsrud, 2002).

The majority of research examining organizational climates in higher education has focused on faculty and student perceptions (see, for example, Hagedorn, 2000; Johnsrud, 2002; Volkwein and Zhou, 2003). Albeit minimal in comparison to research based on faculty and students, there have been a handful of studies specifically addressing organizational climate and administrative staff. As stated by Volkwein and Zhou (2003): Higher education research has shown that several work-related variables exert positive and significant influences on administrative satisfaction: a supportive organizational culture, teamwork, relationships with colleagues and superiors, worker autonomy, and self-fulfillment.

Similar to the above evidence, two recent studies by Volkwein and colleagues (2000, 2003) examined the administrative job satisfaction at both public and private universities. Their collective findings reported job insecurity, stress, and pressure as
having a significant negative impact on overall satisfaction, while teamwork, recognition, advancement, feelings of independence, and social and professional relationships with colleagues and supervisors had a significant positive impact on overall satisfaction.

Two studies conducted by Johnsrud and colleagues (1999, 2000) examined the morale of mid-level administrators. Defining morale as “a state of mind regarding one’s job, including satisfaction, commitment, loyalty, and sense of common purpose with respect to one’s work” (1999 : 124), they found that organizational climate-related items such as trust, communication, guidance, feedback and recognition of competence from supervisors as significant contributors to overall morale. Another study examined the organizational climate and its relationship to job insecurity in three different universities.

Organizational climate of an educational institutions can be said as a delicate blending of interpretation (or perceptions) by persons in the organization of their jobs or roles in relationship to others and their interpretations of the roles of others in the organization. Organizations can also be treated as personality in the concept of organizational climate which embraces the milieu of personalities, principal and teachers, interacting within the sociological and psychological frame work of an institution. Climate may be pictured as a personality sketch of a educational institution. As personality describes an individual, so climate defines the essence of an institution. Personality is relatively stable over a period of time, but it can change. So is with organizational climate. Human behaviour in an organization has several variables:
1. Formal organizational variables e.g. policies, practices and job descriptions;
2. Personality variables e.g. needs, abilities, values, self-concept; and
3. Informal variables that arise out of the participants' continuing struggle to adopt to the formal organization.

These three variables are not discrete, but are mixed beyond classification and form a pattern in which each plays a functional role feeding back and upon the others to maintain itself and the pattern. This fourth level can be described as a 'living complexity' and can be defined as the 'climate of the organization'.

When the new observer comes into a group for the first time, he is able to sense a feeling about the group which can be called as an atmosphere or a climate. Climate can be described in term of 'supportive' (attitude of willingness to share in a problem that the group holds in common) and defensive (characterized by advice giving, censoring, defense, persuasion, controlling, punishing etc.).

"Educational environment" can also be used as synonymous to organizational climate. The term "educational environment" refers to the conditions, forces, and external stimuli that foster the development of individual characteristics. As education aims at changing of behaviour, environment is a powerful variable which must be fully understood and considered while planning the education of children.

Thus, it can be said that climate has been defined in various ways by authors as the perceived subjective effects of the formal
system, the informal style of managers, and other important environmental factors that impact on the attitudes, beliefs, values and motivation of people who work in a particular organization. In this study, institutional/organizational climate includes college infrastructure and facilities, policies and practices of the college, performance appraisal methods in the college and college culture. The following table shows data on the organizational climate and level of commitment among the selected teachers—

Table 5-1
Percentage Distribution of the Sample According to Organizational Climate and Level of Commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Climate</th>
<th>Level of Commitment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unbalanced</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>(55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(31)</td>
<td>(125)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(—)</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>(144)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>(61)</td>
<td>(324)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Actual figures are shown in parentheses)
Chi-Square = 31.839; DF = 4; Significance Level >.05

It may be observed that one-fifth (20.0 per cent) of the respondents have evaluated the organizational climate of their colleges as unbalanced, four out of ten (40.2 per cent) as balanced and remaining another four out of ten (39.8 per cent) as supportive. Those who have categorized their college infrastructure and facilities for teachers as unsatisfactory and have evaluated
teaching not conducive for professional development are put under the category ‘Unbalanced’ organizational climate. Those who think that college infrastructure and facilities for teachers are normal and have evaluated teaching normal for professional development and academic activities are put under the category of ‘Balanced’ organizational climate. Those who find college infrastructure and facilities for teachers satisfactory and have evaluated teaching satisfactory for professional development and academic activities are put under the category of ‘Supportive’ organizational climate.

It may be observed from the data presented in the preceding table that nearly two-third teachers in unbalanced organizational climate have high level of commitment and remaining little less than one-third either moderate or low level of commitment. A little less than three-fourth teachers in balanced organizational climate have high level of commitment and remaining little less than one-fourth either moderate or low level of commitment. An overwhelming majority of teachers who have categorized the organizational climate of their colleges as supportive have also exhibited high level of commitment. None of the teachers in this category has low level of commitment. One-tenth such teachers have shown moderate level of commitment. Data amply demonstrate that organizational climate of the colleges is significant determinant of commitment among teachers. As the calculated value of Chi-square is much higher than its table value (9.488) at 4 degrees of freedom, the association between organizational climate and commitment among teachers seems to be highly significant.
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The present system of higher education does not serve the purpose for which it has been started. In general education itself has become so profitable a business that quality is lost in the increase of quantity of professional institutions with quota system and politicization adding fuel to the fire of spoil system, thereby increasing unemployment of graduates without quick relief to mitigate their sufferings in the job market of the country. So, the drawbacks of the higher education system underscore the need for reforms to make it worthwhile and beneficial to all concerned. The purpose of education is all round development of personality. But the present day education is neither imparting true knowledge of life, world and helping one stand on one’s own leg nor improving the talent of a student by which one can achieve laurels in the field one is interested.

Amartya Sen—the Nobel-Laureate and Master, Trinity College, Cambridge denounced the Union Government’s reported move to impart religious values as part of primary education. Chances were high that this move would impart a sectarian attitude based on religion, he said. Addressing the media after a two-day workshop on “Education, Equity and Human Security”, co-hosted by the UNICEF, Harvard University, the Commission on Human Security and Pratichi Trust, Prof. Sen said religious self-esteem, in practice, was often misdirected to a sectarian outlook which might bring more harm than good. On the Centre’s move to change the educational content and curriculum, he said
“there is a danger that some political groups may manipulate the educational content and curriculum in schools for subversive purposes. Openness of the curriculum and a secular and inclusive approach that cultivates reasoning and scrutiny can be central to the role of education to promote human security” (Sen, 2002).

Moreover, the intellectual numbness in Indian universities is said to be the result of politicization of campuses. It has been asserted time and again that teachers, probably, can’t shrink from their responsibility for the dismal picture prevailing in the institutions of higher learning. The Indian universities and colleges are becoming an expanding desert of intellectual infertility.

Our university represents the general conditions prevailing in most of the Indian academies. The picture, indeed, is glooming, but so is the blooming situation of our polity, economy or society also. Let us see what is the opinion of knowledgeable and reliable sources in academic scene in India. The Committee to enquire into the working of the central universities appointed by U.G.C. (1984) has observed, “hardly a week passes in the country when the newspapers don’t carry some news or the other about disturbances in the universities, including central universities. Strikes, Gheraos, and closure of the university are the usual headlines...factionalism and groupism among teachers is rampant....these factions actively make use of students and instigate against each other.” In such an atmosphere, hardly one can expect any intellectual productivity.

Andre Beteille (1987) has drawn our attention to another symptom of the sickness of our universities, i.e., the increasing absenteeism on the part of the teachers. In his own words, “teachers
in the colleges freely admit that, even when there is no strike, classes are not always held according to schedule and absenteeism is now wide spread and thinly disguised...perhaps in the majority of colleges, taking classes is becoming increasingly a matter of personal convenience.” Usha Rai (1982) has mentioned an interesting case in regard to J. N. U., “there is at least one teacher who comes to J. N. U. just once a month to collect his salary.” Why there is so much absenteeism? Does it mean that the students and teachers are no more attracted towards their place of learning? If so, what hope one can have from academies in regard to intellectual activity and teachers as ego ideals for their students.

Poddar (1974) has very rightly pointed out that the universities have devaluated themselves to the level of intellect-worker. “As intellect-workers, they have ceased to be concerned with the intellectuals, perennial quests—such as discovery of truth and the willingness to go as far as it will lead, the detection of an struggle against evil, the problem of social and moral responsibility, etc. They are no better than cogs in the wheel of the vast governmental machinery and since a cog possesses no conscience, they too have not any...” Thus the teachers have become the moralists of realism. They have learnt to mould themselves according to the winds of opportunity.

Still another symptom of intellectual infertility may be identified in the form of teacher's isolation in his own community. Srivastava (1970) has pointed out that the teachers are not instructing machines. They are whole human beings, interlocked in a network of human relationships. The teachers feel that they have
become marginal men in their own community, which has begun to assign more prestige to political power and material achievements. Teachers, in general possess the neither.

Last but not the least is the symptom of teachers having their own negative self image. Such an image grows out of sheer frustration. Shils (1970) has clearly shown the fact that the Indian academic profession has a bad name among those Indians who make it up and those Indians who observe it. There is undoubtedly a good deal of truth in these negative evaluations. So much so that, “even the academic profession does not encourage its best men and women pupils to pursue academic careers.”

All the above symptoms indicate that there is an intellectual numbness in Indian universities. They are not even able to perform their functions of teaching and research. It is more tragic that the teachers of these academies have not reacted to this in gulping current of intellectual sterility. They, of course, agitate but the agitation is more for higher pay and perks rather than for improving the conditions of creativity. They have their due share of activists also, most of these activists are the seekers of favours from the university authority or political bosses. In turn, these petty teachers politicians begin to establish their own clientele by various forms of favouritism. This ultimately leads to factionalism among the teachers, polluting the total academic environment. This is the reason that we have tried to find out the impact of politicization in determining the level of commitment among teachers.

Table 5.2 presents data about the levels of politicization and commitment among teachers on next page—
### Table 5.2
Percentage Distribution of the Sample According to Levels of Politicization and Commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Politicization</th>
<th>Level of Commitment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>(35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>(61)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Actual figures are shown in parentheses)

Chi-Square = 59.380; DF = 4; Significance Level >0.05

It may be observed from the data presented above that nearly two-third of the teachers with low level of politicization exhibit high level of commitment and the remaining a little more than one-third either moderate or low level of politicization. More than three-fourth teachers with moderate level of politicization exhibit high level of commitment and remaining one-fifth moderate level of commitment. None falls in the category of low level of commitment. As regards the teachers with high level of politicization, it may be noticed that an overwhelming majority of them has shown high level of commitment. Those with moderate level of commitment have insignificant proportion and none has shown low level of commitment. It seems that the level of politicization has significant impact on level of commitment among teachers. On the contrary, the proportion in moderate level of commitment shows significant
decrease with the increase in politicization among the selected teachers. As we move from low to high level of politicization, the corresponding score in high level of commitment shows significant increase. As the calculated value of Chi-square is much higher than its table value (9.488) at 4 degrees of freedom, the association between politicization and commitment among teachers seems to be highly significant. The point which emerges from this table is that politicization is not hindrance in the commitment of teachers in the colleges. In fact, it enhances their level of commitment.