CHAPTER - III

CONCEPT AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous Chapter described the various studies previously conducted in respect of Organizational Climate (OC) by various authors. The studies have been published in the form of articles in Journals, Periodicals and in Books. The previously conducted research studies initiated a thought to form the concept and the theoretical framework of the present study. In this chapter, the detailed account of the development of the concept Organizational Climate (OC) has been vividly explained. How the behavioral theories have given rise to the development of the concept has been described citing the behavioral theories promulgated by various behavioral scientists (authors). Included in this chapter are, some of the important definitions of Organization and OC.

3.2 EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT- ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

The emergence of theories of Organizational Behavior permits the use of the concept of climate. It provides new and profitable ways of considering theories of organizational behavior.

The earliest reference of Organizational Climate is found in the article of Lewin, Lippin 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 (1953). This article discussed the development of leadership attitude and its implication through the measurement of behavioral 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 an article which studied organization in a bank, Argyris (1958) used a simplistic model to study interpersonal relationships. The model consists of an input dimension, output
dimension, and a feedback to input. It was constructed to reflect the primary structural properties of the social organization with human being in the role of the original inputs. This study depicts the climate of an organization as being composed of elements representing many different levels of analysis; the resultants of the interaction of the hold of multi-level variables may be viewed in a significant pattern which was arrived at through these many different levels of analysis. The significant pattern reached with this different level analysis was that of organizational behavior. Thus, Argyris introduced the concept of OC and defined climate in terms of formal organizational policies, employee needs, values, and personalities.

McGregor in his famous book ‘The Human Side of Enterprise’ (1960) 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. He argued that the climate is primarily determined by the managerial assumptions and the relationship between the managers and their subordinates. There were of course drawbacks on the conceptual framework. First, McGregor did not present any technique of measurement of OC. 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 provide the initial framework of OC. In their research work Forehand and Gilmer (1964) defined OC 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 behavior of people in the organization.’ Gregopoulos (1963) defined OC as a ‘normative structure of attitudes and behavioral standards which provided a basis for interpreting the situations and act as a source of pressure for directing activities.’

Litwin and Stringer (1968), in his paper, “Climate and Behavioral Theory,” explains individual and organizational behavior. The first part of the paper discusses some of the major groups of psychological theories of individual behavior, among which are psychoanalytic theories, stimulus response theories, and expectancy-value theories.

Psychoanalytic theory involves the relationship of the development of personality and the childhood maturation of the human being. The psychological aspects of the developmental process are closely related in the environment. This has been expressed in
studies which define the ego’s function in relation to that environment. A stable and viable personality is seen in direct relationship to ego development. It, therefore, can be stressed that there is an important person-environment relationship. Psychoanalytic theory has influenced the development of research in disciplines that are very much concerned with the ecological and environmental variables.

The molar approach of stimulus-response theories tends to place environmental influences in a diminished role. They tend to deliberately exclude the influence of the total environment or of environmental qualities as primary determinants of behaviour. Finally, they provided six dimensions of OC 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., power need, achievement need, and affiliation need. Attempts were also made to establish the operationalization of climate through the assessment members’ perceptions. During this time the actual concept of OC began to take shape. In a study by Schneider and Bartlett (1968), attempts were made to develop a measure of climate.

The expectancy-value theory gives great importance to such variables as environmental determinants of behavior. Tolman (1926) creates a psychology of purposive behavior. He includes in its central characteristics that: (1) behaviour is purposive, that is, the organism is always moving towards a goal or away from a disturbing object in his environment; (2) and the organism possesses knowledge of or has a cognitive map of its environment. The analysis and measurement of expectations and incentive value create problems for the expectancy-value theory. These variables do not characterize the environment in a significant way.

Included in this paper are two theories of organizational determinants of behavior, the Lewinian field theory and the probabilistic functionalism of Egan Brunswick. The fundamental part of the Lewinian concept is that of life - space. It refers to the behavior of an individual at a certain moment that is determined by the totality of facts. This concept includes the person and his environment as one. A dynamic feature of lifespace is what Lewin calls force. The strength of a force is determined by the sum of the attractive or repulsive qualities of the element of the environment, and by the psychological distance between the person and those elements. Burnswik deals logically
with the problem of relationship between the external or physical and the internal or subjective environment. He relates the variables in his theory in terms of their status. They include stimulus, response, and their relationships to the organism. Lewin and Burnswik construct theories of individual behavior which give major attention to the influence of environmental quality of climate on behavior, which has given major impetus to the integration of theories on individual behavior with environment or climate.

Litwin’s second section deals with the central problem of relating theories of organizational behavior to the environment. The understanding of the individual in small group behavior appears to be central to the development of theories of climate. Included are discussions of organizational climate as it relates to theories of classical management, structural organization, social structure, and decisions-system. Each of these has been discussed below:

In one category, Taylor, Fayol, and Gulick and Urwick are considered the leading exponents of classical management theories. Their efforts primarily concerned the subdivision of work, and the differentiation of responsibility and authority. These classical theories seem to neglect the importance of human environment or the climate, largely because they ignore the determinants of variability in human behavior. When these theories were viewed in historical perspective, it appeared that these writs were not able to comprehend the importance of the human in the organization. Therefore, it is unlikely that climate concepts could have been integrated into the classical type of organizational theory.

Structural-organization theories are a second category. These are concerned with the interrelationship of structural, technical, and external climate factors. Investigators attempted to account for characteristics in explaining the interrelationships of the various sub-units which composed the organization or analytical variables. Organizational structure, technical attributes of the work of the organization, and the design of individual and group tasks are viewed by the structural theorists as important determinants of satisfaction, morale, and productivity of people, and of organizational effectiveness and development. The emphasis of objective features of organizational structure, administrative practices, and their effect on job characteristics in the structural approach differs substantially from emphasis in the environmental concept; there, the emphasis was upon the total subjective effect of the environment on people.
Theoretically, social structure, a third category, is not considered to be separate from internal organizational system. The characteristics of the social structure, particularly those requiring analysis of subjective data led to what might be called a micro-analysis of individual and group behavior inside the organization; these characteristics were more difficult to define in ways that are not specific to the organization. Since the internal-system concept and the concept of organizational climate are related to each other, the integration of climate concept into structural theories is certainly feasible.

The basis of the decisions-system theory, a fourth category, is that rational decisions are the primary goal of organizations. In the rational-decision process, emphasis is given to the analysis of individual psychological factors, group structures, and to norms and influences of administrative behavior. Since the various characteristics of organizational climate are compatible with the analysis of decision-making processes, the inclusion of climate concepts is possible when relevant and pertinent to the decision-making theory.

The greatest contribution of organizational climate as a concept seems to be in the theories which are related to the social system which emphasizes the importance of the immediate, informal work group in determining individual motivation and organizational performance. The social system theories are built on some of the following consideration: (a) socials-circumstances influence is more related to variations in productivity than is physical capacity; (b) economic rewards are not necessarily important; (c) formally designated leaders are often less influential than informal leaders, and (d) the effective supervisors are more likely to be employee-centered than job-centered. Effective individual behavior and the processes of group interaction are emphasized in this set of theories. It appears that there will be an increasing role for environmental concepts in the social system theories as investigators direct their concern toward studies of more complex organizations and of total system functions. Litwin concludes by saying that theories of individual behavior have not, by and large, attached much importance to the analysis of the environmental quality of climate. The integration and utilization of climate concepts in theories of organizational behavior on the other hand, have provided the impetus for the specific study of organizational climate and extended its range of application.
The term “climate” is discussed in “The Concept of Organizational Climate: by Tagiuri. This paper states that there is lack of agreement on a definition of climate but suggests that the work refers to some features of characteristics of the environment and its consequences for the behavior of an individual or of a group, and to which the individual is somehow sensitive. This author suggests that it appears that if everything else is held constant, climate and behavior converge. Tagiuri proposes that for purposes of accounting for behavior of individuals or of groups, climate may be used as a concept which stands between the broadest concept of environment on the one hand, and, on the other, more specific concepts such as behavioral setting, situation, and conditions. Climate is a less general, narrower concept than environment. Here, then, is expressed in an analytic and descriptive term. For purposes of practical application, Tagiuri defines his concept of the term as follows:

“The Climate of an organizational setting is defined as relatively enduring quality of the internal environment of the organization, that is (a) experienced by its members, (b) influences their behavior, and (c) can be described in terms of the values of a particular set of characteristics (or attitudes) of the organization.”

The dimensions of organizational climate are extremely difficult to pin down. It is not easy to identify measures of climate that are not descriptive of particular organizations. Garlie Forehand suggests that climate is identifiable in the interactions of the environment and personal variables. It is suggested that a profitable strategy would be the independent measurement of variations within the environment, and of participants and the analyses of their joint outcomes. It is assumed that an individual’s personal characteristics predisposes him to perform a task in a given way, given an appropriate environment. This examination found that one central dimension of organizational climate is undeniable: the postulate that behavior is influenced by properties of the environment in which it occurs. As a result, the concept of organizational climate has important heuristic value. It is suggested that the concept underlying a climate study should be about the interaction of personal variables and environmental variables, and should consider environmental variables in terms of the degree to which they demand or constrain the operation of personal characteristics.
Cattell (1951)\textsuperscript{8} offers another way of identifying the various factors in climate when he discusses the concept of group syntality. He defines syntality as that which permits the psychologist to predict what the group as a whole will do when a stimulus situation has been defined.

Sells presents a view of organizational climate as it relates to organizational behavior. He thinks that behavior provides an understanding of the nature of organizational climate and at the same time facilitates a distinction between climate and other variables. He states that organizational climate appears to be a function of cultural patterns of organization and includes those generalized organizations of members which are (a) shared by the majority of the members of the organizational unit, and (b) acquired in relation to factors specific to the organizational situation. A further distinction is made between behaviors dependent upon factors unique to the particular organization and those reflecting influences that are part of the total physical and social environment which is shared by all human beings.

One of the first attempts to measure climate is described by Hemphill (1950)\textsuperscript{9} in an article published in 1950. This study was developed as part of a ten year research program on leadership conducted as part of the Ohio State Leadership Studies. This investigation was predicated on the following definition of a social group: “A unit consisting of a plural number of separate organism (agents) who have collective perceptions of their unity and who have the ability and tendency to act / or are acting in a unitary manner toward their environment.” To identify characteristics which would provide the boundaries of the social group, four criteria were used as guides (a) each characteristic should have significance in a sociological or psychological framework; (b) each characteristic should be conceived as a continuum varying from the lowest degree to the highest degree; (c) each characteristic should refer to a molar rather than a molecular property of the group; (d) each characteristic should be relatively orthogonal or independent of all the other characteristics in the descriptive system. Hemphill’s thirteen characteristics that appear to meet the criteria are listed below:

1. Autonomy is the degree to which a group functions independently of other groups and occupies an independent position in society.
2. Control is the degree to which a group regulates the behavior of individuals while they are functioning as group members.
3. Flexibility is the degree to which a group’s activities are marked by informal procedures rather than by adherence to established procedures.

4. Hedonic tone is the degree to which group membership is accompanied by a general feeling of pleasantness or agreeableness.

5. Homogeneity is the degree to which members of a group are similar with respect to socially relevant characteristics.

6. Intimacy is the degree to which members of a group are mutually acquainted with one another and are familiar with the more personal details of one another’s lives.

7. Participation is the degree to which members of a group apply equal effort to group activities.

8. Permeability is the degree to which a group permits ready access to membership.

9. Polarization is the degree to which a group is oriented and works toward a single goal which is clear and specific to all members.

10. Potency is the degree to which a group has primary significance for its members.

11. Stability is the degree to which a group resists changes in its size and in turnover of its members.

12. Stratification is the degree to which a group orders its members into status hierarchies.

13. Viscidity is the degree to which members of the group function as a unit.

The characteristics as portrayed in the responses to the group dimensions description questionnaire reflect qualities of group relationships or performance. In one reported case, individuals in the teaching profession, there is evidence that several characteristics of their work group as portrayed by the dimension scale related to the satisfactions of their job (Hemphill 1956). If the data of one experimental laboratory project can be depended upon, there is suitable evidence that there is a tendency for the group dimensions, hedonic tone, viscosity, and participation to be positively related to group productivity.

Pace (1964) developed a systematic objective measuring instrument of characterize college environments called the College Characteristics Index (CCI), which
was patterned after Murphy’s need-press theory and directed towards college students. The environmental processes were viewed as counterparts to personal needs, and the performance in the environment was seen as a function of the congruence between the need-press.

James and Jones (1974)\textsuperscript{12} 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 OC can be divided into three approaches:

1. Multiple Measurement-Organizational Attribute Approach (MMOAA)
2. Perceptual Measurement – Organizational Attribute Approach (PMOAA)
3. Perceptual Measurement-Individual Attribute Approach (PMIAA)

Notwithstanding the differences in approach, strategy, and assumptions, and the differences in item content as well, there appear to be some general similarities in the results of the various studies.

3.3 OPERATIVE DEFINITIONS

Following are the expansion of some of the abbreviations used in this study.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>Higher Educational Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HLI</td>
<td>Higher Learning Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPC</td>
<td>Non-Professional College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPC Students</td>
<td>Those students undergoing Non-Professional Degree Courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>Professional College</td>
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<tr>
<td>PC Students</td>
<td>Those students undergoing Professional Degree Courses</td>
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<td>O.C</td>
<td>Organizational Climate</td>
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Organizational Climate:

Organization Climate is defined as the patterns of social interaction that characterizes an organization, which according to Halpin and Croft (1963)\textsuperscript{13} run from openness at one end of the continuum to the closed-ness at the other.
Organization:

Lorsch (1965)\textsuperscript{14} conceived an organization as a socio-technical system in which behavior is influenced by a number of inter-related variables, including the individual predispositions of members, social structure, formal organization and the system’s external environment.

Stogdill (1967)\textsuperscript{15} opines that an organization is an input-Output system. The three sets of variables namely inputs, process and outputs, which he describes are concepts assumed characterize any organization.

Chapter Summary

The foregoing discussion on Organizational Climate has described the concept in terms of social environments. Environmental concepts seem to be most readily accepted by those theorists who predicate their paradigm on the social system; these include as important social circumstances the informal group and employee-centered behavior. The definition of organization climate as stated by Tagiuri places it in the realm of interpersonal relations as depicted by the perceptions of the behavior of the individual members of the group. Implicit in the entire discussion is the dependence of behavior on environment. The various theories outlined in the foregoing discussion place varying degrees of importance of environment on the action of individuals in groups. Contemporary theorists agree that group effectiveness is directly related to the development of interpersonal relationships within the group.

This simplistic approach to the concept of OC allows for investigation of its consequences. This approach is not to be construed as an indication that OC is uni-dimensional. In reality, it appears that OC is an extremely complex concept. Most likely, further research and analysis of the concept will probably reveal a multi-level and multi-concept nature.
REFERENCES


