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Organizational Climate: Homogeneity Within and Heterogeneity Between Organizations**

What is climate? Is climate a characteristic of organizational structure or an attitude, e.g., satisfaction? How can we distinguish organizational climate from psychological climate as a perceptual construct? Despite the decades of conceptual and empirical enquiries on these questions, the problem of defining organizational climate still persists for the professional specialists in industrial and organizational psychology. The present study is proposed to enhance our understanding of the concept of organizational climate and its measurement procedures.

Since the climate is a complex set of inter-related variables, it has been a topic of debate. A large number of theoretical conceptualizations and empirical data have been accumulated around this topic (see e.g., Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler, & Weick, 1970; Forehand & Gilmer, 1964). Some view climate as a dependent variable (e.g., Litwin & Stringer, 1968; Sinha, 1973; Dieterly & Schneider, 1974). Others treat it as an independent variable (e.g., Frederiksen, Jensen, & Beaten, 1972; Pitchard & Karasick, 1973). Still others conceptualize climate as a mediating variable (e.g., Hall & Schneider, 1973; Likert, 1967; Baumgartel & Sullivan, 1974; Baumgartel, Dunn, & Sullivan, 1976/77; Baumgartel, Sullivan, & Dunn, 1978). James and Jones (1974), in their review paper, delineated three approaches to the study of organizational climate--multiple measurement-organizational attribute, perceptual measurement-organizational attribute, and perceptual measurement-individual attribute.

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They wondered

... many climate researches appear to be more concerned with measurement techniques than with understanding and explicating the underlying concepts or constructs they were attempting to measure... (p. 1108).

A great controversy arose when the climate was viewed as nothing but another name for job attitudes (Guion, 1973; Johannesen, 1973). This notion caught the eyes of many investigators (e.g., Pitchard & Karasick, 1973; Lawler, Hall, & Oldham, 1974; Schneider, 1975, among others). Schneider and Snyder (1975) concluded that climate and satisfaction are different phenomena and can be measured as independent constructs. In addition, there has been confusion in differentiating climate from structure, which may be referred to as the properties of an organization (Schneider, 1975). The debate does not end here. The concept needs more clarification--whether one is studying the *psychological* climate (the perceived world of members) or *organizational* climate (the attributes of the system as a whole). James and Jones (1974) contend

When regarded as an organizational attribute, the term organizational climate appears appropriate. When regarded as an individual attribute, it is recommended that a new designation such as "psychological climate" be employed (p. 1108).

Taking this lead, then, it is proposed that the term climate refers to the attributes of the organization environment as a system rather than to the perceptions of the individual employees or to the attributes of the department or subunits of an organization alone. This can be displayed in the following equation:

$$OC = f(IPP) (SC) (OA)$$

Where,

OC = Organizational climate;

IPP = Individual perceptual processes;

SC = Sub-unit characteristics;

OA = Organizational attributes.

Keeping this perspective then, it is expected that, the departmental effects or differences (within organization) would be weaker or less significant than the organizational effects (inter-organizational differences).

METHOD

The Measures

The research questionnaire measured five factors of organizational climate. Three referred to the leadership style dimensions--authoritarianism (F), nurturant-task-orientation (NT), and participative (P). The concept of NT style of leadership was developed by J. B. P. Sinha (1980). This can be contrasted with the authoritarianism, one which is

characterized by self-oriented, power-minded, rigid, defensive, and personalized leadership. Since the NT is predominantly a task-and-efficiency-oriented leadership style,

(he) requires that task must be completed, and that the subordinates understand and accept the goals and normative structure of the group or organization and cultivate commitment to them. The NT leader structures his and his subordinate's role clearly so that the communications are explicit, structured, and task relevant. He initiates, guides, and directs his subordinates to work hard and maintains high level of productivity--both qualitatively and quantitatively.... He thus creates a climate of purposiveness and goal-orientation. (Sinha, 1980, p. 55)

On the other hand, the NT style is different from the participative one which is people-oriented, having lower preference for power, status or structure. Besides the three leadership styles, the two other dimensions of climate were personnel support (PS) and bureaucratization (B).

The 25 items in the climate measures were derived from the original scale of Sinha (1977). Each factor (scale) consisted of five items rated by respondents on a 5-point scale ranging from *Quite False* (1) through *Doubtful* (3) to *Quite True* (5). The internal consistency reliabilities, in the present study, for F-, NT-, P-, PS-, and B- scales stepped by S-B formula yielded .80, .65, .41, .99, and .85 with an average r value of .74. The five factors of climate are found to be highly inter-related (Sinha, 1980; Ansari, 1978) which suggests a constraint that the factors may not be taken as orthogonal. Descriptive information such as respondents' position, department, experience etc. were also gathered with the help of a personal data blank.

The Setting and Procedure

The proposed study concerns three organizations in the State of Bihar, India. Since the organizations are many and of divergent nature, no attempt was made to draw the sample randomly. Rather, keeping in view a few dimensions of this heterogeneous universe, three contrasting organizations were selected for the study. The points of difference lie mainly in: (1) the styles of management, (2) the production process, (3) the source of capital investment, (4) the efficiency, (5) the size (numerical strength), and (6) the geographical location.

One hundred twenty-two male executives from the top and middle echelons of management were selected from the three selected business organizations. The executives were interviewed individually and in

private either at their residence or in the office generally in the evening after working hours with prior appointment.

The data, in this study, were utilized from the author's "Executive Success" project (Ansari, 1978) which was designed to make an eclectic examination of factors associated with executive success. The study at hand used only those departments which had five or more respondents. Due to the heterogeneous nature of the universe, the departments were not comparable across the organizations in the present investigation. Thus, the analysis was done separately to see the effects of organization and their sub-units.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is apparent from Table 1 that the ANOVAs reveal highly significant ($p < .01$) organizational differences all through the climate factors except

TABLE-1: MEAN SCORES AND F-RATIOS OF CLIMATE FACTORS

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Org-1</i>	<i>Org-2</i>	<i>Org-3</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>
<i>F</i>	12.90	12.62	15.70	2/119	9.69*
<i>NT</i>	17.33	17.58	16.26	2/119	2.24
<i>P</i>	17.69	18.00	16.09	2/119	5.02**
<i>PS</i>	19.63	19.67	16.41	2/119	22.86***
<i>B</i>	15.23	14.87	17.69	2/119	9.64**

** $P < .01$; Org = Organization

TABLE-11: MEAN SCORES AND F-RATIOS OF CLIMATE FACTORS IN ORGANIZATION-1

<i>Factors</i>	<i>D-1</i>	<i>D-2</i>	<i>D-3</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>
<i>F</i>	13.03	12.11	13.28	2/49	-
<i>NT</i>	17.22	18.67	16.14	2/49	1.31
<i>P</i>	17.80	18.67	15.86	2/49	1.98
<i>PS</i>	19.86	19.78	18.28	2/49	1.28
<i>B</i>	14.86	16.11	16.00	2/49	-

Note. *F* less than 1.00 in ANOVA has not been reported;
D=Department

TABLE-III: MEAN SCORES AND F-RATIOS OF CLIMATE FACTORS IN ORGANIZATION-2

<i>Factors</i>	<i>D-1</i>	<i>D-2</i>	<i>D-3</i>	<i>D-4</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>
F	12.25	15.60	10.60	12.33	3/20	5.73**
NT	17.62	19.80	17.00	16.17	3/20	1.66
P	18.00	18.40	17.80	17.83	3/20	-
PS	19.50	20.80	19.40	19.17	3/20	-
B	15.87	16.20	12.40	14.50	3/20	1.38

Note. *F* less than 1.00 in ANOVA has not been reported;
 ** $p < .01$; D=Department

TABLE-IV: MEAN SCORES AND F-RATIOS OF CLIMATE FACTORS IN ORGANIZATION-3

<i>Factors</i>	<i>D-1</i>	<i>D-2</i>	<i>D-3</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>F</i>
F	16.24	12.40	15.75	2/43	1.85
NT	16.34	15.80	16.25	2/43	-
P	16.14	17.40	15.42	2/43	-
PS	15.72	18.60	17.17	2/43	3.18
B	17.76	14.80	18.75	2/43	3.10

Note. *F* less than 1.00 in ANOVA has not been reported;
 D=Department

for one, i.e., the NT style of management. In contrast, out of the 15 ANOVAs reported in (Tables II through IV), in only one case do the departmental differences show up as significant—that is, the F factor in organization-2. The findings show the strong support from the above stated hypothesis—that is, the existence of climate as an organizational system concept.

The present findings can be substantiated by at least two empirical studies. Harnette and Centra (1974) studied several academic organizations to investigate the perceptual agreement among the students, faculty, and staff in assessing academic climate. Their results showed that there was great agreement in the perception of three samples. Hence, they

concluded that the status or sub-group variables did not appear to be influential in perceiving the academic environment. The present study has a rather direct support by the findings of Drexler (1977) who reported that about 42% of the variance in climate measures is accounted for by the organization as a whole, while the sub-unit effects were much weaker than the organizational effects. Thus organizational climate may be defined as the sum total of the particular attributes of the organization as a system as well as those values and norms which symbolize the on-going pattern of the organization and its sub-units. This climate may be assessed by summing the individual ratings. The point here is that an organization has only *one* dominant climate with various dimensions and not *many*. If there are more than one, they are *psychological or* sub-unit rather than *organizational* climates. Very recently, the author (Ansari, 1979) studied 28 different British and American companies (over 800 respondents). In his contingency approach to managerial success, Ansari investigated the fit of the managers' motivational predispositions with the work environment or the climate of the total organization in predicting managerial success. Keeping the above framework and methodology in view, he constructed climate scales basing the analysis on *mean scores by company* on the relevant items. Thus, he had 28 climates for 28 different companies. Positive findings further validate the reality of the total climate hypothesis. This conceptualization of climate can also be seen in the "Cross-National Management Education" project of Howard Baumgartel and his associates (Baumgartel & Sullivan, 1974; Baumgartel, Dunn & Sullivan, 1976/77; Baumgartel, Sullivan & Dunn, 1978) in their study of the effect of organizational climate in mediating take home benefits from participating an advanced management development programs. Besides, in their recent conceptualization of organizational climate and effectiveness, Sinha and Prasad (1977) show up a similar line of thinking, i.e., total-climate hypothesis.

Though the study reported here is based on a small number of subjects, it clarifies one of the basic confusions underlying the concept of organizational climate. It is recommended that for further research different climate and structural variables should be used to validate the total climate conceptualization. Likert's (1967) theoretical framework suggests that system climates are set by top level managers within the organization. Hence, the studies using measures of this nature may be the indirect assessment of centralization and top management control and be used to reveal characteristics of effective organizations.

SUMMING UP

The paper is a methodological study concerning the validity of organi-

zational climate measures. Attention is addressed to the definition of the concept of organizational climate. According to the proposed framework, organizational climate is the sum total of particular attributes of the organization as a whole as well as those values and norms which symbolize the on-going pattern of the organization and its sub-units. From this perspective then, an organization has only *one* general climate and not *many*, If there are *more* than one, they are either psychological or unit climates rather than the *organizational* climate. The study confirmed the expectation that if the organizational climate is the characteristic of organizational attributes as a whole and not merely the individual perceptions and/or attributes, the departmental or unit difference within organization would be less variable or significant than the inter-organizational differences. For empirical verification of the stated hypothesis, 122 male executives from the top and middle echelons of management were selected from the three contrasting types of Indian business organizations. The executives were interviewed individually with the help of a research instrument assessing climate and personal descriptive data. The methodological issues of the concept and its theoretical implications are also discussed.

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