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Examining the Perceived Ethical Climate and Faculty Commitment in Private Higher Secondary Schools in Nepal

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between perceived ethical climate and faculty commitment in private higher secondary schools in Kathmandu and Lalitpur. It also explores the extent of the impact of different dimensions of perceived ethics on overall faculty commitment. A descriptive and analytical research design was employed, involving 464 faculty members selected through purposive sampling in Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts. Both primary and secondary data were utilized, with structured questionnaires serving as the primary data collection tool. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS and MS Excel. The findings reveal significant relationships between all three types of ethical climates (egoistic, benevolence, and principled) and faculty commitment. Benevolence has the strongest positive impact on faculty commitment, while egoistic climate shows an impact only on continuance commitment. Principled climate emerges as the most influential factor in overall faculty commitment, followed by benevolence. However, the egoistic climate exhibits a weak and insignificant relationship with the overall commitment of faculties in Nepalese private higher secondary schools. In these schools, team-oriented benevolence climates and rule-oriented principled climates foster strong emotional attachment among faculty members. The study concludes that cultivating a benevolent and principled ethical context is crucial for building a committed faculty team, emphasizing the pivotal role of ethical workplaces in fostering faculty commitment in Nepalese higher education.

Keywords: faculties' commitment, private schools, perceived ethical climate, egoistic climate, benevolence and principled climate

Introduction

The commitment of employees is the backbone of any organization. Perceptions concerning the ethical environment play a major role in enhancing employees' attachment to their respective organizations. Researchers have made relentless efforts to explore the relationship between perceived organizational ethical climate and employees' commitment (Cullen et al., 2003; Martin & Cullen, 2006; Sims & Keon, 1997). Various researchers at different times have found that employees' perceptions of the ethical climate form the foundation for a high level of employee commitment (Cullen et al., 2003; Kim & Miller, 2008; Mulki et al., 2008). Previous research has studied individual and multiple organizations to determine this relationship, typically using a quantitative approach, with results confirming that perceptions of egoistic climates are negatively related to commitment, while benevolent and

principled climates show a positive relationship with employee commitment (Cullen et al., 2003; Kim & Miller, 2008; Mulki et al., 2008).

Over the past thirty years, there has been augmented interest in the unethical behavior exhibited by firms. Large corporations such as Enron, WorldCom, and Tyco have brought public attention to the inherent dangers of unethical business practices. The imperatives of day-to-day organizational performance are often so compelling that there is little inclination to focus on the moral content of organizational decision-making (Sims, 1992; Koh & Boo, 2004). In this regard, it becomes crucial to study unethical behavior or workplace deviance. This study will examine the ethical context and climate within organizations and their implications for all employees. An organization's ethical climate is a part of its broader organizational culture. Victor and Cullen (1987) propose that once within an organization, employees learn how to behave through formal and informal socialization processes, discovering which values are held in high esteem and which are rewarded. The organizational values dealing with ethical issues—those that determine what is considered ethically correct—make up the ethical climate of an organization (Victor & Cullen, 1987).

The most decisive factors influencing an organization's ethical climate include personal self-interest, company profit, operating efficiency, team interests, friendships, social responsibility, personal morality, rules, laws, and professional codes (Sims, 1992). Perhaps the most important factor is the actual behavior of top management: "what top managers do, and the culture they establish and reinforce, makes a big difference in the way lower-level employees act and in the way the organization as a whole acts when ethical dilemmas are faced" (Sims, 1992). Victor and Cullen (1988) identify three ethical criteria: egoism (maximizing one's own interests), benevolence (maximizing the interests of as many people as possible), and principle (adherence to universal standards and beliefs).

Faculty members are the front-line employees at any institution of higher education. The job tasks they perform daily have a direct impact on the organization's ability to meet stakeholder expectations. Whether the stakeholder is a student, local municipality, neighboring business, the federal government, or society at large, all successful outcomes begin with the front-line faculty members (Moore & Moore, 2014). Employees' perceptions of their organization's ethical climate profoundly affect their behaviors, which in turn impacts their job satisfaction, performance, and commitment. Thus, sufficient research is necessary to analyze such circumstances and to provide recommendations for overall improvement and organizational success (McKay et al., 2008).

Another prominent researcher, Elci and Alpkan (2009), points out that an organization's ethical climate is one of the major factors influencing employee relationships and attitudes toward the organization, emphasizing the need to understand organizational ethical climates and the outcomes they can have on employees. They note that these relationships, in turn, affect the success of the organization. Ethical climates are seen as the distinct characteristics of organizations that affect decision-making at various levels, attracting certain employee perceptions that can influence the culture of the organization and how ethical dilemmas are addressed (Duh et al., 2010). Thus, the ethical climate of an organization plays a vital role when employees make key decisions, including whether to remain committed to their organization (Young & Corsun, 2010).

For administrators in higher education, it is vital to identify operational areas where they can have a positive impact. Recent research has increasingly focused on the role ethics plays in shaping organizational climate and employee behavior. A prevailing reason behind the occurrence of deviant workplace behaviors is the conflicting perception, often shaped by deviant role models, that the organization condones such behavior (Appelbaum et al., 2007).

Studies conducted in the past have focused on understanding the relationship between ethical climate and job-related attitudes and behaviors among employees (Deshpande, 1996; Hunt et al., 1989; Kelley & Dorsch, 1991; Koh & Boo, 2004; Schwepker, 2001), and most of them have been carried out primarily in Western nations. Therefore, research on ethical climate remains at a very nascent stage, and researchers are continuing to contribute efforts to this area of study (Koh & Boo, 2004; Schwepker, 2001). Moreover, the lack of existing studies exploring the prevailing types of ethical climates and their impact on organizational commitment highlights the significance of conducting further research in this area (Schwepker, 2001).

Paradoxically, Cullen et al. (2003) argued that although there is considerable research on the positive effects of employee commitment, there is insufficient research identifying the specific nature of the relationship between perceived organizational ethical climate and employee commitment, emphasizing that additional research is indispensable. According to the suggestion provided by DeCotiis and Summers (1987), employee commitment should be researched both empirically and conceptually, as various factors—such as working relationships, personal morality, employee and organizational cultures, organizational policies and procedures, and organizational efficiency—may contribute to the level of commitment at the individual employee level. Stewart et al. (2011) also recommend further research on organizational ethical climates to better predict various employee-related outcomes.

When the ethical climate of an organization is considered, it is ordinarily seen as a macro-level concept. However, the perception of an organization's ethical climate is related to individual ethical decision-making at the micro level (Wyld & Jones, 1997). The word "perception" shifts the level at which the research takes place. Perceptions are simply defined by Reber (1985) as the awareness of something that impinges upon us. Perceptions are viewed as a process whereby individuals interpret sensory impressions into a unified framework of thinking, guiding individual behaviors (Business Dictionary, n.d.). For this study, the research focuses on the micro level, namely the individual level within the organization.

Ethics in an organization is extremely important. The ethical climate of an organization is directly associated with positive employee behaviors and is also linked to a range of negative work behaviors, including tardiness, absenteeism, and social loafing (Peterson, 2002a & b). Negative work behaviors are similarly connected to decreases in job satisfaction and organizational commitment, lower levels of creativity, stagnated productivity, increased antisocial behavior, and higher employee turnover (Appelbaum et al., 2007; Morrison, 2008; Peterson, 2002a & b). Although the detailed financial implications of these behaviors are difficult to precisely quantify, their impact on the organizational bottom line can be profoundly apparent (Moore & Moore, 2014).

This study analyzes the effects of perceived organizational ethical climate on faculty commitment within private schools in the Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts. In light of the problem statement and research objectives, several specific research questions arise that are relevant to the literature review and empirical study:

1. Is there a relationship between the different factors of perceived ethical climate and faculty commitment in private schools in the Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts?
2. What is the nature of the effects of different factors of perceived ethical climate on faculty commitment in private schools in the Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts?

Research Objectives

This research aims to examine the relationship between the perceived ethical climate and faculty commitment in private schools within the Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts. By investigating how faculty members perceive the ethical standards and practices within their schools, the study seeks to understand how these perceptions influence their level of commitment to their work, including job satisfaction, loyalty, and professional engagement.

Furthermore, the study will evaluate the specific effects that various elements of the ethical climate, such as fairness, integrity, and transparency, have on faculty commitment, to provide insights into how an ethical workplace environment can enhance faculty performance and retention in these educational institutions.

The Review of Literature

Organizational Ethical Climate

The most important point to note is that several types of climates exist within the organizational framework, such as climates for safety compliance, community service, and innovation, among others that have been researched. A relatively newer type of organizational climate is the ethical climate. Introduced into the literature by Victor and Cullen (1988), the ethical climate of an organization refers to the behaviors perceived as ethically correct and how issues regarding deviations from these expected behaviors are handled within the organization. Therefore, from a managerial perspective, it can be concluded that the culture of an organization establishes its values, while the climate establishes its ethics (Moore & Moore, 2014). Ethical climate refers to "the shared perceptions of what is ethically correct behavior and how ethical issues should be handled" (Victor & Cullen, 1987, pp. 51–52). Organizational ethical distinctiveness, when integrated into organizational culture, can greatly influence both organizational performance and employees' work-related attitudes (Ambrose et al., 2008). More precisely, an ethical climate is an organizational environment where ethical content is embodied in policies, regulations, employees' behaviors, and perceptions (Victor & Cullen, 1988). As recommended by Vardi (2001, p. 329), the ethical climate reflects employees' perceptions of work measures and processes within the organization that have ethical content.

Furthermore, the term "ethical climate" encompasses (i) the formal and informal actions and decisions of employees and leadership aimed at promoting ethical professional behavior—i.e., openness, transparency, and trustworthiness to the public interest—and (ii) shared beliefs and perceptions regarding the organization's moral priorities, decision-making processes, norms, and behaviors (Victor & Cullen, 1988; Martin & Cullen, 2006). Previous studies have found that adherence to a code of ethics fosters an ethical climate and contributes to a positive and safe working environment (Cullen et al., 2003; Martin & Cullen, 2006). Moreover, ethics programs enhance employees' sense of belonging, reduce conflicts, and improve openness and communication with management (Pelletier & Bligh, 2006; Saravanamuthu, 2002; Sims, 2002; Trevino et al., 1998). The perceived ethical climate helps organizational members answer questions such as: "What issues have ethical content?" "What are the appropriate decision criteria?" "What is the correct alternative according to the organization?" and "What should I do?" Thus, the perceived ethical climate assists individuals in identifying ethically relevant issues and the criteria to be used in understanding, evaluating, and resolving them (Singhapakdi & Vitell, 1991).

Nonetheless, employees' perceptions of the psychological contract and its potential violation by employers are likely to affect their job attitudes and behaviors (Cavanaugh & Noe, 1999; Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Turnley & Feldman, 1999; Van Dyne et al., 1994). Psychological contracts may have both "transactional" and "relational" components. Transactional contracts involve explicit, short-term, and primarily monetary obligations. In contrast, relational contracts are broader, long-term, open-ended agreements involving trust, loyalty, and commitment (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Rousseau & McLean Parks, 1993). Because employees who perceive a covenant relationship with their employer tend to exhibit attitudes and behaviors that benefit their organizations, factors that foster covenantal relationships are particularly important in the organizational context (Barnett & Schubert, 2002).

Additionally, ethics programs boost employees' sense of belonging, diminish conflicts,

and promote greater openness and communication with management (Pelletier & Bligh, 2006; Saravanamuthu, 2002; Sims, 2002; Trevino et al., 1998). Numerous studies based on surveys, case studies, and theoretical work provide a clear picture that a well-designed and effectively implemented ethics program not only leads to improved ethical outcomes but also enhances other organizational outcomes, including measures of employee commitment and performance (Schwepker, 2001). Early literature suggests that the development of organizational commitment results from individual experiences at work, organizational influences, and the alignment of personal values with those prevalent in the organization (Angle & Perry, 1981; Trevino et al., 1998).

Perceived Ethical Climate

Perceptions of organizational climate may diverge due to differences in individuals' positions, work groups, or employment history (Victor & Cullen, 1988; Schwepker, 2001). Various researchers have found that the most common cause behind the occurrence of deviant workplace behavior is the conflicting perception, often influenced by deviant role models, that the organization supports such behavior (Appelbaum et al., 2007). The perceived ethical criteria emphasize three factors: egoism, benevolence, and principle (Bernardi & Guptill, 2008).

An egoistic or instrumental criterion is based on the moral philosophy of egoism, which suggests that the individual's best interests dominate the ethical reasoning process. Egoism defines ethical behavior in terms of self-interest (Ferrell & Fraedrich, 1997). Self-interest can be understood in terms of physical well-being, gratification, power, wealth, pleasure, or other factors that promote individual desires and interests. Depending on the level of analysis, a climate characterized by egoistic criteria would encourage ethical decision-making based on the self-interest of the individual, the interests of the company (e.g., profit), or the interests of society (e.g., efficiency) (Ferrell & Fraedrich, 1997). A climate shaped by egoism might lead organization members to make decisions that serve their interests without regard to the health of the organization, professional codes, or even laws. Such a climate may reinforce this behavior through the absence of expressed concern for utilitarian or principled ethics, or through the failure to enforce stated policies and procedures (Wimbush & Shepard, 1994).

The benevolence or utilitarian criterion is based largely on the utilitarian principles of moral philosophy, which suggest that individuals make ethical decisions by considering the positive or negative consequences of their actions on others (Ferrell & Fraedrich, 1997). In general, utilitarianism defines moral behavior according to the consequences of behavior for a relevant group (Ferrell & Fraedrich, 1997). An ethical climate characterized by benevolence or utilitarian ideals would promote the consideration of the effects of ethical decisions on others. Relevant others may include an individual's immediate workgroup, organizational members as a whole, the organization's customers and stakeholders, or society at large. The perception of a benevolent climate should encourage ethical decisions based on their consequences for others.

The principled or deontological criterion is based largely on deontological principles of moral philosophy, which hold that individuals make ethical decisions by considering actions against universal and unchanging principles of right and wrong (Ferrell & Fraedrich, 1997). Awareness of a principled climate should encourage ethical decisions made according to relatively inflexible standards of right and wrong. Deontological climates emphasize adherence to organizational policies and procedures regarding ethics and/or compliance with professional codes of ethics, societal regulations, and laws (Bernardi & Guptill, 2008).

Organization Commitment

Organizational commitment is "a state in which an employee identifies themselves with a particular organization and its goals, and wishes to

maintain membership in the organization" (Robbins & Langton, 2003) and has been recognized as a prime measure of intellectual health (Warr, 1987). Similarly, Porter and his associates (Mowday et al.,1979; Porter et al., 1976; Porter et al. 1974) advocated commitment as "the relative power of an individual's identification with and connection to a particular organization" (Mowday et al., 1982). Further, other authors view commitment as the continuation of an action (e.g., remaining with an organization) resulting from the recognition of the costs associated with its termination. That is, under the right conditions (e.g., freedom of choice, decisiveness of the act), agreeing to work for an organization can lead to an intention to continue employment, followed by the development of a positive attitude toward the organization that justifies the behavior related to commitment (O'Reilly & Caldwell, 1981). More specifically, commitment is a psychological state that (a) characterizes the employee's relationship with the organization, and (b) has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization. Beyond this, however, it is clear that the nature of these psychological states differs.

Researcher Kanter focused on affective commitment as "solidity commitment," representing the attachment of an individual's fund of affectivity and emotion to the group (Kanter, 1968). Similarly, Buchanan (1972) described commitment as a "partisan, affective attachment to the goals and values of the organization for its own sake, apart from its purely instrumental worth" (p. 533). Most likely, employees are interested in staying with organizations that provide them with positive work experiences because they value these experiences and anticipate their continuation. Additionally, they expect to exert effort and contribute to organizational effectiveness as a means of maintaining fairness in their relationship with the organization. While this justification has been accepted by some as self-evident, it has led others to question the value of the commitment construct (Salancik, 1977; Scholl, 1981; Staw, 1977).

Furthermore, affective commitment refers to a person's emotional connection and identification with the organization's goals and values. Strong affective commitment leads to continued employment with the organization because the individual wants to remain. Variables in the comfort category are found to correlate with affective commitment, including confirmation of pre-entry expectations (Blau, 1988; Meyer & Allen, 1987), equity in reward distribution (Lee, 1971; Ogilvie, 1986; Rhodes & Steers, 1981), organizational dependability (Buchanan, 1972; Meyer & Allen, 1988; Steers, 1977), organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 1990; Eisenberger et al., 1986), role clarity and freedom from conflict (Blau, 1987; DeCotiis & Summers, 1987; Glisson & Durick, 1988; Morris & Sherman, 1981), and supervisor consideration (DeCotiis & Summers, 1987; Glisson & Durick, 1988; Morris & Sherman, 1981; Stone & Porter, 1975).

The competence-related experiences include achievement (Angle & Perry, 1981; Colarelli et al., 1987; DeCotiis & Summers, 1987), fairness of performance-based rewards (Brooke et al., 1988; Curry et al., 1986), job challenge (Buchanan, 1972; Meyer & Allen, 1988), job scope (Blau, 1987; Glisson & Durick, 1988; Pierce & Dunham, 1987; Steers & Spencer, 1977), opportunity for advancement (O'Reilly & Caldwell, 1980), opportunity for self-expression (Meyer & Allen, 1988), participation in decision-making (DeCotiis & Summers, 1987; Rhodes & Steers, 1981), and personal importance to the organization (Buchanan, 1972; Steers, 1977).

Continuance commitment refers to an acute awareness of the perceived costs associated with leaving the organization. When the costs of leaving are perceived to outweigh the potential benefits, continued employment occurs solely because the individual feels they must stay. Furthermore, continuance commitment is quite straightforward: anything that increases the costs associated with leaving an organization has the potential to create continuance commitment. In some cases, potential

costs develop as a direct result of actions taken by employees with full recognition that these actions will make leaving more difficult (e.g., accepting a job assignment requiring highly specialized skills training). However, sometimes potential costs accumulate over time without the employee's awareness (e.g., the market value of an employee's skillset may gradually erode without their knowledge) (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Researcher Becker (1960) referred to this latter situation as "commitment by default" (p. 38). However, the potential costs of leaving will only create continuance commitment if, and when, they are recognized. More specifically, an employee whose skills are becoming less marketable may not experience continuance commitment until or unless the time comes to test the market. It is through the identification of costs, therefore, that continuance commitment develops (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Similarly, Kanter (1968) clarified that "cognitive continuance commitment" occurs when there is an "income associated with continued participation and a 'cost' associated with leaving" (p. 504). In the words of Stebbins (1970), continuance commitment is "the awareness of the hopelessness of choosing a different social identity because of the enormous penalties involved in making the switch" (p. 527).

Normative commitment reflects a feeling of personal obligation to remain with the organization (Wiener, 1982). Strong normative commitment leads to continued employment because employees feel they ought to remain with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Wiener (1982, p. 421) defined commitment as "the totality of internalized normative pressures to act in a way which meets organizational goals and interests," and suggested that individuals demonstrate these behaviors solely because "they believe it is the 'right' and moral thing to do."

In practice, however, Wiener's description of commitment suggests internalized normative pressure that is more akin to the "personal norm" (i.e., internalized moral obligation) included in Triandis' (1975) model. This internalized normative pressure is generally strengthened through the socialization of children to remain loyal to their employers, a value often imparted by parents. At a broader level, cultures may instill similar norms in their members by emphasizing the importance of the collective over the individual. Similarly, though over a shorter period, organizations may socialize new hires by conveying the expectation and value of employee loyalty (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The internalization of these experiences—whether familial, cultural, or organizational in origin—can be explained through principles of social learning theory (David & Luthans, 1980) or through more complex psychodynamic processes (Bowlby, 1982).

The finding that several researchers (e.g., Prestholdt et al.,1987; Schwartz, 1973; Schwartz & Tessler, 1972) have identified personal norms as critical predictors of behavior, including turnover, attests to the potential utility of a normative view of commitment. Wiener (1982) similarly argued that the feeling of responsibility to remain with an organization may result either from the internalization of normative pressures exerted prior to organizational entry (i.e., familial or cultural socialization) or following entry (i.e., organizational socialization).

Normative commitment may also develop when an organization provides the employee with "rewards in advance" (e.g., paying for college tuition) or incurs significant costs in providing employment (e.g., costs associated with job training). Employees' recognition of these investments can create an imbalance in the employee–organization relationship, causing employees to feel a moral obligation to reciprocate by committing themselves to the organization until the perceived debt is repaid (Scholl, 1981).

Although demographic characteristics such as age, tenure, sex, and education have been linked to commitment (e.g., Angle & Perry, 1981; Glisson & Durick, 1988; Morris & Sherman, 1981; Morrow & McElroy, 1987; Mottaz, 1988; Pierce &

Dunham, 1987; Steers, 1977), these relationships are neither strong nor consistent. Moreover, even when relationships are observed, they cannot be interpreted unambiguously (Salancik, 1977). For example, the positive relationship between tenure and commitment may be due to tenure-related differences in job status and quality or, alternatively, to senior employees' attempts to justify their long service to the organization. Recently, Mottaz (1988) demonstrated that the links between demographic characteristics and commitment are indirect and disappear when work rewards and work values are controlled.

In contrast to personal and organizational characteristics, considerable research has examined the links between work experience variables and affective commitment. Unfortunately, however, this research has often been unsystematic, making it difficult to summarize (Salancik, 1977; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Elizur & Koslowsky, 2000).

Research Gap

Various studies have examined organizational commitment across different countries (Friend et al., 2009; Glisson & Durick, 1988; Graham & Organ, 1993; Griffin & Bateman, 1985; Kanter, 1968; Kelley & Dorsch, 1991; Koh & Boo, 2004, among others). However, very few—or almost no—studies have been found that specifically investigate the impact of perceived ethics on faculty commitment. In the context of Nepal, the researcher has found no study directly relating perceived ethics to faculty commitment. Although some studies have addressed ethics and commitment in general (Shakya, 2009; Shrestha & Mishra, 2015), a study specifically focusing on the relationship between perceived ethics and faculty commitment is lacking. Most ethics-related studies in Nepal have focused on the health sector (Harper et al., 2011; Shakya, 2009). This reveals a gap that the present study aims to address by examining the relationship between perceived ethics and faculty commitment in the Kathmandu and Lalitpur regions of Nepal.

Conceptual Framework

The concept of the ethical work climate is grounded in the theory of moral development. This theory, originally developed by Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget and later expanded by Kohlberg during his graduate studies at the University of Chicago (Kohlberg, 1981), suggests that individuals progress through stages of moral development aligned with three ethical standards: self-interest, caring, and principle. Individuals make decisions to exploit their interests (egoism), maximize joint interests (utilitarianism), or uphold principles (deontology). They perceive ethical climates through these lenses of egoism, benevolence, and principle (Cullen et al., 1993; Vaicyset al.,1996; Victor & Cullen, 1988).

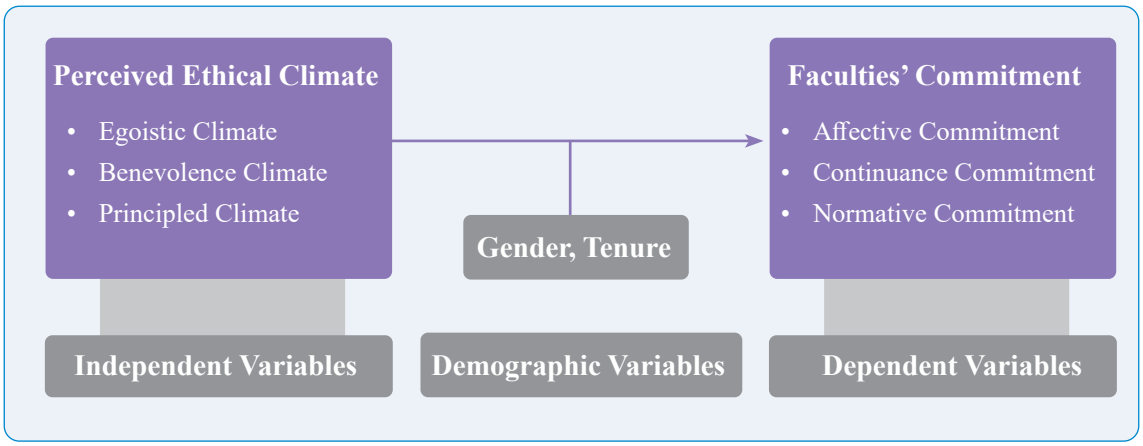
The Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and the Equity Theory (Adams, 1965) describe the concept of commitment. According to Social Exchange Theory, a system of social and economic exchange exists between employees and organizations, where employees contribute time, effort, and commitment in exchange for wages, support, and recognition. Under Equity Theory (Adams, 1965), employees evaluate the balance between the inputs they provide (time, effort, commitment) and the outputs they receive (wages, recognition) relative to those of others. When employees perceive equity, it fosters positive behaviors. These behaviors may be directed toward colleagues, managers, or clients and may also reflect in careful attention to organizational tasks (Smith et al., 1983; Vigoda, 2000).

Although commitment has been defined in many ways, most definitions reflect at least three general themes: affective attachment to the organization (affective commitment), perceived costs associated with leaving the organization (continuance commitment), and obligation to remain with the organization (normative commitment) (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Based on the above theories, the following framework has been developed for the present study.

Figure 1

Theoretical Model of Perceived Organizational Ethical Climate



Adapted from "The impact of perceived organizational ethical climate on work satisfaction" by Elci, & Alpkan (2009). The figure is modified as per the objective of the researcher.

Methodology

This is a quantitative study based on quantitative data. A descriptive, analytical, and causal-comparative research design was employed for data analysis. The descriptive design was used to describe the demographic information of the respondents in terms of gender, age, education level, and years of employment. The analytical design was employed to assess the effects of the perceived ethical climate on faculty commitment among full-time and part-time faculty members of private schools in the Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts. Similarly, the causal-comparative design was used to examine the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

The study examined the variables of perceived ethical climate (independent variable), faculty commitment (dependent variable), and socio-demographic variables (i.e., tenure and gender). Accordingly, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to find the relationship between perceived ethical climate and faculty commitment, while multiple regression analysis was employed to determine the effect of each variable.

The study identified the links between perceived ethical climate and faculty commitment through different methods. The relationship between the dimensions of perceived ethical climate—namely, egoistic climate, benevolent climate, and principled climate—and the dimensions of faculty commitment (affective, continuance, and normative) was assessed using Pearson's correlation coefficient. Multiple regression analysis was also used to examine the influence of perceived ethical climate on faculty commitment.

The population of the study consisted of all faculty members of private higher secondary schools in Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts. According to the Ministry of Education Flash Report (2018), there are 1,351 private schools in these districts, with a total of 5,144 faculty members (teachers). The sample was selected using purposive sampling. The researcher visited around 50 schools from Kathmandu and Lalitpur based on the objectives of the study, and a total of 464 respondents were included in the sample.

The primary data for the study were collected through a structured questionnaire. This questionnaire was developed using previously validated scales. The items measuring perceived ethics were adapted from the Ethical Climate

Questionnaire (ECQ) developed by Victor and Cullen (1988) and revised by Cullen et al. (2003). The commitment questionnaire was taken from the scale developed by Meyer and Allen (1991).

Separate items were developed for the three dimensions of the perceived ethical climate: egoistic climate, benevolent climate, and principled climate. Six items were used to measure the egoistic climate, four for the benevolent climate, and eight for the principled climate, all taken from Cullen et al. (1993, 1998) studies. Similarly, the commitment questionnaire was divided into three parts to measure affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Three items were used for each type of commitment, selected from Meyer and Allen's (1991) scale based on convenience and the study's time constraints.

To measure perceived ethics and faculty commitment, a six-point scale ranging from negative to positive was used (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly Agree). Respondents were asked to tick only one option. Responses where more than one option was selected were rejected to maintain the reliability and validity of the study.

After data collection, the responses were categorized, tabulated, processed, and analyzed using SPSS and MS Excel. Both descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used to achieve the objectives of the study.

For descriptive analysis, the frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation of demographic data were calculated and interpreted. For inferential analysis, Pearson's correlation, multiple regression analysis. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to find the relationships between variables, while multiple regression analysis determined the influence of independent variables on dependent variables. Beta coefficients were used to determine the strength and direction of influence between variables.

Based on the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter Two, the following hypotheses were formulated to explore, test, and confirm previous research findings conducted in various contexts around the world:

H1 There is a statistically significant relationship between different factors of perceived organizational ethical climate and faculty commitment.

H2 There is a statistically significant influence of different dimensions of perceived ethical climate (egoistic climate, benevolent climate, and principled climate) on overall faculty commitment.

To assess the internal consistency of the variables, a reliability test (Cronbach's Alpha, α) was conducted for perceived ethics and faculty commitment. The Cronbach Alpha for the perceived ethical climate was 0.703, and for faculty commitment, it was 0.743. These values exceed the 0.70 threshold recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), indicating acceptable internal consistency. To ensure the content validity of the instruments, previously developed and validated questionnaires were used.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Demographic Information of Respondents in Terms of Gender, Age Group, Service Years, and Education

It is important to present the background information of the respondents in terms of gender, age, service years, and education level to provide a clear profile of the sample. Without this information, the characteristics of the respondents could not be identified. Table 1 presents all the demographic information of the respondents.

Table 1

Social-demographic Profiles of Respondents

Variable	Frequency (n = 464)	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	304	65.5
Female	160	34.5
Age Group		
23-32	236	50.9
33-42	184	39.7
43-52	38	8.2
53-62	6	1.3
Service		
1-5	206	44.4
6-10	134	28.9
11-15	72	15.5
16-20	26	5.6
21-25	16	3.4
26-30	8	1.7
30 above	2	0.4
Education		
Below Bachelor	4	9
Bachelor	86	18.5
Below Master	80	17.2
Master	274	59.1
Master Above	18	3.9

Concerning gender, the majority of respondents are male, accounting for 65.5% of the total number of respondents, while females represent less than 50%.

Regarding age, a high proportion of respondents (50.9%) fall within the 23–32 age group, while very few (1.3%) are between 53–62 years old. This suggests that younger individuals are more involved in teaching at the higher education level.

In terms of respondents' service years, it was found that the largest proportion, 44.4%, have been employed for 1–5 years. A notable number of respondents, 134 (28.9%), have been working for 6–10 years. Very few respondents, only 2 (0.4%), have been working for more than 30 years. This data indicates that faculty stability in higher education is relatively low.

Regarding educational qualifications, the overall response shows that the highest number of respondents (59.1%) hold a Master's degree in Education, 18.5% hold a Bachelor's degree, and only 3.9% have qualifications higher than a Master's degree in Education.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation of Ethical Climate and Faculty Commitment

Table 2

Mean, Standard Deviation (S.D.), and Correlation of Individual Variables of Perceived Ethical Climate and Faculty's Commitment

Mean	S.D.	Variables	EC	BC	PC	AC	CC	NC	PE	FC
3.3017	0.7689	EC		.081	.180 (**)	-.036	.267 (**)	.031		
4.3006	0.9233	BC			.418 (**)	.414 (**)	.134 (**)	.168 (**)		
3.8610	0.7233	PC				.361 (**)	.333 (**)	.244 (**)		
4.1767	0.9888	AC					.347 (**)	.300 (**)		
3.1566	0.9666	CC						.425 (**)		
3.4310	0.8560	NC								
3.8211	0.56181	PE								0.401(**)
3.5881	0.84288	FC								

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
S.D. = Standard Deviation, EC=Egoistic Climate BC= Benevolence Climate
PC= Principled Climate AC= Affective Commitment CC=Continuance Commitment
NC= Normative Commitment PE= Perceived Ethical Climate and FC= Faculties' Commitment

Table 2 presents the results showing the mean, standard deviation, and correlation of individual variables of perceived ethical climate and faculty commitment. In terms of perceived ethical climate, respondents indicated a relatively higher presence of a benevolent climate (Mean = 4.3006), followed by a principled climate (Mean = 3.8610). The lowest score was observed for an egoistic climate (Mean = 3.3017). This indicates that respondents generally agreed with the existence of a benevolent and principled climate, but tended to disagree with the presence of an egoistic climate.

Regarding faculty commitment, the highest mean score was found for affective commitment (Mean=4.1767), followed by normative commitment (Mean = 3.4310), and continuance commitment (Mean = 3.1566). This suggests that the presence of a benevolent and principled climate contributes to a higher level of affective commitment among faculty members.

In terms of correlation, the benevolent climate shows a positive correlation with all types of commitment—affective, normative, and continuance commitment. The principled climate also has a positive correlation with affective, continuance, and normative commitment. However, the egoistic climate shows a positive correlation only with continuance commitment. This result supports the H1.

Multiple Regressions of Different Dimensions of Perceived Ethical Climate and Faculties' Commitment

Table 3

Regression of Faculty Commitment on Perceived Ethical Climates

Model	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	T	Sig
Constant	1.269	5.199	.000
EC	.041	.9555	.340
BC	.172	3.736	.000
PC	.333	7.131	.000

Note. Dependent variable: Faculty Commitment; R2 = .196; F = 37.318; P- Value = .000.

Table 3 presents the results of the regression analysis. The regression model is statistically significant (F = 37.318; R^2 = 19.6%; p = .000). The analysis indicates that a benevolent climate and a principled climate have a significant positive influence on faculty commitment. However, an egoistic climate has no significant influence on the dependent variable, faculty commitment. Therefore, the results partially support H2.

Discussion

The correlation results reveal that an egoistic climate has a very weak positive correlation with a benevolent climate (.081) and a principled climate (.180). However, a benevolent climate has a strong positive correlation with a principled climate (.418). These results are consistent with the findings of Barnett and Schubert (2002), who reported a strong positive correlation between benevolent and principled climates but no correlation with an egoistic climate.

The study also reveals that a benevolent and principled climate are positively correlated with affective, continuance, and normative commitment. However, an egoistic climate is only significantly positively correlated with continuance commitment. This suggests that while an egoistic climate, which focuses on self-interest and organizational profit, does not enhance faculties' normative and affective commitment, those who perceive the climate as egoistic tend to remain in their organization, thereby increasing their continuance commitment. This finding is consistent with the studies of Moore and Moore (2014) and Kaur & Sharma (2016).

The mean score for a benevolent climate is the highest, followed by the mean score for a principled climate, while the egoistic climate has the lowest mean score. A higher mean score reflects greater agreement with the existence of that climate. These results align with the findings of Kaur & Sharma (2016) and Fritzsche (1988).

Regarding commitment, the study found the highest mean score for affective commitment (M = 4.1767), followed by normative commitment (M = 3.4310), and the lowest mean score for continuance commitment (M = 3.1566). Similar results were reported by Kaur & Sharma (2016) and Ambrose et al. (2008). This suggests that employees strongly agree with sentiments of affective and normative commitment but are less in agreement regarding continuance commitment.

The regression results indicate that the different factors of perceived ethical climate significantly influences faculty commitment. The F value is 37.318, R^2 = 19.61%, and p = .000. These findings are consistent with studies by Okpara & Wynn (2008), Obalola et al. (2012), Babin et al. (2000), Friend et al. (2009), Trevino et al. (2006), and Ambrose et al. (2008), all of which found that the ethical climate influences organizational commitment.

This study specifically found that both perceived benevolent and principled climates have a significant positive influence on faculty commitment, whereas an egoistic climate does not. This finding aligns with Barnett and Schubert (2002), who reported that a workplace climate emphasizing egoism makes the development of a covenantal relationship between employer and employee less likely. However, the findings differ from those of Victor & Cullen (1988), Trevino et al. (1998), and Wimbush and Shepard (1994), where an egoistic climate was found to negatively relate to organizational commitment.

Finally, this study found that a principled climate exerts a stronger influence on overall faculty commitment (Beta = .333) than a benevolent climate (Beta = .172). This result contrasts with studies by Cullen et al. (2003), Ambrose et al. (2008), and Barnett and Schubert (2002), where a benevolent climate was found to have a stronger impact on overall commitment.

Conclusion

The relationship between the perceived ethical climate and faculty commitment has been found to be statistically significant. The different components or variables of the perceived ethical climate explain a considerable amount of variance in faculty commitment. The egoistic climate, which is associated with self-interest at the individual

level and company profit at the organizational (local) level, as per the ethical theory of egoism, has been found to be significantly correlated only with continuance commitment, but not with affective or normative commitment. This is because some faculty members who place a high value on their own interests over others, and are concerned more with company profit than with factors like team cooperation or societal benefits, tend to develop continuance commitment toward the organization. They are less inclined to leave an organization if they perceive the ethical environment to align with their personal values. Commitment literature has also established that people are more likely to commit to organizations that positively regard their individual interests.

Similarly, the benevolent climate, which emphasizes friendship at the individual level and team interest at the local (organizational) level, according to the ethical theory of utilitarianism, has been found to have a significant positive correlation with all three types of faculty commitment: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. The study found that the perception of a benevolent climate has the strongest significant correlation with affective commitment. This suggests that faculty who perceive the organization's ethical environment as benevolent display greater affection and loyalty toward their organization.

Likewise, the principled climate, which reflects personal morality at the individual level and adherence to company rules and procedures at the organizational level, has been found to have the strongest positive correlation with affective commitment, along with positive correlations with continuance and normative commitment. This clearly shows that both benevolent and principled climates are significantly and positively correlated with all three types of commitment.

Looking at overall faculty commitment, both benevolent and principled climates positively influence faculty commitment, with the influence of the principled climate being stronger than that of the benevolent climate. However, the egoistic climate shows no significant relationship with overall faculty commitment.

Implication

The findings of this study will assist managers, administrators, and principals of higher education institutions in understanding the broader impact of ethics within organizations and their positive effect on employee commitment. Educational institutions need to place greater importance on faculty members' perceptions of organizational ethics, as in the current era, faculty prioritize ethics and values when choosing their employers and building long-term relationships. Organizations that engage in unethical practices and expect the same from their employees should not expect loyalty in return.

Limitation

The restricted sample size, owing to time constraints, may not accurately represent the target population. Additionally, the study is based entirely on quantitative data collected through structured questionnaires. Future studies could address these limitations by using a combination of self-report measures and supervisors' ratings, complemented by qualitative data collection methods such as focus groups and in-depth interviews.

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