Influence of Organizational Climate on Teacher Morale: Research So Far and Implications for the Future

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Abstract: It has been fairly well established by now that the morale of the teacher plays a vital role in the quality of education imparted to the student. Teacher Morale, in turn, is influenced by the Organizational/School Climate within which the teacher operates. Hence, anyone who is interested in enhancing the quality of education should also be interested in developing positive Organizational Climate so that Teacher Morale too may be improved. It is in this context that the present paper purports to present the findings of the critical appraisal, carried out by the Research Scholar, of the various research studies conducted so far on the interrelationship between Organizational Climate and Teacher Morale, especially in the context of secondary schools in India.

Keywords: Teacher Morale, Organizational Climate, Secondary Schools.

1. Introduction

The objectives of this paper are two-fold: i) to present the findings of the review of research-based literature on the influence of Organizational Climate (in the school setting) on Teacher Morale and ii) to discuss the implications of the findings for practice and further research in the areas of Organizational Climate and Teacher Morale. In order to provide the conceptual background, the initial part of the paper presents the concepts of Organizational/School Climate and Teacher Morale, the tools available and widely used to assess these in the school setting, and the significance of these concepts to the quality of education in the school setting. The second half of the paper discusses the findings of the review of research-based literature on the influence of Organizational Climate on Teacher Morale and their implications to practice and research, with a special focus on secondary schools in India.

2. Concept of Organizational Climate

Organizational/School Climate is considered to be one of the important quality indicators in educational institutions. A positive Organizational/School Climate includes an identifiable, open and nurturing organizational ethos that attempts to foster a sense of responsibility and efficacy among students and staff. In such a school, one can expect mutual respect and collaboration among administrators, teachers, students, parents, and the community. Above all, in such a school there is an atmosphere of conscious commitment to foster the well-being, academic achievement and civic development of students. Thus, Organizational/School Climate bears a significant relationship with teacher's satisfaction, performance and retention; student achievement; and the ability of the school to sustain and reform over the years.

According to Glisson and James (2002), Organizational Climate differs from Psychological Climate in that while the psychological climate can be said to be "the individual employee's perception of the psychological impact of the work environment on his or her own well-being" organizational climate is the aggregate of the shared perception of the employees of a particular work unit on the impact of their work environment.

Moorhead and Griffin (2001) opine that Organizational Climate differs from Organizational Culture in that the study on climate is based on the disciple of psychology while the study of culture falls within the realm of sociology and anthropology. Hoy, Tarter and Kottkamp (1991) state that while the term 'culture' refers to the behavioural norms, assumptions and beliefs of an organization, 'climate' refers to perception of persons in the organization that reflect those norms, assumptions and beliefs. Understood in this way, a school's climate can be assessed by mapping the collective perception of its members regarding the norms, assumptions and beliefs professed and practiced by the school.

Anderson and West (1996) define Organizational Climate as "the recurring patterns of behavior, attitudes and feelings that characterize life in the organization". From a practical point of view, Organizational Climate

is the aggregate of the perception of its members regarding the specific aspects of dimensions of the organization including perceived autonomy, warmth and support, openness, cooperation, aggressiveness and competitiveness (Gregopoulos, 1965).

It is interesting to note that Halpin and Croft (1963) have defined Organizational Climate as the personality of an organization. In this sense, school climate can be said to be the "personality" of a school described in terms of social interactions between the Principal and teachers and among different members of the teaching staff.

3. Tools Available to Assess Organizational Climate

Tools developed and used to assess any concept/construct become very important from the point of view of its effective operationalization in any research. From this perspective, it is important that we also list out and review the reliability and validity of certain tools available and used to assess the Organizational/School Climate in India.

One of the highly used tools by the researchers in the discipline of Education is the Organizational Climate Inventory (OCI) developed by Chattopadyay and Agarwal in the year 1976. This Inventory consists of 70 items with five-point response scale. It has been prepared to measure eleven dimensions of the Organization Climate, viz. i. Performance standards, ii. Communication flow, iii. Reward system, iv. Responsibility, v. Conflict resolution, vi. Organization structure, vii. Motivation level, viii. Decision making process, ix. Support system, x. Warmth, and xi. Identity problems.

Another tool used quite frequently is the Organizational Climate Questionnaire developed by Furnham and Goodstein (1997). This instrument provides two scores for each of the fourteen dimensions: agreement (employee satisfaction with how things are done) and importance (the degree to which the respondents believe that the item is a significant aspect of the way in which the work is performed in the organization). These two scores provide a fourfold table of action steps: i) ignore – low agreement and low importance – areas unworthy of further consideration, ii) consider – high agreement and low importance – unimportant things done well (often misguided efforts that could be reduced), iii) celebrate – agreement and importance both high – management should celebrate the fact that these things are being done well, and iv) fix – low agreement and high importance – things that need prompt attention.

School Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire developed by Sharma (1978) is basically an Indian adaptation of Organizational Climate Descriptive Questionnaire (OCDQ) developed by Halpin and Crofts in 1963. This scale consists of 64 Likert type items distributed over eight dimensions (sub-test) of organizational climate.

The Manual for Organisational Climate Scale developed by Sanjyot Pethe, Sushama Chaudhari, Upinder Dhar and published in the year 2001 by National Psychological Corporation is another tool widely used by the researchers. Another tool available to assess the concept is the Organizational Climate Index by Hoy and his colleagues (2003) designed to measure the openness and health of schools.

It is quite clear from the review of the tools used by the Indian researchers studying the School Climate that most of these tools are quite old and some of them are mere adaptations of the tools developed in the Western context. Hence, there is an urgent need to develop more indigenous tools which take into consideration the recent research findings in this area.

4. Significance of Organizational Climate to Educational Institutions

Organizational Climate can be said to be having great significance as evidenced by different research studies in the school setting. For example, Edmonds (1979) in his propagation of effective schools argues that "strong administrative leadership, safe and orderly environment, high performance expectations and emphasis on the basic skill and a system of monitoring student progress constitute a school climate that promotes academic achievement".

The study conducted by Halpin and Croft (1963) on school climate assessed on a continuum from open to close has concluded that there is a positive correlation between the Principal's behavior and the teacher's behavior.

A study conducted by Gandhi (1977) concluded that teachers working with comparatively open schools adopted considerably high level of humanistic approach towards their pupil than those working with other types of schools.

A study conducted by Bandhu and Arora (2003) reported that better school climate (having openness and autonomy) promoted greater job satisfaction. It further revealed that better organizational climate resulted in lower rates of burnout among its staff.

A study conducted by Shaw (2009) concluded that the leadership style of the Principals in the middle schools has greater impact on the school climate than that of the Principals in the elementary schools. A similar study conducted by Stratton (2010) showed that there is a positive relationship between the leadership styles of new secondary school principals and the climate's existing in their schools.

Studies conducted by Padaki and Gandhi (1981), Garg (1983) and Cetin (2006) revealed that there is a positive relationship between school climate and professional commitment of teachers. Similarly, the studies conducted by Srivastava (1985), Stremmel (1992), and Hayat (1998) show that there is a positive correlation between school climate and the job satisfaction of the teachers. The study conducted by Babu and Kumari (2013) found that the effectiveness of elementary school teachers is significantly affected by the climate prevailing in their schools.

In her research study titled "Teacher Effectiveness, Job Commitment and Organizational Climate in Relation to Emotional Intelligence of Principals of Secondary Schools" Anand (2012) found that the Principals of secondary schools with high level of emotional intelligence have positive impact on school organizational climate, teacher effectiveness and job commitment.

In a study titled "Spiritual Intelligence and Organizational Climate as Predictors of Life Satisfaction and Adjustment of Secondary School Teachers", conducted by Kaur (2013), it was found that there was significant and positive correlation between organizational climate and life satisfaction of secondary school teachers.

A study conducted by Goswami (2007) showed that teacher freezing is highest in closed climate schools and lowest in autonomous climate schools. In a similar study conducted by Saikia and Goswami's (2010) it was found that the organizational climate of the school was the significant correlate of teacher freezing at secondary stage. The study also revealed that that school climate had a very strong bearing on the effectiveness of teachers. Similarly, in her research study titled "Teacher Freezing among Secondary School Teachers in Relation to their Personality and Organizational Climate" Poonam (2015) concluded that organizational climate of secondary schools has negative correlation with teacher freezing. She concluded that teacher freezing decreases with improvements in the school climate.

In her research study titled "Influence of Gender and Type of School on Leadership Behavior, Organizational Climate and Job Performance of School Teachers" Shalmani (2014) found that there was significant relationship between leadership behavior, job performance and organizational climate among school teachers. Similarly, in her research study titled "Instructional Leadership of Secondary School Heads in Relation to their Work Values and School Organizational Climate" Vedavathi (2017) found that secondary school heads perceive themselves as exhibiting work values at a high frequency than those in elementary schools.

Thus, all the studies on studies conducted on School Climate have come up with very strong evidences to argue that School Climate is a very important indicator of educational quality.

5. Concept of Teacher Morale

'Morale' is said to be the capacity of a group's members to maintain belief in an institution or goal, particularly in the face of opposition or hardship. According to Noella Mackenzie (2007) teacher morale is more complex than has been previously understood, with various levels of morale operating concurrently for them. Similarly, Steinhoff and Owens (1989) opine that teachers are primarily motivated by intrinsic rewards such as self-respect, responsibility, advancement, promotion, recognition and a sense of accomplishment.

According to many scholars on the subject, by treating teachers in ways that empower them such as involving them in decisions about policies and practices and acknowledging their expertise Principals can create and promote teacher morale. Further, Evans (1998) in his book titled "Teacher Morale, Job Satisfaction and Motivation" argues that teacher morale is the foundation based on which alone job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation can be expected to be developed.

6. Tools Available to Assess Teacher Morale

Most of the researchers use Purdue Teacher Opinionaire (PTO) developed by Bentley and Rempel (1968) for assessing Teacher Morale. It is a standardized instrument that asks teachers to respond to 100 questions such as "I love to teach," or "I am well satisfied with my present teaching position". The instrument breaks down morale into 10 specific dimensions for more meaningful discoveries and is designed to estimate individual, school, and system morale. The following are the ten factors the instrument: i) Teacher Rapport with Principal, ii) Satisfaction with Teaching, iii) Rapport among Teachers, iv) Teacher Salary, v) Teacher Load, vi) Curriculum Issues, vii) Teacher Status, viii) Community Support of Education, ix) School Facilities and Services, and x) Community Pressures. Each of the 100 items of the Purdue Teacher Opinionaire uses a four-point Likert-type scale that measures the degree of agreement with the statement: (1) disagree, (2) probably disagree, (3) probably agree, and (4) agree. Stedt and Fraser (1984) contended that the Purdue Teacher Opinionaire is one of the most useful and dependable methods for measuring teacher morale.

In addition to the PTO, another instrument developed during this time was the School Survey (SS) (Coughlin, 1970). Piloted in 1964, this questionnaire also recognizes the complexity of morale and analyzes its dimensions according to thirteen factors. These factors cluster around the following four categories: i) Administrative Operations, ii) Working Relationships, iii) School Effectiveness, and iv) Career Fulfillment. The thirteen factors of the SS and the ten factors of the PTO are quite similar.

Sucher (1962) in his "Study of Morale in Education" has constructed an instrument of the incomplete sentence type to assess teacher morale. It takes into consideration various aspects such as community respect, professional organisation, teacher assignments, good working conditions, channels of communication, policy, confidence with principal, personal problems, relations with principal, item work among teachers, relations with pupils, teacher welfare, fair salary, and fringe benefits to assess the level of teacher morale.

From the review of the tools developed and used for assessing teacher morale it can be seen that most of them have become obsolete and lack cultural fit when it comes to Indian context. Hence, it is high time fresh and rigorous attempts are made to develop appropriate tools to assess such an important concept.

7. Significance of Teacher Morale to Educational Institutions

According to a study conducted by Mehta (1977) there are positive and significant inter-relationships among institutional climate, teacher morale and student control ideology. Hoy and Tarter (1992), based on a study conducted by them, conclude that teacher morale is the single most important feature that contributes to better student achievement. A study conducted by Cooper (2001) revealed that there was a significant relationship between the morale of junior college instructors and their teaching effectiveness as perceived by students.

8. Influence of Organizational Climate on Teacher Morale

In his study on 'institutional climate as a factor of staff morale' Mehta (1977) covered the staff and students of 122 colleges. The study revealed that organizational climate significantly affected teacher morale.

The study conducted by M.C. Murray and Adela (1994) suggests that organizational climate have very high impact on teacher morale. Similarly, a research study conducted by Harvey (2000) revealed that there is positive correlation between organisational climate and teacher behavior. An extensive study conducted by McMurray, Scott and Pale (2000) showed that positive organizational climate has a decisive role to play in the enhancement of teacher morale. Also, a study conducted by Barr (2006) found that having a positive leadership style of the Principal results in positive school climate as well as positive teacher behavior.

9. Implications of the Study

Privatization and commercialization of education in India, in the recent past, have relegated the concepts such as Organizational Climate and Teacher Morale to the background. This is because while the public educational institutions suffer from issues such as lack of funding, poor quality of infrastructure, and bureaucratic administration; the private educational institutions suffer from issues such as accessibility and affordability from the perspective of the students and lack of respect and employment security from the point

of view of teachers. This definitely leads to poor Organizational Climate which results in low Teacher Morale. This in turn, can definitely have adverse impact on the quality of educational outcomes.

These dynamics assume greater significance in the context of secondary schools as it is in this stage of their education that pupils develop the capacity for independent thinking. If, in this stage of education, the teachers engage with the students in making them learn 'how' to think rather than 'what' to think they will in all probability turn out to be producers and informed consumers of knowledge rather than becoming disempowered, marks-scoring individuals. In order to be able to initiate such a meaningful learning environment and process for their students, the teachers need to have high Morale which can be expected to be developed only in a positive Organizational Climate that promotes independent thinking, spirit of experimentation, and recognition and reward for innovation.

It is in such a context that we need to realize that the findings of the review of various research studies conducted so far have great implications for practice and research in the area of organizational climate and teacher morale.

9.1. Implications to Research

The findings of this study go on to show that there has been very little attention paid to the assessment of organizational climate and teacher morale, especially at the secondary school level. Firstly, there is an urgent need to redefine these concepts in keeping with today's educational reality and needs. Secondly, we need to prepare proper assessment tools which are updated and relevant to Indian contexts. Thirdly, we need to study the interrelationships between Organizational Climate and Teacher Morale rather than looking at these things in isolation. It is because a teacher can be expected to have high Morale only in a positive Organizational Climate and a pupil taught by a teacher with high Morale alone can be expected have happy and positive learning outcomes.

9.2. Implications to Practice

The findings of this study also reveal that there has been very little effort made so far to improve organizational climate and teacher morale in the secondary school level in India. It is also high time that the findings of the research studies on the influence of organizational climate on teacher morale were utilized for improving the systems and processes in the secondary schools in India.

10. Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that the lack of theoretical and empirical studies in the school setting, compounded by the inadequacy of the tools for assessment, call for an urgent engagement with these concepts at the practical level. Further, there is an urgent need to design and implement innovative mixed methods studies to better appreciate the relationship between organizational climate and teacher morale so that quality of education in our schools can be made sustainable in the long run. Finally, the gap between the research studies and practice in the secondary schools needs to be bridged by developing symbiotic relationship between practice and research by developing a 'praxis' that promotes practice-informed research and research-informed practice on a continuous basis.

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