

## Relationship Between Ethical Climate and Organizational Commitment in Higher Education Institutions of Pakistan

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### *Abstract*

*Organization's Ethical Climate is the topmost behavioral construct which has a positive impact on all the workings of an organization. It involves the decision-making practices of an organization which are characterized by the reactions of its members. In the same way, organizational commitment is another behavioral construct which is characterized by the emotional attachment of the employees with their organization. Commitment among the employees has far reaching benefits for the organization as well as employees. Research shows that organizational commitment and ethical climate correlated. The current research was aimed at finding the relationship between Ethical Climate and Organizational Commitment in Higher Education Institutions of Pakistan. This study was descriptive in nature and the researcher has adopted survey technique for data collection. Descriptive statistics, mean, SD, correlation, and linear regression were calculated using SPSS version 20.0. Findings of the study revealed the significant relationship between Ethical Climate and Organizational Commitment in Higher Education Institutions of Pakistan. The researcher recommended to enforce promotion of religious teachings, academic morality, ethical culture, resolution of conflicts through ethical manner among faculty members of private sector universities.*

**Keywords:** *Ethical Climate, Organizational Commitment, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).*

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### **Introduction**

Ethical climate in an organization holds the paramount importance due to its relevance with cordial atmosphere and dealings among the employees and management. It involves the decision-making practices of an organization which are characterized by the reactions of its members. Ethics is the basics of morals, values and principles which are desirable and acceptable throughout the organization. Managers, being the leaders of the organization are supposed to have considerable amount of admirable ethical values to inspire their subordinates. This characteristic of the leaders is influential to the promotion of organizational values. Leaders are also instrumental in maintaining and improving ethical values among the employees. Credit goes to Victor and Cullen (1987) who are the pioneers to introduce ethical climate in organizations. According to them, ethical climate is a set of manners that are believed to be morally justified, and the procedures which are adopted to handle nonconformities. Vryonides and Papastavrou (2019) define ethical

climate as prevalence of the perceptions which are based on right behaviors and a psycho logic measure which can leverage ethical issues inside an organization. To summarize, we can say that organization formulates the values while the climate of the organization is responsible for ethics. Ethical behaviors in an organization can be studied in two aspects, formal and informal practices in an organization. Formal practices include organizational structure, reward, performance evaluation, code of ethics, and mission statement of the organization while informal practices include language, norms, rituals and stories (Teresi, Pietroni, Barattucci, Giannella, & Pagliaro, 2019). Highly ethical organizations ensure the prevalence and collaboration of cultural components. These organizations always monitor cultural or organizational changes and probe the dimensions which diverge or impact ethical decision-making practices.

Ethical climate dimensions are represented by a two dimensional chart which displays ethical criteria and locus of analysis utilized in decision making process inside an organization (Cullen, Victor, & Bronson, 1993).The ethical criteria depict moral philosophies consisting egoism, benevolence, and principles. On the other hand, locus of analysis determines the direction of ethical decision-making procedure which include individual, local, and cosmopolitan aspects.A cross sectional view of the locus of analysis and ethical criteria forms a 3x3 matrix having nine ethical climates shown below.

Table No. 1

Locus of Analysis		Locus of Analysis		
		Individual	Local	Cosmopolitan
Ethical Criteria	Egoism	Self Interest (EI)	Organizational Profit (EL)	Efficiency (EC)
	Benevolence	Friendship (BI)	Team Interest (BL)	Social Responsibility (BC)
	Principle	Personal Morality (PI)	Organizational Rules, SOPs (PL)	Laws, Professional conduct (PC)

Source: (Victor & Cullen, 1987)

It is pertinent to mention that Victor and Cullen (1987) did not adhere that all these nine climates are existing in all organizations , rather it was a conceptual framework to identify possible ethical climates with a possibility to emerge different climates in different organizations. For the current study, researcher has probed three dimensions of ethical climates i.e., EI (Self Interest), EL (Organizational Profit), and PC (Laws, Professional conduct).

### Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment has attracted numerous researchers during the last three decades due to its relevance with employee performance, productivity and retention (Lovakov, 2016). Its relevance and importance to organizational matters makes it a major employer concern. Organizational commitment is the degree of attachment with an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991).Kaplan and Kaplan (2018), identifies organizational commitment as the perception to which employees accepts, recognize and operates his/her functions according to set rules and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Baird, Tung, and Yu (2019)define organizational commitment as a perception that is responsible to motivate employees to exert their maximum abilities for the achievement of organizational goals and to remain a member of that organizations. He further adds that committed individuals are an asset of the organization as they perform willingly, wholeheartedly, avoid wasting of time and resources and have fewer chances of switching to

other organizations. Wilkes (2017) exerts that organizational commitment is a state of mind which creates specific thinking about an organization and persuades the employees to serve the organization for life long. Organizational commitment is attracting the researchers to explain employee behaviors throughout the world. Commitment acts as a force that compels the employees to work for the organization in a specific direction to achieve organizational goals (Suzuki & Hur, 2018). Researchers have explored organizational commitment in diversified organizations including industrial or educational, national, and multinational, profit seeking or nonprofit seeking, public or private firms etc.

Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) have categorized organizational commitment into three types i.e. affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment. They describe affective commitment as an employee's affection and psychological attachment with an organization. It is an unwritten contract to serve the organization without any conditions. Organizations which are having employees who are at the peak of affective commitment, surpass their competitors in terms of quality and quantity (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018). On the contrary, less committed employees are lethargic, shirkers, and prone to wastage of time and resources. Employees having higher affective commitment will never leave the organization due to their emotional attachment (Mitonga-Monga, 2018). Organizations are very sensitive on the issue of affective commitment and always devise measures to promote affective organizational commitment among the employees. Continuance organizational commitment is characterized by awareness of financial benefits associated with an organization. It is also linked with the costs that an employee will have to bear in case of losing the job (Krajcsak, 2018). In continuance commitment employees compare the benefits and losses in case of losing and getting a new job. In getting a new job, an employee faces a lot of difficulties pertaining to financial losses and in adapting new working environment. Employees therefore develop continuance commitment to cope such problems. Normative organizational commitment is employees' obligation to stay in the organization owing to societal or religious norms (Andrews, Rosenberg Hansen, & Huxley, 2019). In other words, employees retain the membership of the organization because they must be there.

Commitment among the employees has far reaching benefits for the organization as well as employees. An employee's well-being and job satisfaction is directly linked with the commitment (Heydari & Lai, 2019) as committed employees save their resources and time by continuing working in one organization. Organizations on the other hand benefit a lot from committed employees. Committed employees improve the effectiveness of the organization by reducing the chances of turnover (Baird et al., 2019). Committed employees are dedicated workers and increase the productivity, performance and effectiveness of the organization (Andrews et al., 2019).

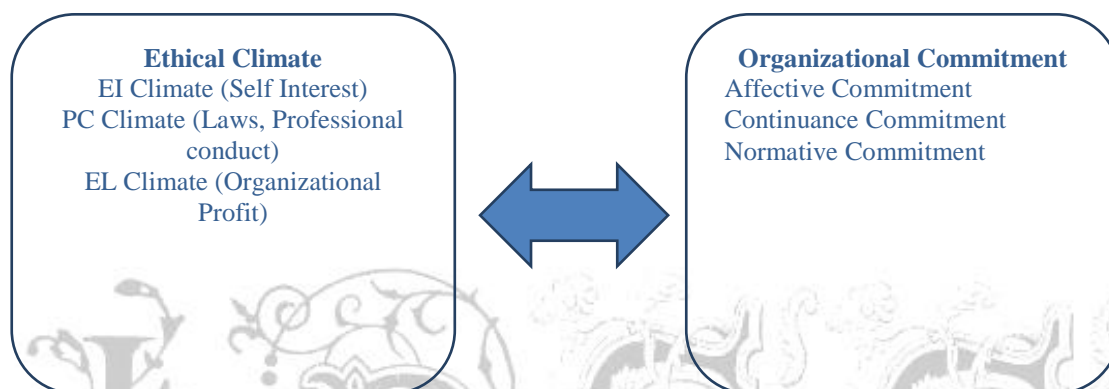
Organizational commitment among the university faculty is a highly commendable trait and has practical usability for the universities. Committed teachers are aware of their noble task of teaching and perform it with their utmost dedication, enthusiasm and perseverance which has positive impact not only on the achievement of students but also on the institution. They increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the university grace of their committed behavior and dedicated efforts. In fact, educational institutions are in dire need of such teachers to uplift the education system of Pakistan (Lashari, Moazzam, Salman, & Irfan, 2016).

### **Organizational Commitment and Ethical Climate**

Researchers have a divergent opinion about the linkage between organizational commitment and ethical climate in organizational employees. According to Cullen et al. (1993) the relationship between a benevolent (caring) climate and organizational commitment is positively correlated while the relationship between egoism (instrumental) climate and organizational commitment is negatively correlated. Researchers like Lau, Tong, Lien, Hsu, and Chong (2017) have identified a positive relationship between ethical climate, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, they also found a positive relationship between caring, independence, and rules climates and organizational commitment dimensions i.e. affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Çemberci, Civelek, and Günel (2016) conducted a study among industrial

workers and highlighted the relationship between ethical climate and organizational commitment as significantly positive. Teresi et al. (2019) conducted his study in a management organization and confirmed the presence of strong positive correlation between benevolent (caring) climate and organizational commitment. In another study Huang, Gao, and Hsu (2019) explored the linkage between ethical climate and organizational commitment among the employees of an ecology institution and concluded that benevolent (caring) climates are instrument in escalating commitment among faculty. We can conclude from the above studies that organizational commitment and ethical climate have significant relationships and organizational ethical climate is a major determinant of organization commitment among employees.

### Theoretical Model



### Higher Education in Pakistan

Higher education is instrumental in reshaping the fate of the nations by growing its economy, providing employment opportunities, and purifying the thinking styles of its members. Owing to developments in Information and Computer technologies (ICT), world has reshaped itself into a global village and the field of education has also benefitted from it. Cooperation in the field of education, irrespective of religion, race, territory, and political ideology has increased unprecedentedly across the globe. This globalization of education has created trust, harmony, and mutual support among the nations. It is always priority of the students as well as parents to acquire a degree compatible to bath local alongside international requirements and has a global recognition (Elahi, 2018).

In ancient era higher education was a source of personal scholastic achievement and to obtain an eminent position in the society. Today, globalization has changed the concept and scope of higher education. Now it is linked with the economic and social status of a nation and occupies a significant place in an education system. Higher education has the capacity to train and prepare the youth for economy, industry, agriculture, and civil service etc. Miraculous developments of the nations in the field of science and technology are owed to developments in higher education. Nations who have given due recognition to the promotion of higher education have made drastic achievements in the social and economic progress of the country. It has empowered youth with latest skills and technologies which has significantly contributed to growth of national economy (Fleming, 2020).

Higher education system in Pakistan is working under the umbrella of Higher Education Commission (HEC) since its inception in 2002. It has the responsibility to coordinate and support higher education and to accelerate its role in national economy and development. HEC has the basic responsibility to upgrade the higher educational institutions to international level. Parameter of this responsibility was to ensure quality, evaluation and to encourage a research culture in Higher Education's Institutions (HEIs) parallel to world standards. HEC has made drastic developments in equipping the youth with higher education since the last

two decades which is visible in the form of enhanced enrolment and greater interests of teachers as well students towards research activities at national and global level (Hameed & Jan, 2016).

HEC has been instrumental in promoting a research culture across the Pakistan and introduced measures to allocate funds to universities which makes universities strictly bound to adhere to standards and SOPs. In addition, it has provided fabulous research grants and scholarships for students at all levels to study abroad or at home. These steps has resulted in the form of promotion of research culture, performance improvement of HEIs and enhancement of standard of education to leverage the better living standards, alleviate poverty and improvement of overall economy of Pakistan (Subhani, Osman, & Niaz, 2017). But despite all these initiatives, Pakistan is standing far away in terms of quality education as compared with other countries of the world.

According to HEC, there are 214 universities and HEIs working in public and private sector of Pakistan but there are only 14 universities which are included in Times University Ranking (2020) whereas India, Iran and China has 56, 40, and 81 universities respectively included in this ranking. These figures show a clear picture of the quality and standard of our universities. According to (HEC) there 83 private sector universities in Pakistan, whereas there are 28 universities working under private sector in the province of Punjab. These universities are doing a meritorious job by educating the youth in parallel with public sector universities.

These universities are contributing significantly to national economic growth, development and enhancement of educational standards due to their massive investments and latest infrastructure. These universities have identified a new business horizon which is catering new technologies for the students with enhanced employment opportunities. These universities have specific characteristics and vary significantly with public sector universities in the areas like remunerations, job security, promotion criteria, service structure, rules, fiscal allocations, and organizational hierarchy. These universities are also working under the guidelines of HEC and are delivering diverse range of courses including medical, engineering, management sciences, humanities and teacher training (Muqadas, Rehman, & Aslam, 2017).

### **Implications of Organizational Commitment in Higher Education**

Organizational commitment being the cornerstone of all the working organizations and management hierarchies is indispensable for the institutional goals of HEIs (Hanaysha & Majid, 2018). HEIs has the responsibility to cope the national demand of the provision of adept managers in all walks of life. This responsibility is linked with qualification, expertise and commitment of the academic staff who correspond positively to institutional demands (Qureshi, Waseem, Qureshi, & Afshan, 2018).

University teachers must have the opportunities to enhance their professional knowledge and provided with sufficient remunerations to have a satisfied living. Provision of better facilities, chances of knowledge enhancement and acknowledgement of their contributions will enhance teacher commitment. Teachers having greater levels of commitment towards their institution, will prove them better contributors as compared to those having less or no commitment (Riani, Suyono, & Setiawan, 2019). Committed teachers being the asset of the institution are always honored and contribute substantially to achieve organizational vision and mission in a practical way with dedication and devotion (Suzuki & Hur, 2018).

Organizational commitment is a frequently researched construct in Higher Education sector of Pakistan. HEIs in Pakistan are growing day by day and are and are facing numerous academic as well as administrative problems. Lack of commitment among academics especially in private sector has the greater magnitude. This lack of commitment among academics is characterized by dissatisfaction with their job, lack of ambitious performance, and frequent turnovers which not only adversely affect quality of research activities but also defame the institution (Qureshi et al., 2018).

## Research Objective

Following research objective was designed for the present research.

*To find the relationship between Ethical Climate and Organizational Commitment in Higher Education Institutions of Pakistan.*

This study is descriptive in nature and the researcher has adopted survey technique for data collection.

## Instrumentation

Researcher employed questionnaires for data collection, i.e. organizational commitment, and ethical climate. Details of instrumentation are given below.

### Organizational Commitment

Data for organizational commitment was measured by adapting Organizational Commitment Scale (OCS) initially developed by Meyer and Allen (1991). OCS measured responses on a five-point likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5= Strongly Agree). Scale was modified and used with due permission of the developers. Researchers checked the reliability of the instrument by Chronbach alpha as 0.801 which is quite sufficient. Items in the modified scale constitute affective, continuance, and normative subscales of organizational commitment.

### Ethical Climate

Ethical Climate dimensions were measured by adapting Ethical Climate Questionnaire (ECS) initially developed by Cullen et al. (1993). ECS measured responses on a five-point likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5= Strongly Agree). Scale was modified and used with due permission of the developers. Researchers checked the reliability of the instrument by Chronbach alpha as 0.837 which is quite sufficient. Items in the modified scale constitute EI Climate (Self Interest), PC Climate (Laws, Professional conduct), and EL Climate (Organizational Profit) subscales of ethical climate.

### Population and Sample

Current study was designed to explore the relationship between ethical climate and organizational commitment among faculty of private sector HEIs, so the population comprised all the private university teachers working in the province of Punjab.

Researcher employed multistage sampling technique as it is best suited to a population scattered in a large area. In the first phase, one university from each division was selected randomly whereas Minhag University Lahore was added to the sample in place of DG Khan division, making nine universities due to absence of private sector university in DG Khan division. In the second stage 42 teachers were randomly chosen from each university.

This made a sample of 378 for the current the study. Sample constitutes University of Lahore, UMT Lahore, NCBA, Minhaj University Lahore, University of Faisalabad, University of Sialkot, Institute of Southern Punjab Multan, University of Wah, and Namal University Mianwali. A total number of 378 questionnaires were distributed by post, personal liaison, and dedicated visits to the universities. 315 questionnaires were returned with a response rate of 83% which is quite acceptable according to Blumenberg and Barros (2018) who says that 80-85% return rate in self-administered questionnaires is appropriate.

## Analysis and Results

The demographic properties of the respondents are given below: -

- There were 62.5% (197) male respondents while 37.5% (118) were females.
- Lectures constituted 46% of the respondents (146), 39% were assistant professors (125), 12% were associate professors (38), while remaining 2% were professors (6).
- 84% of the respondents belonged to age category of 30-40 years (265) whereas 16% of the respondents belonged to age category of 40-45 years (50).
- 85% of the respondents had experience less than five years (269) whereas 15% of the respondents were having experience 5-10 years (46).

Table No.2 Descriptive Statics Organizational Commitment

Variables	Mean	SD
Affective Commitment	2.86	0.745
Continuance Commitment	3.86	0.605
Normative Commitment	3.28	0.468
Overall Organizational Commitment	3.33	0.606

Source: Author's Computation

Results in table No. 2 shows that affective, continuance, and normative commitment has a positive contribution to organizational commitment in university teachers as the mean values of majority of the variables are (3.86, 3.28, 3.33) >3 which infers that majority of the respondents agree with organizational commitment which means the presence of organizational commitment among teachers.

Table No. 3 Ethical Climate

Variables	Mean	SD
EI Climate (Self Interest)	3.07	0.89
PC Climate (Laws, Professional conduct)	3.18	0.92
EL Climate (Organizational Profit)	3.48	0.9
Overall Ethical Climate	3.24	0.9

Source: Author's Computation

The Results in table No. 3 shows that EI Climate (Self Interest), PC Climate (Laws, Professional conduct), and EL Climate (Organizational Profit) has a positive contribution to Ethical Climate in the university teachers as the mean values of majority of the variables are (3.07, 3.18, 3.48) >3 which infers that majority of the respondents agree with Ethical Climate and are influential in promoting organizational commitment among teachers.

Table No. 4 Correlation Analysis

Organization Commitment	EI Climate (Self Interest)	PC Climate (Laws, Professional conduct)	EL Climate (Organizational Profit)	Overall Ethical Climate
	.136*	-.189**	.503**	.348**

\*\* . P < 0.01, \*p < 0.05 Source: Author's Computation

Results in the table No.4 show correlation between ethical climate and organizational commitment. EL Climate (Organizational Profit) has a positive high correlation with organizational commitment (r=.503, p<.01), while a weak correlation exists between EI Climate (Self Interest) and organizational commitment (r=.136,p<.05). It was also noticed that there is strong negative relationship between PC Climate (Laws,

Professional conduct) and organizational commitment ( $r=-.189, p<.01$ ). As a whole, ethical climate has a strong positive correlation with organizational commitment ( $r=.348, p<.01$ ).

Table No.5 Regression Analysis

	$\beta$	$t$	F	$R^2$	Significant
EI Climate (Self Interest)	.390	2.422	5.867	.018	.016
PC Climate (Laws, Professional conduct)	-.511	-3.409	11.625	.036	.001
EL Climate (Organizational Profit)	.381	10.295	105.997	.253	.000
Overall Ethical Climate	.756	6.566	43.112	.121	.000

Dependent Variable: Organizational Commitment Source: Author's Computation

Table No. 5 shows that EI Climate (Self Interest) and PC Climate (Laws, Professional conduct) has not significantly impacted Organizational Commitment among private sector university teachers while EL Climate (Organizational Profit) has significantly impacted Organizational Commitment,  $R^2 = .253$ ,  $F(1, 314) = 105.997, p<.001$  with positive beta coefficient of ( $\beta = .381$ ) which shows that one unit increase in EL Climate (Organizational Profit) will cause 38% increase in organizational commitment among private sector university teachers. It was also found that ethical climate as a whole has significantly impacted Organizational Commitment,  $R^2 = .121$ ,  $F(1, 314) = 43.112, p<.001$  with positive beta coefficient of ( $\beta = .756$ ) which shows that one unit increase in ethical climate will cause 75% increase in organizational commitment among private sector university teachers.

## Discussion

Current research was aimed at exploring the relationship between ethical climate and organizational commitment in HEIs of Pakistan. It was found that private university teachers were strongly agreed with the presence of all the dimensions of ethical climate i.e. EI Climate (Self Interest), PC Climate (Laws, Professional conduct), and EL Climate (Organizational Profit), and agreed with the prevalence of all the three dimensions of organizational commitment i.e. affective, continuance, and normative commitment, in private sector universities. Results proved that EL Climate (Organizational Profit) has high positive correlation with organizational commitment while EI Climate (Self Interest) had weak positive correlation with organizational commitment whereas PC Climate (Laws, Professional conduct) had strong negative correlation with organizational commitment. It was also discovered that ethical climate as a whole had a strong positive correlation with organizational commitment. It was also exposed that EL Climate (Organizational Profit) dimension of ethical climate had a significant effect in escalating organizational commitment among private sector university faculty. Additionally, ethical climate had a significant effect in increasing organizational commitment among private sector university faculty.

Results of the study prove that ethical climate and organizational commitment are significantly correlated, and ethical climate significantly affects organizational commitment. Higher the perceived level of ethical climate, greater will be the organizational commitment among faculty of private sector universities.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Organizational commitment has the supreme importance in keeping the employees motivated, satisfied, and dedicated. Commitment being the vital trait of university teachers is necessary to achieve institutional goals. Employers and managers always strive to enhance their employees' commitment by numerous techniques and incentives. Ethical climate is an important behavioral construct which has greater implications in management firms as well as HEIs. Findings expose the utility of ethical climate and organizational commitment in HEIs, hence supports the objective of the study. Findings reveal that EI Climate (Self Interest) and EL Climate (Organizational Profit) dimensions of ethical climate have a positive



correlation with organizational commitment, hence, are instrumental in enhancing organizational commitment among the faculty of private sector HEIs. Overall findings suggest that presence of ethical climate in private sector HEIs affect teachers' organizational commitment which is in line with the findings of Choe, Choong, and Tan (2017) who conducted a similar study in higher education context of Malaysia.

Presence of ethical climate contributes effectively to organizational commitment of an institution. Unethical atmospheres create turmoil, hinder professional development, and create mistrust among employees. Other adverse impacts may include disgrace of seniors, lack of cordial atmosphere, and even cause turnover intentions among faculty.

Importance of ethical climate makes it mandatory for the managers to implement ethical climate based on the conclusions of Cullen et al. (1993). Management should focus on the promotion of religious teachings, academic morality, ethical culture, resolution of conflicts through ethical manners in all walks of HEIs to ensure ethical climate, which will make academics satisfied and committed, as they are the asset of any educational institution and are responsible for its success.

### **Limitations**

Researchers have made utmost efforts to give a real picture of the problem under study, though there might be some limitations. The questionnaire of the study was distributed personally, by post and personal liaison with the university teachers which did not produce desired response, although still many teachers responded. This might be attributed due to extreme commitments of teachers in teaching and research.

Another limitation is concerned with the population of the study as it consists of only private sector universities which cannot be generalized on public sector universities due to difference in service structure, working atmosphere and ethical climate.

### **Scope of Future Research**

Present research was aimed at finding relationship between ethical climate and organizational commitment among faculty members of private sector universities only. It is suggested that future research should also include public sector universities so that the results could be generalized to teaching faculty of all HEC recognized universities. In addition, it is also suggested that future research must also include qualitative measures like interview to have in depth investigation of the problem.

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