The effect of ethical climate on the organizational commitment of faculty members

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationship of perceived ethical climate on the organizational commitment of full-time faculty members in institutions of higher education. Four regional universities participated in this study. The data analysis indicated significant differences in self-reported levels of organizational commitment with regards to type of perceived ethical climate. Results of this study also indicate that gender differences play a significant role in the self-reported level of organizational commitment. Understanding organizational commitment is important because decreased levels of commitment have been linked to lower productivity, stagnated creativity, and higher levels of turnover.

Keywords: Ethical Climate, Organizational Commitment, Faculty

INTRODUCTION

Institutions of higher education are some of the most complex organizations in the U.S. They have multi-million dollar budgets, operating incomes, capital expenditures, and intense marketing plans. The competition they face with other institutions can be as vicious as any corporate boardroom. They have no individual shareholders, yet society is seen as the largest of the stakeholders. The customers of an institution of higher education are as difficult to identify as the stakeholders who benefit and invest in their livelihood. Some of these institutions receive a significant amount of federal and state appropriations, yet may not be considered government agencies. Their existence can be found in the form of brick and mortar buildings, trade and vocational schools, hybrid institutions, or completely virtual associations, operating as public, private, or for-profit entities.

For administrators in higher education, however, it is imperative to identify areas of operational concern where they can have a positive effect. Recent research has focused on the role ethics plays in the scope of organizational climate and employee behavior. This includes the effect leaders or administrators have on their employees' behavior as well. The most prevailing reasons behind the occurrence of deviant workplace behaviors is the conflicting perception, via deviant role models, that the organization supports such behavior (Appelbaum, Iaconi, & Matousek, 2007). The ethical climate of an organization is linked directly to the positive behaviors of employees and also to a range of negative work behaviors including tardiness, absenteeism, and social loafing (Peterson, 2002a; Peterson, 2002b). Negative work behaviors also are linked to decreases in job satisfaction and organizational commitment, lower levels of creativity, stagnated productivity, increased antisocial behavior, as well as increased employee turnover (Appelbaum et al., 2007; Morrison, 2008; Peterson, 2002a; Peterson, 2002b). The detailed financial implications of these behaviors are difficult to capture; however, the impact to the bottom line can also be overwhelmingly apparent.

Most of the research conducted on ethical climate and organizational commitment has been analyzed using for-profit businesses and corporations. A growing stream of research is starting to look at organizational factors that influence institutions of higher education. Very little research, however, has been done on the relationship between ethical climate and organizational commitment in institutions of higher education. Cullen, Parboteeah, and Victor (2003) found a link between ethical climate types and organizational commitment. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to further explore the relationship between the perceived ethical climate and the organizational commitment of full-time faculty members.

By deepening the understanding of the effect that perceived ethical climate has on the organizational commitment of full-time faculty members, administrators could better understand the impact their managerial decisions have on the long-term viability of the institution. In 1871, during his inaugural presidential address, Yale University president, Noah Porter declared, "The most efficient of all moral influences in a college are those which proceed from the personal characters of the instructors. . . A noble character becomes light and inspiration, when dignified by intellectual power and attainments" (Brackner, 1992, p. 22). According to Webber (2007) it is the systematization or application of the values Porter refers to that evolve into the shared norms that are enacted upon by members of the organization; thereby, creating the organization's culture.

Faculty members are the front-line employees at any institution of higher education. The job tasks they perform everyday have a direct impact on the organization's ability to meet stakeholder expectations. Whether that stakeholder is the student, local municipalities,

neighboring businesses, the federal government, or society at large, all successful endeavors will begin at the hands of the front-line faculty members. Thus, the current manuscript contains an empirical analysis focusing on the following research questions:

1. Is there a significant difference in the organizational commitment of full-time faculty members with regard to type of perceived ethical climate?

2. Is there a significant difference in the organizational commitment of full-time faculty members with regard to gender?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Culture and Climate

Organizational cultures not only reinforce the vision, the mission, and the goals of an organization, but they also provide the framework for expected behaviors of conduct for employees. Schein (1992) defined organizational culture as basic assumptions and beliefs about the organization that are shared by employees. It is the organizational culture that establishes the boundaries and parameters for acceptable employee behavior. The organizational culture characterized by shared assumptions, beliefs, and values helps to shape and guide [individual and group] behavior (Erakovich, Bruce, & Wyman, 2002).

According to McCrimmon (2007) culture was the personality or the stable force behind the organization. Often times a person's personality is shaped early on in his or her life cycle, and when it is firmly established it can be difficult to change. Nelson and Quick (2009) defined organizational culture as "[patterns] of basic assumptions that are considered valid and that are taught to new members as the way to perceive, think, and feel in the organization" (p. 251). Simply stated, culture is synonymous with values. Apple Computers exemplifies an entrepreneurial culture of innovation and risk. Insurance companies and banks, however, tend to have cultures dominated by risk avoidance (McCrimmon, 2007). Organizational climates, however, are a distinct yet interrelated entity within organizational life.

Reichers and Schneider (1990) defined organizational climates as "the shared perception of the way things are around here" (p. 22). Ironically, it possesses both formal and informal - or some might even say casual – elements reinforcing 'the way things are around here' attitude of the organization's employees. It differs significantly from organizational culture in that it is the executed behaviors of the individuals in the organization that produce the climates. When intertwined into the organization, the social norms become increasingly apparent as to what behaviors will considered acceptable and unacceptable. Organizational norms establish the climate and eventually evolve into acceptable behaviors that are well known by organizational members (Erakovich et al., 2002).

Ethical Climate

It is important to note that many types of climates exist within the organizational framework: climates for safety compliance, community service, and innovation are just a few that have been researched. A newer type of organizational climate is ethical climate. Introduced into the literature by Victor and Cullen (1988), the ethical climate of an organization refers to the behaviors that are perceived to be ethically correct and how issues regarding deviations away from those expected behaviors are handled in the organization. Therefore, organizationally

speaking, it could be concluded that the culture of an organization establishes the values, while the climate of an organization establishes the ethics.

There are two general approaches for assessing ethics within an organization: cognitive approach and the shared-perception approach (Webber, 2007). The cognitive approach relies solely on the individual's perception of the work environment. The shared-perception approach attempts to use unbiased data such as organizational structure, reward and performance evaluation systems, employee code of conduct manuals, and other formal documents (i.e. letters and memos from executives) to make an impartial assessment of the work environment. Critics to this approach claim that even though documents are used to assess the environment, they still represent the viewpoint of a single individual or small group of individuals.

Ethical Climate and Organizational Commitment

Cullen et al. (2003) further researched the relationship between organizational commitment and the three ethical climate criteria: egoistic, benevolent, and principled. In their research they found that benevolent organizations are positively related to organizational commitment, egoistic organizations are negatively related to organizational commitment, and principled organizations have a positive relationship to organizational commitment but only with professional workers. The negative impacts of egoistic climates are far reaching. Employees who work in egoistic climates perceive that self-interest is promoted and reinforced even at the expense of hurting other people. Organizations that promote self-interest within their social norms can experience higher levels of deviant workplace behaviors, lower forms of group cohesion, higher turnover intentions, and a reduction in the organizational commitment of their membership. Organizations that promote benevolent climates encourage a perception of a local caring environment. These caring environments "[are] more likely to encourage positive affect among organizational members, which in turn can result in higher attachment to the organization (Cullen et al., 2003, p. 138). Interpersonal cohesiveness that supports affective attachment and reinforces the organizational commitment of its membership is promoted.

Organizational Climate and Deviant Workplace Behavior

Contributors such as social, interpersonal, and organizational factors have been linked to workplace deviance. Researchers have discovered that the most prevailing reasons behind the occurrence of deviant workplace behavior is the conflicting perception, via deviant role models, that the organization supports such behavior (Appelbaum et al., 2007). Deviant or negative workplace behavior is linked to antisocial behavior, organizational misbehavior, noncompliant behavior, workplace deviance, and dysfunctional workplace behavior (Peterson, 2002a; Peterson, 2002b). Potential costs include lost productivity, lost resources, lost customers, employee turnover, and decreased employee morale.

Trevino (1986) claimed that both organizational and situational factors can influence the attitude and behavior of the organizational membership. According to Webber (2007) it is the executed behaviors of the individuals in the organization that produce the organizational climates. The ethical climate of an organization is linked directly to the positive behaviors of employees and also to the range of negative work behaviors including tardiness, absenteeism, and lax performance (Peterson, 2002a; Peterson, 2002b). In his research Peterson (2002b) found that the Ethical Climate Questionnaire created by Victor and Cullen was a partial predictor of

deviant workplace behavior. More specifically, the ethical dimensions were predictive of many types of behaviors including deviant workplace behavior.

Morrison (2008) proposed that negative workplace relationships will impact the level of job satisfaction, turnover intentions, organizational commitment, and cohesion experienced by organizational members. She concluded that "those [participants] with at least one negative relationship at work were significantly less satisfied, reported less organizational commitment, were part of less cohesive workgroups and were significantly more likely to be planning to leave their job" (Morrison, 2008, p. 340). Furthermore, increased stress, eventually leading to employee burnout, was another predictable outcome of negative workplace relationships.

One suggestion for countering deviant behavior is the establishment of a strong organizational culture, specifically a culture focused on core ethical values (Appelbaum et al., 2007). Additionally, it is critically important that these ethical values are also communicated and disseminated to all employees in the organization and reinforced by the behavior of the supervisors and leaders in the establishment of the organizational policies and applicable social norms.

Ethical Leadership and Organizational Climate

Leaders within an organization are responsible for establishing the vision, mission, goals, and values of an organization; therefore, it is important to note the role that leaders play within the organizational climate. Ethical scandals have plagued U.S. business practices in recent times and questions have been raised as to the impact leaders have on providing ethical guidance. Brown, Trevino, and Harrison (2005) defined ethical leadership as the demonstration of appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships. Maxwell (2005) described leadership simply as influence. Therefore, in order to have influence with one's followers, a leader must be viewed as an attractive, credible, and legitimate role model (Maxwell, 2005).

The study of ethical leadership is built upon the foundation of social learning. Social learning proposes that leaders will influence the ethical behavior of others through modeling (Brown et al., 2005). It is the leader's responsibility to model the ethical behavior they want from followers. Wimbush and Shepard (1994) found that subordinates mimic supervisors' behavior because it is supervisors who hold the subordinates accountable for their actions.

This theory of social learning and modeling is grounded in Mead's (1934) theory on symbolic interactionism. "Symbolic interactionism is a theory which explains how people create shared perceptions through an on-going, social interactive process of interpreting, defining, and evaluating events through symbols" (Wimbush & Shepard, 1994, p. 642). In a work relationship, symbols take on many different forms. Symbols are most often expressed through verbal and nonverbal communication between supervisors and subordinates (Wimbush & Shepard, 1994). Also, supervisors and leaders play an important role in reinforcing and disseminating the organization's visions, mission, goals, and policies throughout the organization. Supervisors and other organizational leaders become a critical determinant of how organizational policies are perceived throughout the organization (Wimbush & Shepard, 1994). When policies and expectations are communicated incorrectly, inconsistently, or dissimilarly, the various climate types begin to emerge.

Organizational Commitment

Meyer and Allen proposed a three-pronged approach for understanding organizational commitment. This perspective on commitment consists of three general themes: "affective attachment to the organization, perceived costs associated with leaving the organization and obligation to remain with the organization" (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 64). These three themes are also more commonly referred to as 1) affective commitment, 2) continuance commitment, and 3) normative commitment.

Affective commitment refers to a person's emotional attachment and identification with the organization's goal and values. Strong affective commitment creates continued employment with the organization because the individual *wants* to do so. Continuance commitment refers to an acute awareness of the perceived costs associated with leaving the organization. When the costs associated with leaving the organization are perceived to be greater than potential benefits, continued employment occurs solely because the individual *needs* to remain with the organization. Normative commitment reflects a feeling of personal obligation to remain with the organization. Strong normative commitment creates continued employment because employees feel that they *ought* to remain with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). As a result, for this research study, organizational commitment is defined as the level of attachment, both emotionally and functionally, to one's current place of employment (Elizur & Koslowsky, 2000).

Organizational Commitment and Values

Research on values is fraught with complex and individualistic motivations. Values can be as diverse as the number of individuals studied. According to Johnson (2007), values work as a primary driver for our decision making practices and our behavior on the job. Values directly influence job behaviors such as how hard we work, how we treat coworkers and subordinates, and how we evaluate performance. Values are also used for priority establishment and assessing the correctness of behaviors. Schwartz (1992) developed the most widely used assessments on value systems. He defined values as the desirable goals that serve as guiding principles that directly influence individual.

Leaders and managers play an important role in employees' perceptions of the values they associate with their company. Actions and behaviors exhibited by superiors within the organization have a direct impact on employees' perceptions of organizational values. Perceived organizational values have a direct link to organizational commitment; therefore, when leaders and managers behave in manners that reinforce the values of benevolence and vision, the levels of affective and normative commitment are increased in their workforce. Based upon previous research (Abbott et al., 2005), organizations play an important role in reinforcing the organizational commitment (specifically affective and normative) in their workforce as well.

Instrumentation

Two previous established survey instruments were used to collect data for this study. The modified Meyer and Allen (2004) Three-Component Model (TCM) survey for employee commitment, and Victor and Cullen's revised Ethical Climate Questionnaire (1993). The revised Three-Component Model (TCM) of employee commitment measures three distinct factors of organizational commitment. These three types of employee commitment are affective, normative, and continuance commitment and each factor measures a separate component of the overall commitment process. This unique perspective on commitment consists of three general themes: "affective attachment to the organization, perceived costs associated with leaving the organization and obligation to remain with the organization" (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 64). It

has also been explained that normative commitment relates to what one *should* do, affective commitment pertains to what one *wants* to do, and continuance commitment explains what one *has* to do (Jenkins, 2009; Meyer & Allen, 2004).

Each component, affective, normative, and continuance, is measured based upon four questions off of the TCM instrument. A seven-point Likert-type scale was used to measure agreement with each statement. The scale ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree.

Revised Ethical Climate Questionnaire (RECQ)

The Revised Ethical Climate Questionnaire (RECQ), a widely used assessment of ethical climate in organizations, was originally developed in 1988 by Victor and Cullen. Originally called The Ethical Climate Questionnaire (ECQ), it has undergone one significant revision from its origination, and it is now referred to as the Revised Ethical Climate Questionnaire. The purposed of the measurement was derived from Victor and Cullen's desire to study the ethical work climate in an organization based primarily upon the analysis of the ethical choices made by individuals in that organization (Webber, 2007). Their primary focus was to develop a measurement heavily grounded in the shared-perception approach to ethical assessment.

For the purpose of this study, an adaption of the ethical climate questionnaire was used. The focus of the revised instrument will center on the three factors of ethical criteria: Egoism, Benevolence, and Principled. According to Cullen, Victor, and Bronson (1993), "ethical climates may be distinguished in terms of maximizing one's own self-interests, maximizing joint interests, or adherence to universal principles" (p. 668). Four items for each of the three ethical criteria were selected to be used in this study. A seven-point Likert-type scale was used which ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between organizational commitment and perceived ethical climate of full-time faculty members at four regional universities located in the United States. An electronic survey with three sections was used to capture data. A seven point Likert-type scale was used on the first two sections to assess varying levels of organizational commitment and perceived ethical climate. The third section included five demographical questions. All full-time faculty members at the four participating institutions, totaling approximately 7,808, were invited to respond. Six hundred seventy-three responses were captured; however, only 594 were used in the analysis of data. There were 79 ineligible responses that included 32 incomplete surveys, 39 who were not full-time faculty members, and 8 who were employed by their institution for less than 1 year. The demographic make-up of the participants included 54.2% tenured faculty, 25.6% tenure-track faculty, and 20.2% of contract-based or other faculty. See Table 1.

Group Assignments

Respondents were grouped into one of the four ethical climate type categories based upon their highest cumulative score. The ethical climate questionnaire is a continuous measurement whereby all respondents were required to answer four questions for each climate type based upon a seven point Likert-type scale. Therefore, total scores ranged from a possible high of 28 to a possible low of four for each climate type. Respondents' observations were grouped based on

which of the three ethical climate types received the highest cumulative score. If the cumulative score for two climate types was equal, then the observation was assigned into one of the two groups randomly. With 594 completed responses, 168 respondents were grouped into the benevolent ethical climate, 166 respondents were grouped into the egoism climate, and 260 respondents were grouped into the principled climate.

Reliability

"Reliability is the extent to which a variable or set of variables is consistent in what it is intended to measure" (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998, p. 3). Cronbach's alpha was used as a measure of reliabilities for all constructs (Cronbach, 1951). Each of the scales had a reliability of at least □ = .70, each scale was determined to have an acceptable level of internal consistency (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). See Table 2.

Research Questions and Analysis

Research Question 1: Is there a significant difference in the organizational commitment of full-time faculty members with regard to type of ethical climate?

> Ho1: There is no significant difference in the organizational commitment of full-time faculty members with regard to type of ethical climate.

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between types of perceived ethical climate and the self-reported levels of organizational commitment. The factor variable the type of perceived ethical climate included three groups: benevolent, egoism, and principled. The dependent variable was the self-reported level of organizational commitment. The ANOVA was significant, [$F(2, 591) = 73.27$, $p < .001$]. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The strength of the relationship between the type of ethical climate and the self-reported level of organizational commitment as assessed by $□^2$ was large (.20) (Green & Salkind, 2008).

Because the overall F test was significant, post hoc multiple comparisons were conducted to evaluate the pairwise difference among the means of the three groups. A Tukey procedure was selected for the multiple comparisons because equal variances were assumed. There was a significant difference in the means between the benevolent ethical climate group and the egoism ethical climate group ($p < .001$) and between the benevolent ethical climate group and the principled ethical climate group ($p = .001$). There was also a significant difference between the egoism ethical climate group and the principled ethical climate group ($p < .001$). The data suggest that when faculty members perceive their organization's ethical climate to be egoistic, there are lower self-reported levels of organizational commitment than when they perceive the ethical climate to be benevolent or principled. It also appears that when faculty members perceive the organization's ethical climate to be benevolent, there are higher self-reported levels of organizational commitment than when they perceive the ethical climate to be egoistic or principled. The 95% confidence intervals for the pairwise differences as well as the means and standard deviations for the three ethical climate types are reported in Table 3.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference in the organizational commitment of full-time faculty members with regard to gender?

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the organizational commitment of full-time faculty member with regard for gender.

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores for organizational commitment differ based on gender. The self-reported level of organizational commitment was the dependent variable and the group variable was gender type. The test was significant, [t(592) = 4.09, p = < .001]. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The $\square^2$ index was .03, which indicated a small effect size (Green & Salkind, 2008). Female participants (M = 57.50, SD = 11.82) tended to report higher levels of organizational commitment than their male counterparts (M = 53.47, SD = 12.19). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was (-5.96 to -2.09).

Key Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship exists between a faculty member's perception of his or her organization's ethical climate and the self-reported levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Specifically, this research assessed the perception of 594 full-time faculty members working at four regional universities across the United States. It is important to note that the findings of this study may not be generalizable to other populations due to two key constraints: 1) The return rate for this study is approximately 8.6%, and (2) the faculty respondents consisted of 80% tenured or tenure-track faculty. The following conclusions, however, were based upon the findings from the data of this study:

1. The mean total organizational commitment scores of full-time faculty members were significantly different among ethical climate types. Faculty members who perceive their organization to have a benevolent ethical climate reported higher total commitment scores than those who perceive the climate to be principled or egoistic. This finding is supported in previous research (Cullen et al., 2003; Victor & Cullen, 1988). Benevolent climates center on fostering friendship, team interest, and social responsibility amongst organizational members. This pertains most closely to the affective commitment or the type of organizational commitment that is derived from attachment to the goals and values of the organization, emotional linkage to other members of the organization, and the strength of an individual's involvement with the organization.

2. Faculty members who perceived their organization to have a principled ethical climate reported lower total organizational commitment scores than those in the benevolent group but higher total organizational commitment scores than those who perceived the climate to be egoistic. This is also supported by previous research findings (Cullen et al., 2003; Steers, 1977, Victor & Cullen, 1988). Principled ethical climate groups describe those workers who have a professional set of standards, laws, or codes associated with their trade. They also describe individuals who usually have an extensive educational background. Steers (1977) found that "more highly educated people . . . would be less committed to the organization and perhaps more committed to a profession or trade" (p.53). Therefore, it would not be inconceivable to find that professionals who perceive their ethical climate to be principled may in fact be more committed to their profession than they would be to the employing organization.

3. Those participants who perceive their organization's ethical climate to be egoistic have the assumption that self-interest, company profit, and efficiency are the most prevalent values embodied by the organization. Previous research found that egoistic climates are negatively related to organizational commitment (Cullen et al., 2003; Victor & Cullen, 1988). The present study further supports those previous findings.

4. The difference in the mean total organizational commitment score of male and female participants was significant. Females tended to reported higher levels of organizational commitment than their male counterparts. One reason for this difference may pertain to the autonomy over work schedules. Previous research has found that women who perceived their organization to offer flexible work hours reported higher levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction than their counterparts (Scandura & Lankau, 1997). Flexible work hours are deemed an important contributor to successful work and life balance for most women. The occupation of being a professor includes a significant amount of autonomy over work schedules; therefore, women may tend to value this autonomy more than their male counterparts leading to an increase in organizational commitment.

DISCUSSION

Ethical scandals have plagued U.S. business practices in recent times and questions have been raised as to the impact leaders have on providing ethical guidance. Brown et al. (2005) defined ethical leadership as the demonstration of appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships. Maxwell (2005) described leadership simply as influence. Therefore, in order to have influence with one's followers, a leader must be viewed as an attractive, credible, and legitimate role model (Maxwell, 2005).

Rosser, Johnsrud, and Heck (2003) found that educational leaders play a vital role in the growth of organizations, competing with other institutions, and meeting shareholders expectations. Most critically, however, it should not be overlooked as to the role these educational leaders play establishing the culture and climate, most specifically the ethical climate, at institutions of higher education. Decision making processes, creations of values, establishment of organizational norms, modes and methods of communication, perceptions of fairness, trust, honesty, are all significant contributors to perceived ethical climate that are in the control of the administrators.

The study of ethical leadership is built upon the foundation of social learning. Social learning proposes that leaders will influence the ethical behavior of others through modeling (Brown et al., 2005). It is the leader's responsibility to model the ethical behavior that he or she wants from followers. Wimbush and Shepard (1994) found that subordinates mimic supervisors' behavior because it is supervisors who hold the subordinates accountable for their actions.

The findings from the present research imply that when faculty members perceive their organization's ethical climate to be egoistic they will subsequently report lower levels of commitment. Lower levels of organizational commitment are linked to higher levels of absenteeism and turnover, increased withdrawal behaviors and negative attitudes, as well as lower levels of productivity and creativity (Glick, 1992; Hanisch & Hulin, 1991; Hutton & Jobe, 1985). When educational leaders identify the leadership behaviors that impact organizational

commitment and job satisfaction of employees, they also gain better insight into specific areas that may mitigate negative work outcomes.

If administrators want to boost the commitment levels of their faculty members, it is imperative that educational leaders behave in manners that encourage an organizational climate of benevolence. Creating an open process of communication and shared governance is one matter that could increase the perception of a benevolent ethical climate. Administrators may find that by establishing an ethical climate based upon benevolent principles may in turn produce positive operational outcomes.

Establishment of an organization's ethical climate, however, is not limited to administrators. Peer-to-peer relationships also provide critical insight into workplace norms and the current organizational climate. A new research stream is starting to focus on this relationship. Whereas mentoring programs, professional networking, shared research interest and publications could be factors that contribute to a benevolent ethical climate, faculty on faculty bullying is gradually gaining researchers' attention. This new research stream could be a serious contributor to an egoistic ethical climate. Employees who work in egoistic climates perceive that self-interest is promoted and reinforced even at the expense of hurting other people. Organizations that promote self-interest within their social norms can experience higher levels of deviant workplace behaviors, lower forms of group cohesion, higher turnover intentions, and a reduction in the organizational commitment of their membership.

CONCLUSION

Faculty members are the front-line employees at any institution of higher education. The job tasks they perform everyday have a direct impact on the organization's ability to meet stakeholder expectations. Whether that stakeholder is the student, local municipalities, neighboring businesses, the federal government, or society at large, all successful endeavors will begin at the hands of the front-line faculty members.

Administrators are managers in the organizations of higher education. Therefore, the decisions they make directly impact the perception of the existing ethical climate. Administrators should work to build an ethical climate of benevolence focusing on teamwork, social responsibility, and concern for the greater good. According to this research those efforts may lead to more committed employees. Administrators may also find that when their employees are more committed operational objectives are easier to achieve due to higher productivity, increased creativity, lower turnover, and decreased deviant workplace behaviors. They may also find that organizational benefits that arise from fostering an ethical climate of benevolence may reach much further than their own department or college.

Ethical climate is one of the newest streams of organizational climate research. Ethics, however, have been studied from the time of the great philosophers. For centuries humankind has been inherently drawn to the notion of understanding ethical behavior. As more and more researchers begin to realize the important implications that ethical climate has on the organizational objectives, further research will continue to expand our intellectual horizons into uncharted academic territories.

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TABLE 1 – RESPONDENTS DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION BY INSTITUTION

Institution	Total Faculty Responses	Male-Female Responses	Mean Years at Present Institution	Mean Total Years as Faculty Member
A	130	73/57	15.7	22.4
B	164	100/64	16.2	22.7
C	155	61/94	5.9	9.3
D	145	49/96	6.2	10.6
Total	**594**	**283/311**	**11.0**	**16.0**

TABLE 2 - RELIABILITIES

Scale	Chronbach's Alpha
Total Commitment	.78
Total Benevolent	.87
Total Egoism	.70
Total Principled	.74

TABLE 3
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT SCORES WITH 95% CONFIDENCE INTERVALS OF PAIRWISE DIFFERENCES

Ethical Climate Types	N	M	SD	Benevolent	Egoism
Benevolent	168	61.23	9.65		
Egoism	166	47.31	11.50	11.12 to 16.72	
Principled	260	55.58	11.25	1.49 to 6.56	7.35 to 12.44