Ethical Work Climate in Information Technology

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Abstract
Disrespecting ethical codes and constituents in organizations and societies has caused that some ethical abnormalities to be highlighted and engaged managers and relevant authorities mind. Such problems cause that ethics and ethical constituents considered by managers and relevant authorities. Destructive behaviors those are common in various organizational arenas including Information technology. Information Technology and issues regarding are one of the most challenging issues in Organization.

This study is descriptive, and as well, in this paper authors attempted to define ethic and Professional ethic and review of case studies about the immorality of information technology. Finally models of ethical work Climate to reduce the Destructive behaviors are offered.

Keywords
Ethic, Ethical Work Climate, Professional Ethic, Information Technology.

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Introduction

Ethics Decline is considered as one of the obvious outcomes of modern age de-enchanting (Shaygan, 2001: 17) which has caused resorting to schools such as hedonism, pragmatism and utilitarianism. Due to the attendance of uncommitted staff, organizations are facing with disadvantages of some workers. Such problems cause that ethics and ethical constituents considered by managers and relevant authorities.

Addressing ethical issues by researchers is due to live in ethical crisis age (Stoner, 2000: 168; Zahedi, 2000: 231). An unethical behavior in organizations is converted to an important problem for all members of community. Ethical activities and behaviors in organizations is a concern of actors and researchers. People are worried of improper behavior of organizations and managers are concerned about employees’ immoral action (Kincaid et al., 2008). On the other hand, ethical behaviors include good working habits, coordination with other people and needed skills to keep the job (Kegans, 2009).

Overall, ethics is an inner commitment to a good life instead of commitment to implement a set of laws and rules (Buchholz and Rosenthal, 2005). In a research by Ivancevich et al. (2005), organizational misbehaviors and unethical issues were identified: arson, blackmail, bribery, bullying, cheating, discrimination, dishonesty, espionage, fraud, incivility, intimidation, kickbacks, lying, misinformation, privacy violation, revenge, sabotage, sexual harassment, substance abuse, burglary, threats and whistle blowing (Li-Ping Tang et al., 2005).

These show that unethical behaviors have been yet existed in workplaces (Calluzzo and Cante, 2004: 301). Information and communication technology is an area where one can see employees’ destructive behaviors. Due to its virtual nature in which people are identified, it is more abused. Considering the widespread unethical issues in Information Technology (IT) and the high importance of IT share in the performance of public organizations and trading institutes, well ethical activities in using all aspects of IT among the employees are vital for organization and society (Stone and Henry, 2003: 337).

Ethic and Professional Ethics

Ethics is an inner state which invites human to perform jobs without any need to think (Noory Ghomshei, 2010: 41). According to Plato, ethics variables include: justice, enjoyment, reality, privilege, prosperity, beautifullness, love and braveness. These mean the domination of traditions and personal cultural perceptions (Wood and Rentschler, 2003:...
Ethical Work Climate in Information Technology

Ethics has two different applications. Sometimes, ethics means temperament and habited behavior (Dehkhoda, 1993: 1296). Gupta and Suliman defined ethics by this questions what should be done (Evin, 2007: 107). Ethics is a set of spiritual objective processes that fully interfere in real self–growth and the process by which one can establish equilibrium in the functions of spiritual organic units (Allahi, 2000: 23).

Professional ethics is a set of do’s and don’ts which should be respected by employees of an organization (society) to achieve committed working qualitative and quantitative conditions completely (Akbarian, 1991). The importance and emphasis of ethics in organizations is due to the fact that today organizations have expanded their structures and activities internationally and in various forms so that they are now converted into powerful tools for economic and social changes. Therefore, it is not surprising that the importance of ethics in organizations is increased in proportionate to their growth. According to Davies and Frederick (1985) ethics in business does not differs from ethics in society and professional ethics means the utilization of general ethical norms in behavior. They believe that differences in ethics in various aspects are seen in workplaces not ethical principles (Davis and Frederick, 1985).

Comparing ethics and laws and showing which one is more comprehensive and more complete, Pemberton mentioned that ethics always adopts higher standards than law so no one should be dissatisfied when he/she sees that an unethical behavior is legal (Calluzzo and Cante, 2004: 303). Ethics is an inner commitment to a good life instead of commitment to implement a set of laws and rules (Buchholz and Rosenthal, 2005). Compared to law, ethics enjoys below privileges:

- Ethics mitigates human demands and prevents going to extremes;
- Ethics is a guarantee to implement law;
- Ethics enhances and breeds human spiritual aspect;
- Ethics protects human belief (Javadi Amoli, 2002).

Ethical action is considered as a behavior and the root of this behavior is nothing than attitude, beliefs and, more importantly, values. Velasques (1999) believes that “value is considered as attitudes and statements on an objective or the traits of such objective. Values show the ideals in personal or social contexts (Joyner and Payne, 2002)”. Figure 1 outlines the way of converting values to ethical (unethical) behavior and action.
Information Technology
In order to create a more realistic view of the material included in the paper, we will briefly mention some of the basic concepts (Kenneth, 2002) encountered in the field of IT.

- Computers are electronic devices that can be programmed and can enable fast calculation and storage of large amounts of data.
- Communication is the process of transferring information from one entity to another by the use of broadcasting equipment.
- Communication technologies are the systems and the media for distance information transmission.
- Information Technology is a combination of computers and communication Technology.
- The Internet provides a global system of computers that are connected to a network (Dika and Hamiti, 2011).

Ethical Issues Related to IT Users
The ethical code (Larry, 2009) which is used when working with IT equipment is based on the principles of common ethical code (Nicholas, 2009). But since the internet has made possible the real time communication with IT users from around the globe (Hamiti, 2010), with different levels of cultural development, with different religions, who work under different legislation, or even without any relevant legislation etc., it is for sure that different ethical principles are used. Here we are focused on ethical issues related to IT users in:

- Communication using electronic mail (e-mail);
- Teaching in laboratories with IT equipment;
- Exams through IT equipment;
- Distance studies;
- Use of licensed software;
- Communications through Facebook;
- Publications on YouTube (Dika and Hamiti, 2011).

**Case Studies**

1. The U.S. Treasury Department reports that 60% of computer security failures disclosed by financial institutions in the first four months of 2001 were from end-users within the organization (Verton, 2001). A survey of IT managers by the FBI and the Computer Security Institute reported that 81% of corporate respondents said that the most likely source of computer attack is from within their company (Verton, 2001).

2. In a 1998 survey of ethics among 1,000 U.S. users of information technology 45% of the respondents acknowledged some unethical behavior while 13% acknowledged very unethical behavior. Yet another 1998 survey of 726 U.S. workers revealed that approximately 23% of respondents acknowledged very unethical behaviors. A more recent survey indicated that 69% of respondents acknowledged unethical behaviors. In the three preceding surveys, the unethical behaviors included playing games, shopping online, e-mail chats and surfing the Web on the employers’ time. The very unethical behaviors included copying software for personal use, unauthorized viewing, use and disclosure of private files and unauthorized modification or destruction of files and systems.

3. Unethical behavior is not just the domain of traditional employees it is also that of information technologists and the bosses (managers, executives and owners) as well. The effect of some of the unethical behaviors is to reduce enterprise productivity (“Is that work-related”). In a late 1999 survey of 1244 employees and 1438 employers, Vault.com, an on-line job network, discovered that 56% of the former and 51% of the latter believed that surfing non-work related web-sites negatively affected productivity yet 90% of the respondents acknowledged this unethical behavior (“Is that work-related”). In this same survey, 83% of respondents acknowledged sending and receiving personal e-mails at work.

4. The cost of software piracy and counterfeiting has been estimated at 1–2 billion dollars in the U.S. and between 8 and 12 billion dollars worldwide in 1993–1995. The importance of enforcement of
copyrights is clear given that the Business Software Alliance estimated that 50% of all software in use in 1996 was illegally copied. In response to software piracy, the software firms, through their Business Software Alliance, encouraged employees of user-firms to disclose illegal copying of software by employers (Calluzzo and Cante, 2004: 301-302).

**Ethics in IT**

A concern of IT specialists and ethics connoisseurs is whether it is fair to read personal files of other people; when it is right to use a software devised by another person; is it right to use the line of another person? (Oz, 1993) such questions lead to study common destructive behaviors in this field. Ethical discussions that mitigate such behaviors should be studied.

Ethics in IT is new emerging area of information, mental health and communications in information age enhanced and evolved through worldwide web and its related technologies. One can describe information ethics not only as a technical development but also as a spiritual state, thinking and a global public movement.

In his paper “Online Ethics”, Johnson (1985) indicates that established legal and technical facilities are not sufficient to prevent implausible behaviors with regard to computers and IT. He says that the only hope to establish and implement well professional ethics is to define a subset of ethics in IT and internalizing behavioral norms in people that are created and accepted socially (Johnson, 1985; Payne and Landry, 2005: 75).

For many years, Johnson’s book “Computer Ethics” was the best scientific reference in this field. Johnson believed that one can resolve ethical problems in computer and IT field by extending ethics current theories to ethics science. However, he does not believe that computers have created new problems. Rather, he believes that computers have made previous problems more complicated so the problems are seemed new (Johnson, 1985; Johnson, 1999).

IT is a particularly interesting area of work for such an investigation. Firstly, IT is one of the fastest growing sectors in Europe, especially in the U.K. where the market for software and computing services increased by 18% in 1995 and is experiencing its fastest growth in real terms for a decade. The overall turnover of companies in this sector has grown by 22%, with further growth predicted (Panteli et al., 1999: 51). So, if organizational manager wants to reduce Ethical problems in the field of information technology, ethical work climate must be dominated in
Thus, the role of ethical work climates in impacting IT use and behavioral reactions in organizations, coupled with the pervasiveness of IT, made IT ethical work climate an important organizational factor for study. Despite its importance, little amount of research has been done to investigate the ethical work climate specifically within IT.

One study applying the ethical work climate model to IT is by Pierce and Henry (1999). The study built upon the research of Victor and Cullen (1987), but while Victor and Cullen proposed nine theoretical ethical work climates, Pierce and Henry proposed twelve. The difference is in the locus of analysis dimension. Pierce and Henry (1999) broke the Victor and Cullen dimensions of “local” down to two subcategories namely “workgroup” and “organization” (Stone and Henry, 2003: 338).

Ethical Work Climate

According to Sims (1992), “the ethical climate of an organization is the shared set of understandings about what correct behavior is and how ethical issues will be handled. This climate sets the tone for decision making at all levels and in all circumstances” (Sims, 1992: 509).

Scholars such as Victor and Cullen (1987) and, more recently, Vidaver-Cohen (1998) have suggested that ethical climate in organizations influences the moral conduct of their membership and especially that of their boards of directors. One of the most interesting definitions of ethical climate has been given by Malloy and Agarwal (2003) who described it as “the informal interpreter and judge of an individual’s organizational behavior”.

A catalyst or at least a potentially forceful moderator of an individual’s organizational behavior (Malloy and Agarwal, 2003: 39), as the reliance by governments on nonprofits for service delivery continues to evolve, it is necessary for them to understand what kind of philosophy and ethical values their contractors are driven by (Malloy and Agarwal, 2008).

The vast majority of the research that has been conducted in ethical climates is based upon the theoretical framework which was developed by Victor and Cullen in the late 1980s in order to study the perception of ethical orientation in for-profit organizations. An "Ethical climate" in an organization consists of the, by the organizational members, "shared perceptions of what is ethically correct behavior and how ethical issues should be handled" (Victor and Cullen, 1987). It thus essentially refers to the "general agreements among members of the [organization] about what organizational practices and procedures actually mean in terms of

Victor and Cullen formulated two dimensions of ethical climate, each with three positions (see Table 1). The dimension of “ethical criterion” refers to three major classes of ethical theory: egoism, benevolence and principle. While the dimension of “locus of analysis” refers to the main referent group that identifies “the source of moral reasoning used for applying ethical criteria to organizational decisions and/or the limits on what would be considered in ethical analyses of organizational decisions” (Victor and Cullen, 1988: 105).

Thus, we found the individual locus, the local locus or organizational locus, and, the cosmopolitan locus or external locus. In the matrix, each locus combines with a criterion in order to form a type of ethical climate. In total we found nine types of ethical climate: self-interest, friendship, personal morality, organizational interest, team interest, organizational rules, efficiency, social responsibility, law and codes.

Table 1: The ethical climate typology (Laratta, 2009: 360)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locus of analysis</th>
<th>Ethical criterion</th>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Cosmopolitan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egoism</td>
<td>Self-interest</td>
<td>Organizational interest</td>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolence</td>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>Team interest</td>
<td>Social responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principle</td>
<td>Personal morality</td>
<td>Organizational rules and procedures</td>
<td>Law and codes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Ethical Criterion Dimension

While complex and intricate in its details, much of moral philosophy can be organized under three major classes of ethical theory: egoism, benevolence and deontology or principle (Williams, 1985). These theories differ in terms of the basic criteria used in moral reasoning, i.e. maximizing self-interest, maximizing joint interests, or adherence to principle, respectively. Psychological theories of moral development suggest that individuals use similar criteria in the development of ethical reasoning.

Perhaps the most influential, the theory proposed by Kohlberg (1967) contains six stages of moral development ranging from egocentric obedience and punishment to universal principle. The six stages of development have three bases of moral judgment, following the three
The **egoism criterion** is focused on maximizing ‘‘self-interest’’, which is defined in a narrow, instrumental and economic sense of immediate interest. The loci of analysis identify the particular ‘‘self’’ of which the interests are maximized. In the ‘‘self-interest’’ climate type (the individual locus of analysis), the individuals within the organization perceive that it is expected from them that they maximize their personal interests. “As such, the decision-maker usually seeks the alternative with the consequences that most satisfies his/her needs, ignoring/neglecting the needs or interest of others” (Parboteeah and Cullen, 2003: 140).

The local locus of analysis identifies a climate that is aimed at maximizing the immediate, economic interests of the organization. In Victor and Cullen’s typology this is referred to as “company profit”, but the present typology will use **organizational interest**, which is more appropriate in the public sector. Finally, the cosmopolitan locus defines the egoism criterion as considerations of the economic and immediate interests of ‘‘the public sector’’ or, for that matter, “the society”. This climate type is labeled “efficiency”. Thus, each of the three climate types considers respectively the individual, the organization and the society as “a reified, indivisible unit that can be understood to have needs and preferences” (Victor and Cullen, 1988: 106-107). In each of the three climates, people see themselves as part of that reified self of which they try to maximize the interests.

Those who apply the **benevolence criterion** on the other hand, typically make teleological considerations of the consequences of their actions. In the climates that are typified by this criterion, people do not think of themselves as being part of a single, reified self of which the interests should be maximized, but they make a distinction between the subject and the object of ethical behavior and consider the consequences of their behavior for the well-being of others. The locus of analysis identifies the relevant object of these considerations. In the ‘‘friendship’’ climate people consider other people, “irrespective of organizational or specific stakeholder memberships” (Parboteeah and Cullen, 2003: 141).

At the local level, the **benevolence criterion** is defined as “consideration of the organizational collective (e.g. esprits de corps, team play)” (Victor and Cullen, 1988: 107), hence the label ‘‘team interest’’. In a benevolent climate at the cosmopolitan level people consider their actions for stakeholders outside the organization. These include individuals and organizations outside the public sector with whom the organization deals (its “clients” or "suppliers"), but also “internal clients” within the public sector, but outside the specific organization. This
climate is labeled “stakeholder orientation”, because public servants within this climate consider the consequences of their actions for their immediate stakeholders, as far as they actually interact with them. When this climate is the only or the dominant one in an organization, people will not tend to consider the consequences of their actions for inconceivable and “intangible” groups such as “the electorate”, “the taxpayers” or “the wider public”. The latter will only be considered at the level of the principle criterion (Maesschalck, 2005: 5).

People applying the principle criterion make a deontological consideration of laws, rules and principles when dealing with ethical issues. The loci of analysis then identify the sources from which the principles can be derived. The individual level identifies a “personal morality” climate. Strictly speaking the “personal ethical beliefs and standards” to which the “personal morality” climate refers, is limited to principled, deontological considerations about ethical issues (since this climate is based on the principle criterion).

The proposed framework will, however, use a broader understanding of this climate type. Identifying a climate as “personal morality” means that people in that climate perceive they have a significant degree of discretion, which they can use to make not only considerations based on the “personal morality” standard, but also on all the other standards. At the local locus of the principle criterion, the source of the principles lies within the organization. This is the typical rule-following and procedure-centered climate that is often perceived in classical bureaucratic organizations: “organizational rules” (Maesschalck, 2005: 5).

The Locus of Analysis Dimension

A locus of analysis is a referent group identifying the source of moral reasoning used for applying ethical criteria to organizational decisions and/or the limits on what would be considered in ethical analyses of organizational decisions. Distinct from both moral philosophy and individual moral development, ethical climate is an organizational concept.

Therefore, ethical reasoning may vary relative to the use of the concept of organization as a referent (as individual moral reasoning varies relative to the use of the concept of self as a referent). To distinguish possible ethical climate types within each of the ethical criteria noted above, three organizational referents or loci of analysis are conceptualized (Victor and Cullen, 1988: 105-106).

There is a growing belief that organizations are social actors responsible for the ethical or unethical behaviors of their employees. This trend is reflected in both the bases of legal judgments against
corporations (Clinard and Yeager, 1980) and in the reactions of society at large to corporate crime (Cullen et al., 1987).

Consequently, academics (Clinard, 1983) and practitioners (Weiss, 1986) have shown increasing concern for understanding and managing organizational normative systems that may guide the ethical behaviors of employees. In spite of this growing interest, few methodological and theoretical tools exist with the potential to characterize norms at organizational levels of analysis. One promising mechanism for understanding organizational normative systems is the concept of work climate (Schneider, 1983). A work climate is defined as perceptions that are psychologically meaningful moral descriptions that people can agree characterized a system's practices and procedures (Schneider, 1975:474).

The prevailing perceptions of typical organizational practices and procedures that have ethical content constitute the ethical work climate. For example, when faced with a decision that has consequence for others, how does an organizational member identify the "right" alternative—at least in the organization's view? An important source of this information is those aspects of work climate that determine what constitutes ethical behavior at work. Employing a broad definition of ethics in developing the concept of an ethical work climate, we encompassed the range of perceptions that answer, for a member of an organization, the Socratic question: What should I do? Included are the perceived prescriptions, proscriptions, and permissions regarding moral obligations in organizations.

For example, in a hiring decision, expectations about whose interests should be considered and/or what codes or laws should be applied would be an aspect of the ethical climate. With such an approach, ethical climates are conceptualized as general and pervasive characteristics of organizations, affecting a broad range of decisions.

The prevailing epistemology within organizations is explicitly excluded from the concept of ethical climate. How information is discovered (e.g., whether intuition or computation characterizes fact finding in the organization) is not an aspect of ethical climate. Also excluded are conventions, or rules with arbitrary consequences (Lewis, 1969; Turiel and Smetana, 1984).

Organizational decision making that does not have any differential effect on others (e.g., when tradition or current fashion dictates organizational aesthetics) is not part of the ethical climate. Thus, for example, the ethical climate refers to how people in an organization typically decide whether it is right or wrong to pay kickbacks. The ethical climate does not refer to how one determines if the buyer expects
kickback (a question of fact) or whether the kickback should be paid in cash or merchandise (a question of convention).

We hypothesize that ethical work climates have organizational bases separate from individual perceptions and evaluations. We believe that:

(1) Organizations and subgroups within organizations develop different institutionalized normative systems;
(2) Although not completely homogeneous, these normative systems are known to organizational members sufficiently well to be perceived as a type of work climate; and
(3) Perceptions of ethical work climate differ from affective evaluations of ethical work climate. Empirically, our assumptions imply two propositions.

First, the variation in perceptions of ethical work climate between groups (organizations and subgroups within organizations) is greater than the variation in perceptions of ethical work climate for the individuals within these groups (Drexler, 1977).

Second, perceptions that describe the ethical work climate are not necessarily correlated with attitudes that evaluate the ethical work climate (Schneider, 1975).

Conclusion
As two open systems, ethics and IT impact each other so that changes in utilizing one influences over another one. As a capital, ethics is the best asset of human. If we want to observe professional ethics of IT usage, ethical work climate must be established in organization. The ethical climate of an organization is the shared set of understandings about what correct behavior is and how ethical issues will be handled. This climate sets the tone for decision making at all levels and in all circumstances.

For the first time, Ethical work climate was presented by victor and Cullen. Their models have been two dimensions. Ethical criterion, that included of egoism, benevolence and principle, and locus of analysis, which included of individual, Local Cosmopolitan.
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