

Institutional Autonomy, Organizational Climate and the Pursuit of Creativity among Students of Higher Education

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Abstract

This study delves into the intricate relationships between organizational climate, college autonomy, and the creativity of students in higher education in India. Employing a quantitative research design, data were collected from 480 students across 12 randomly selected autonomous colleges. Utilizing tools such as the Autonomous College Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (ACOCDQ) and Dr. B. K. Passi's Creativity Test, the study aimed to discern the individual and combined effects of organizational climate and college autonomy on student creativity. The findings revealed that both organizational climate and the type of college autonomy significantly influence student creativity. Notably, students from government autonomous colleges exhibited higher creativity levels compared to their counterparts in non-government autonomous colleges. Furthermore, a favourable organizational climate was positively correlated with enhanced creative abilities. These insights underscore the pivotal role of institutional environments and governance structures in fostering creativity among students in higher education.

Keywords: *Organizational climate, creativity, institutional autonomy, higher education.*

Introduction and Rationale

Creativity, widely recognized as a critical component of innovation and problem-solving, has become increasingly central to the mission of higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide (Jakovljevic, 2019). The ability of students to think creatively is essential not only for their personal and academic development but also for their future professional success in a rapidly evolving global economy. Several studies have investigated the relationship between creativity and various factors. McLellan

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and Nicholl (2008) found classroom climate to be influential in fostering student creativity. Naderi et al. (2010) established a link between creativity and academic achievement for both genders. Ayoufu (2012) identified intrinsic motivation, psychological empowerment, and support for innovation as key contributors to students' creativity. Afshari et al. (2012) found a positive correlation between transformational leadership and student creativity. The impact of organizational climate on students' creative self-efficacy and innovative behavior was highlighted by Chang and Yang (2012). Eishani (2014) further supported the connection between learning styles and creativity. Shirzadi (2006) emphasized the importance of organizational climate in education for fostering creativity. The moderating role of organizational climate on the relationship between transformational leadership and follower creativity was confirmed by Yildiz and Ozcan (2014).

Despite its importance, there is a notable paucity of research that comprehensively examines the environmental factors within educational institutions that either foster or hinder student creativity. Specifically, the interaction between organizational climate and the degree of institutional autonomy has not been thoroughly explored, leaving a significant gap in understanding how these factors influence creative outcomes among students.

In educational settings, a positive organizational climate—characterized by support for innovation, open communication, and an emphasis on autonomy—has been shown to encourage creativity among students (Greenier et al., 2023). Research on organizational climate and job satisfaction has yielded mixed results. Natarajan (2001) found a positive correlation between school climate and teacher job satisfaction. Griffith (2006) supported this finding, linking positive organizational climate to higher job satisfaction and organizational performance. Vashdi et al. (2012) expanded on this by identifying multiple climates within schools that positively influence teacher satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior. However, much of the existing literature focuses on organizational climate in business or industrial contexts, with relatively fewer studies examining its role in educational environments, particularly in higher education. Furthermore, research on creativity in education tends to focus on individual traits and classroom-level interventions (Tzachrista et al., 2023), while often neglecting broader institutional factors such as organizational climate and college autonomy. The autonomy of educational institutions—the degree to which colleges and universities can govern themselves independently of external authorities—has been linked to various positive outcomes, including academic excellence and institutional innovation (Aithal & Aithal, 2019; Sankaran & Joshi, 2016). Granting autonomy to higher education institutions significantly enhances quality across multiple

dimensions (Bania & Sarangi, 2020; Bania et al., 2021). The National Education Policy of India (NEP-2020) also recommends the implementation of graded autonomy in a phased manner to promote institutional excellence and accountability (Bania, 2021). However, there is limited empirical evidence on how this autonomy interacts with the internal climate of the institution to impact creativity among students.

While existing studies highlight the positive effects of a supportive organizational climate on student outcomes, and the benefits of autonomy in enabling institutions to tailor their educational approaches, there is a conspicuous lack of empirical research examining how these two factors interact to influence creativity. This is particularly relevant in the context of India, where educational reforms have increasingly empowered autonomous colleges with greater control over their academic and administrative processes. Odisha, with its diverse array of autonomous institutions, presents a unique opportunity to investigate these dynamics in a setting that is representative of broader trends in Indian higher education. By examining how different organizational climates within autonomous colleges either facilitate or hinder creativity, this study aims to generate insights that can inform both the management of these institutions and the policies that govern them. Ultimately, the findings are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the optimal conditions for fostering creativity, providing actionable recommendations for educators, administrators, and policymakers who are striving to enhance the creative capacities of students. These capacities are crucial for their personal and professional success, as well as for broader societal progress.

Objectives of the study

- (i) To study the effect of organizational climate on creativity of the students of higher education;
- (ii) To study the effect of the type of the autonomous colleges on creativity of the students of higher education;
- (iii) To study the interaction effect of organizational climate and type of autonomous colleges on creativity of the students of higher education.

Hypotheses of the study

- (i) There exists independent effect of organizational climate on creativity of the students of higher education.
- (i) There exists independent effect of the type of autonomous colleges on creativity of the students of higher education.

- (ii) There exists interaction effect of organizational climate and type of autonomous colleges on creativity of the students of higher education.

Research Methodology

Table 1: Design of the study

S.N.	Objectives	Nature of data	Data source	Tool	Sample	Data collection procedure	Analysis procedure
1.	To study the effect of the organizational climate on creativity of the students.	Information on organizational climate of students and creativity of students in autonomous colleges of Odisha	Students	Questionnaire for students, Creativity Test of Dr. B.K. Passi	480 students	By administering questionnaire through personal contract and B.K. Passi Creativity Test	ANOVA & Scheffe
2.	To study the effect of the type of the autonomous colleges on creativity of the students.	Information on organizational climate of students and creativity of students in autonomous colleges of Odisha	Students	Questionnaire for students, Creativity Test of Dr. B.K. Passi	480 students	By administering questionnaire through personal contract and B.K. Passi Creativity Test	ANOVA & Scheffe
3.	To study the interaction effect of organizational climate and type of autonomous colleges on creativity of the students.	Information on organizational climate of students and creativity of students in autonomous colleges of Odisha	Students	Questionnaire for students, Creativity Test of Dr. B.K. Passi	480 students	By administering questionnaire through personal contract and B.K. Passi Creativity Test	ANOVA & Scheffe

To unveil the intricate relationship between organizational climate, college autonomy, and creativity, this study employed a quantitative approach using a descriptive survey method to obtain precise and pertinent information concerning

the effect of organizational climate and type of autonomous college on student creativity in higher education institutions in Odisha, India. The population for the study comprised students from both government and non-government autonomous degree colleges in the state. The sample was drawn using random sampling techniques and included 480 students from 12 educational institutions across 8 districts of Odisha. Data was collected on various dimensions of organizational climate such as infrastructure, teaching-learning materials, curricular, co-curricular, extra-curricular activities, and examination systems with details provided in Table 1.

Data Collection Instruments

Self-reported questionnaires were administered to students to assess their perceptions of the organizational climate within their college. Autonomous College Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (ACOCDQ) for students was developed by the investigators for measuring organizational climate of autonomous colleges of Odisha. Table 2 here indicates this in detail.

Table 2: Questionnaire for Students on Organizational Climate

S.N.	Statement	Statement / Dimension	Number of Questions
1.	Organizational Climate	Infrastructure facilities	8
		Communication	3
		Library facilities	5
2.	Academic Achievement	Learning environment	6
		Curricular activities	8
		Co-curricular activities	5
3	Creativity	Reflectiveness	2
		Spontaneity	2
		Risk taking	1
		Total	40

Reliability and Validity of the ACOCDQ

The reliability of the ACOCDQ was established through spilt-half reliability method which was computed by using Rulon’s formula. The reliability index was found to be .8576 and was considered to be sufficiently high for the purpose of this study.

Validity of the ACOCDQ

Content validity was established by asking the judges to report whether the item described organizational climate of degree colleges. It was reported that the statements included in the scale had very small Q-values indicating consistency among the judges. On the basis of that it was concluded that the ACOCDQ had sufficiently high content validity.

Questionnaire of Creativity Test for the Students

Dr. B.K. Passi's Test of Creativity (PTC: Verbal and Non-verbal) designed by B.K. Passi (2001) was used. All the tests are available both in Hindi and English. His intent was to set the tone so that examinees would enjoy the activities. Examinees should be encouraged to have fun and should experience passive. In all six tests namely; (1) The Seeing Problems Test, (ii) The Unusual Uses Test, (iii) The Consequences Test, (iv) The Test of Inquisitiveness. The components and objects of Dr. B.K. Passi Creativity Test was reflected in table-3.

Table 3: Dr. B.K. Passi Creativity Test

S.N.	Components	Sub Components (Defects & Problems)	Sub Components (Uses)
1.	Seeing the Problem Test	(a) Shoe (b) Pen (c) Chair (d) Post Card	
2.	Unusual Uses Test		(a) Piece of cloth (b) Bottle
3.	Consequence Test	(a) If human beings start flying like birds (b) If all houses start flying (c) If all people become mad (d) If all females become male	
4.	Test of Inquisitiveness	Any question to be provided by the students from their own	

The table depicts that Dr. B.K. Passi Creativity Test includes various components like seeing the Problem Test, Unusual Test, Consequence Test and Test of Inquisitiveness.

Data Analysis

The collected data underwent rigorous statistical analysis using two-way ANOVA and Scheffe Tests. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if significant differences existed in creativity based on college type (autonomous vs. non-autonomous) and organizational climate. Following a significant ANOVA result, post-hoc Scheffe tests were conducted to pinpoint specific group differences in creativity across various combinations of college autonomy and organizational climate.

Results and Discussion

Effect of Type of Autonomous Colleges on Creativity of the Students of Higher Education

Collapsing organizational climate, table no. 4 shows that there is significant independent effect of type of autonomous colleges on creativity of students ($F=14.54$; $df = 476$; $p < .01$).

Table 4: Summary of ANOVA for Creativity of Students Studying in Government and Non-Government Autonomous Colleges with High and Low Organizational Climate (N=480)

Sources of Variance	Degree of Freedom (Df)	Sum of Squares (SS)	Mean Square (MS)	F-ratio
Types of Autonomous Colleges	1	11603.34	11603.34	14.54**
Organizational Climate	1	165169.2	165169.2	206.97**
Interaction	1	4864.13	4864.13	6.09
Within	476	379872	798.05	
Total	479	561508.67		

Df 1/476 at .05 level = 3.86, .01 level = 6.7 ** Significant at .01 level

Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there exists no independent effect of type of autonomous colleges on creativity of students was rejected in favour of research hypothesis.

Table 5: Summary of the Mean Creativity Scores of Students Studying in Government and Non-Government Autonomous Colleges (N=480)

Government Autonomous Colleges	Non-Government Autonomous Colleges
123	113.17

Further, as seen in table no. 5 it was found that the creativity of students studying in government autonomous colleges (M=123) was better than the creativity of students studying in non-government autonomous colleges (M=113.17). Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there exists no difference between the creativity of students studying in government autonomous colleges and non-government autonomous colleges was rejected in favour of research hypothesis.

Effect of Organizational Climate on Creativity of the Students

Collapsing type of colleges, table no. 4 shows that there is significant independent effect of organizational climate on creativity of students. Thus, the null hypothesis stating that there exists no independent effect of organizational climate on creativity of students was rejected in favour of research hypothesis.

Table 6: Summary of the Mean Creativity Scores of Students Studying in High Organizational Climate and Low Organizational Climate (N=480)

High Organizational Climate	Low Organizational Climate
136.64	99.53

Further, it as seen in table no. 6, it was found out that the creativity scores of students with high organizational climate (M=136.64) was better than the creativity scores of students with low organizational climate (M=99.53). Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there exists no difference between the creativity of students score with high organizational climate is better than the creativity of students with low organizational climate was rejected in favour of research hypothesis.

Interaction Effect of Organizational Climate and Type of Autonomous Colleges on Creativity

As it can be seen, in table no. 4, it was found out that there was significant interaction effect of type of autonomous colleges and organizational climate on creativity of students (F = 6.09; df = 476; p <.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis

stating that there exists no significant interaction effect of type of autonomous colleges and organizational climate on creativity was rejected in favour of research hypothesis.

Further, table no.7 showing intergroup comparisons of students studying in two different type of autonomous colleges such as government autonomous colleges and non-government autonomous colleges with high organizational climate and low organizational climate reveals that the creativity of students studying in government autonomous colleges with high organizational climate differed significantly from the creativity of students studying in government autonomous colleges with low organizational climate ($F=23.68$; $df=476$; $p < .01$) in favour of students studying in government autonomous colleges with high organizational climate ($M=138.37 > M = 107.63$).

Table 7: Summary of F-value for Intergroup Comparisons of Students on Creativity Using Scheffe Test (N=480)

Groups	Mean Score	F-ratio
Government autonomous colleges with high organizational climate Vs Government autonomous colleges with low organizational climate	138.37 107.63	23.68**
Government autonomous colleges with high organizational climate Vs Non- government autonomous colleges with high organizational climate	138.37 134.9	0.31
Government autonomous colleges with high organizational climate Vs Non-government autonomous colleges with low organizational climate	138.37 91.43	55.21**
Government autonomous colleges with low organizational climate Vs Non- government autonomous colleges with high organizational climate	107.67 134.9	18.58**
Government autonomous colleges with low organizational climate Vs Non- government autonomous colleges with low organizational climate	107.63 91.43	6.58
Non- government autonomous colleges with high organizational climate Vs Non- government autonomous colleges with low organizational climate	134.9 91.43	47.35**

Df 1/476 at .05 level = 3.86 ; .01 level = 6.70 ** significant at .01 level

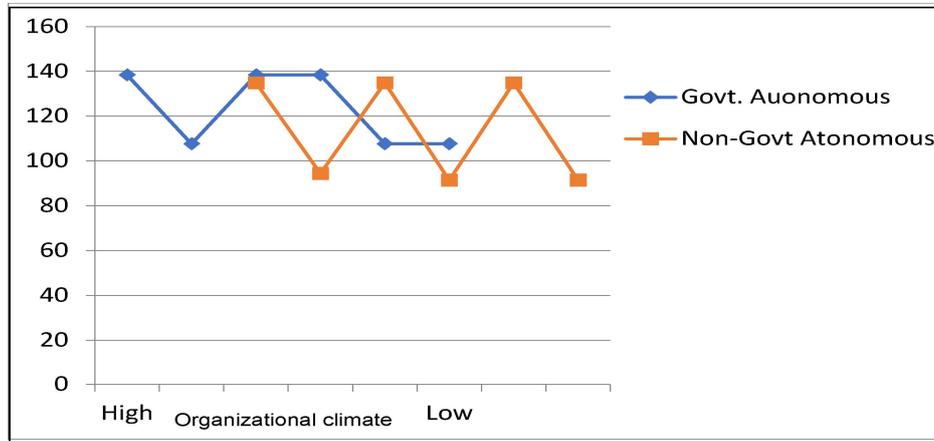


Fig.1: (Ref. Table No. 7) Interaction effect of types of autonomous colleges and organizational climate on student's creativity

Further, table no. 7 shows that the creativity of students studying in government autonomous colleges with high organizational climate did not differ significantly from the creativity of students studying in non-government autonomous colleges with high organizational climate ($F = 0.31$; $df = 476$; $p > .05$). In addition to it, table no. 7 shows that the creativity of students studying in government autonomous colleges with high organizational climate differed significantly from the creativity of students studying in non-government autonomous colleges with low organizational climate ($F=55.21$; $df = 476$; $p < .01$) in favour of students studying in government autonomous colleges with high organizational climate ($M=138.37 > M = 91.43$).

Further, table no. 7 shows that the creativity of students studying in government autonomous colleges with low organizational climate differed significantly from the creativity of students studying in non-government autonomous colleges with high organizational climate ($F=18.58$; $df=476$; $p < .01$) in favour of students studying in non-government autonomous colleges with high organizational climate ($M=107.67 < M=134.9$).

Further, table no. 7 shows that the creativity of students studying in government autonomous colleges with low organizational climate differed significantly from the creativity of students studying in non-government autonomous colleges with low organizational climate ($F=6.58$; $df = 476$; $p < .05$) in favour of students studying in government autonomous colleges with low organizational climate ($M=107.63 > M = 91.43$).

Further, table no. 7 shows that the creativity of students studying in non-government autonomous colleges with high organizational climate differed significantly from the creativity of students studying in non-government autonomous colleges with low organizational climate ($F=47.35$; $df=476$; $p<.01$) in favour of students studying in non-government autonomous colleges with high organizational climate ($M=134.9 > 91.43$).

Major Findings

The study yielded the following key findings:

- i. There is a significant independent effect of the type of autonomous college on students' creativity.
- ii. Students in government autonomous colleges demonstrated higher creativity than those in non-government autonomous colleges.
- iii. There is a significant independent effect of organizational climate on students' creativity.
- iv. Students in colleges with a high organizational climate exhibited greater creativity than those in colleges with a low organizational climate.
- v. There was a significant interaction effect between the type of autonomous college and organizational climate on students' creativity.
- vi. Students in government autonomous colleges with a high organizational climate were more creative than those in government autonomous colleges with a low organizational climate.
- vii. Creativity levels of students in government autonomous colleges with a high organizational climate were similar to those in non-government autonomous colleges with a high organizational climate.
- viii. Students in government autonomous colleges with a high organizational climate were more creative than those in non-government autonomous colleges with a low organizational climate.
- ix. Students in non-government autonomous colleges with a high organizational climate were more creative than those in government autonomous colleges with a low organizational climate.
- x. Students in government autonomous colleges with a low organizational climate were more creative than those in non-government autonomous colleges with a low organizational climate.
- xi. Students in non-government autonomous colleges with a high organizational climate were more creative than those in non-government autonomous colleges with a low organizational climate.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the factors that influence creativity in higher education, emphasizing the importance of both organizational climate and institutional autonomy. The research demonstrates that a supportive organizational climate—characterized by openness, innovation, and intellectual freedom—significantly enhances student creativity. Additionally, the autonomy of educational institutions plays a crucial role in providing the flexibility needed to nurture creative thinking. The interaction between these factors suggests that creativity is most effectively fostered in environments where both autonomy and a positive organizational climate are present.

The implications of these findings are far-reaching, offering guidance for educators, administrators, and policymakers committed to cultivating creativity in higher education. By creating and maintaining environments that support creative exploration, and by protecting the autonomy of institutions, students can be better prepared to meet future challenges with innovative and creative solutions. As higher education continues to evolve in response to global demands, these insights will be increasingly critical in shaping the educational experiences that define the next generation of thinkers, leaders, and innovators.

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