



The Climate Compression Effect on Hybrid Educational Organizations

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ABSTRACT

The transformation of educational organizations into digitally connected and hybrid environments has expanded academic interaction across physical and digital spaces. While hybridization offers greater flexibility and connectivity, it may also reshape how organizational members experience interpersonal and academic climates. This study proposes the Climate Compression Effect (CLC Effect) as a new qualitative conceptual lens for understanding a subtle organizational phenomenon in which the presence or arrival of a particular individual is experienced as narrowing the psychological, interpersonal, and communicative space of other organizational members. The study employs a qualitative exploratory approach and positions CLC as a sensitizing concept rather than a predetermined theoretical model. The conceptual analysis indicates that climate compression may be experienced through increased caution in communication, reduced openness, diminished informal interaction, greater interpersonal formality, selective communication, and withdrawal, even in the absence of overt conflict or formal organizational disruption. The phenomenon is particularly relevant to hybrid educational organizations because interpersonal influence may extend across interconnected physical and digital environments, including classrooms, meetings, messaging platforms, email, learning management systems, and online meetings. The study distinguishes CLC from organizational conflict, psychological safety, and the chilling effect by emphasizing the broader perceived contraction of the organizational space in which members communicate and interact. The CLC Effect is therefore proposed as a sensitizing concept for future qualitative investigation of interpersonal climate dynamics in hybrid educational organizations.

Keywords: Climate Compression Effect; CLC Effect; Organizational Climate; Hybrid Educational Organizations; Psychological Safety; Academic Interaction; Qualitative Research; Collegiality

Field: Organizational Behavior; Educational Management; Organizational Psychology; Higher Education; Human Resource Management

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INTRODUCTION

The transformation of educational organizations from predominantly face-to-face institutions into digitally connected and hybrid environments has fundamentally changed the way academic members interact, communicate, and work (McCarthy et al., 2023). The expansion of internet access has made it increasingly possible for lecturers, students, administrators, and academic staff to participate in educational activities across physical and digital spaces. In Indonesia, this transformation is particularly visible in the growing digital connectivity of the population. Data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) indicate that internet penetration reached 79.5% in 2024, representing approximately 221.6 million internet users. At the provincial level, the development is also substantial. Statistics Indonesia (BPS) reported that 72.78% of Indonesians aged five years and above had accessed the internet in 2024, while the corresponding figure for Riau Province reached 77.68%. Within Riau, internet access was substantially higher in urban areas (84.30%) than in rural areas (73.20%), demonstrating both the increasing digital integration of the province and the persistence of a digital divide.

These developments have important implications for educational organizations. The contemporary educational organization can no longer be understood solely as a physical institution in which academic activities occur within classrooms, offices, meeting rooms, and campus facilities (Hanaysha et al., 2023). Instead, organizational interactions increasingly take place across interconnected physical and digital spaces. Lecturers may teach face-to-face while communicating through messaging platforms; students may attend classes physically while submitting assignments through learning management systems; academic meetings may involve participants located both on campus and remotely; and administrative decisions may be communicated through digital channels rather than through direct interpersonal interaction. In this sense, the hybrid educational organization represents not merely a combination of online and offline learning modalities, but a new organizational environment in which physical presence and digital presence coexist and continuously influence one another.

The development of this hybrid environment, however, does not necessarily produce a more open, flexible, and collaborative academic climate (Lauring & Jonasson, 2025). Greater connectivity may simultaneously increase the intensity and visibility of organizational interaction. Individuals can remain psychologically present even when they are physically absent, while communication can continue beyond formal working hours and institutional boundaries. Consequently, an individual's presence, communication style, reputation, or interpersonal influence may affect the organizational climate across multiple channels at the same time. A person who enters a department, faculty, study program, or academic team may therefore influence not only face-to-face interactions but also digital conversations, online meetings, group communication, and other forms of academic exchange.

This phenomenon becomes particularly important when the arrival or presence of a particular individual is followed by a noticeable change in the atmosphere of the organization (Kirchner-Krath et al., 2024). In some educational organizations, the arrival of one person may cause members to become more cautious in expressing opinions, more selective in communicating, more reluctant to disagree, or more conscious of how their statements and actions may be interpreted. The organization may not necessarily experience an explicit conflict. There may be no formal dispute, confrontation, or visible organizational crisis. Nevertheless, members may begin to perceive the environment as psychologically heavier, socially narrower, and less comfortable for open academic interaction. In a hybrid organization, this change can occur simultaneously in physical and digital environments.

Existing organizational literature provides several concepts that can partially explain such phenomena, including organizational climate, psychological safety, interpersonal conflict, workplace incivility, social influence, and the chilling effect (Raza et al., 2023). However, these perspectives do not fully capture a particular situation in which the presence of one individual appears to compress the overall psychological and interpersonal space of an educational organization without necessarily producing overt conflict. The distinction is important. Conflict emphasizes opposition between parties; psychological safety focuses on whether individuals feel safe to take interpersonal risks; and a chilling effect generally emphasizes the inhibition of expression or behavior caused by perceived threats or consequences (Nyoto et al., 2021). The phenomenon addressed in this study concerns something broader: a perceptible contraction of the organizational climate itself following the presence or arrival of a particular individual.

To address this phenomenon, this study proposes a new conceptual lens, termed the Climate Compression Effect (CLC Effect). The CLC Effect refers to a phenomenon in which the presence or arrival of a particular individual compresses the psychological, interpersonal, and communicative space within an educational organization, causing organizational members to become more cautious, restrained, tense, and less open in their academic interactions. The concept does not assume that the individual is a formal leader or possesses substantial organizational authority (Nyoto et al., 2024). Rather, the central argument is that individual presence can itself become a source of organizational climate change.

The concept becomes particularly relevant in hybrid educational organizations because the boundaries through which interpersonal influence operates have become increasingly permeable (Zhang et al., 2025). A person's influence may extend from physical meetings into digital communication channels, creating continuity between campus-based and technology-mediated interactions. Thus, climate compression may not remain localized within a classroom, office, or meeting room; it may travel across WhatsApp groups, online meetings, learning platforms, email communication, and informal academic networks. The hybrid structure may consequently amplify the persistence and reach of the climate effect.

The Indonesian and Riau contexts provide a meaningful setting for examining this phenomenon. Riau's relatively high level of internet access, 77.68% in 2024, indicates that digital interaction has become an important component of everyday social and educational life, while the 84.30% urban access rate further illustrates the strong digital connectivity of urban educational environments. BPS also reports internet access

among populations at different educational levels, including D1–D3 and S1-and-above groups, demonstrating the relevance of digital connectivity across the educational population. At the same time, BPS's Statistics of Education 2024 emphasizes that Indonesian education is undergoing continuous development in terms of educational processes, resources, and outcomes, providing a broader institutional context in which digitally connected and increasingly flexible educational organizations operate.

Against this background, the central question is not simply whether hybrid technology improves or constrains educational performance (Arfat et al., 2025). Rather, it is how the presence of particular individuals can reshape the climate of hybrid educational organizations. The CLC Effect proposed in this study seeks to explain this overlooked organizational phenomenon by connecting individual presence with climate compression, psychological tension, behavioral restraint, and declining collegial openness. By introducing this concept, the study aims to extend discussions of organizational climate and academic interaction beyond conventional structural explanations and toward a more micro-organizational understanding of how one person's presence can change the perceived climate of an entire educational organization.

Accordingly, this study proposes the Climate Compression Effect (CLC Effect) as a new conceptual perspective for understanding interpersonal climate dynamics in hybrid educational organizations. The concept provides a foundation for examining how individual presence, psychological responses, communication patterns, and organizational climate interact across physical and digital spaces. Ultimately, the CLC Effect highlights a phenomenon that may remain invisible in conventional organizational assessments: an organization can remain formally functional while its psychological and collegial space becomes progressively compressed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Climate in Educational Organizations

Organizational climate is widely understood as the way organizational members collectively experience and interpret the environment in which they work (Gilardi & Lazazzara, 2025). In educational organizations, climate is particularly significant because academic work depends not only on formal structures and institutional policies but also on everyday interaction, trust, communication, cooperation, and the freedom to exchange ideas. The academic environment is therefore shaped by what members experience in their daily encounters with colleagues, students, administrators, and institutional practices.

In a university or other educational institution, organizational climate is rarely produced by formal organizational arrangements alone. It is continuously constructed through meetings, conversations, teaching activities, academic discussions, informal encounters, and routine communication. A department may have clear rules and formally appropriate procedures while its members simultaneously experience the environment as supportive, uncomfortable, competitive, tense, or restrictive. This distinction suggests that organizational climate has an important experiential dimension that cannot always be captured through formal organizational structures.

From a qualitative perspective, climate is therefore particularly relevant as an experienced organizational reality. What matters is not merely whether an organization formally provides opportunities for participation, but how members actually experience those opportunities in everyday academic life. This perspective opens space for examining subtle changes in organizational atmosphere that may not be visible in formal records or conventional organizational indicators.

Academic Climate and Collegiality

Academic organizations depend heavily on collegial relationships (Jernberg et al., 2025). Teaching, research, supervision, curriculum development, and academic administration require continuous interaction among individuals with different expertise, responsibilities, personalities, and perspectives. Collegiality provides an interpersonal foundation through which disagreement can occur without necessarily becoming destructive.

A healthy academic climate allows organizational members to express different opinions, ask questions, challenge assumptions, and engage in intellectual disagreement while maintaining professional relationships. Conversely, when collegial relationships become strained, members may continue to perform their formal responsibilities while becoming increasingly cautious in informal and academic interactions.

This distinction between formal functioning and experienced climate is particularly important. An organization may continue to conduct meetings, classes, research activities, and administrative processes even when its members perceive that the atmosphere has changed. Consequently, organizational dysfunction does not

always begin with visible conflict or institutional failure. It may first appear as subtle changes in communication, interpersonal distance, silence, hesitation, or reduced spontaneity.

These subtle changes provide an important conceptual entry point for understanding the phenomenon explored in this study.

Psychological Safety and the Experience of Academic Interaction

Psychological safety provides an important perspective for understanding how individuals experience interpersonal environments (Newman et al., 2017). It concerns whether individuals perceive that they can speak, ask questions, express disagreement, acknowledge mistakes, or contribute ideas without experiencing interpersonal threat or negative consequences.

Within educational organizations, psychological safety is particularly relevant because academic work inherently involves questioning, criticism, intellectual disagreement, and experimentation. When members perceive that the interpersonal environment is safe, they are more likely to participate openly. When that sense of safety becomes weakened, communication may become more guarded.

Importantly, the experience of psychological safety does not necessarily change because of an explicit organizational policy. It can also change through everyday interpersonal encounters. A particular interaction, person, or recurring pattern of communication may influence how individuals interpret what is safe to say or do.

This observation is relevant to the present study because it suggests that organizational climate can be experienced through micro-level interpersonal encounters. The presence of a particular individual may therefore matter even when that person does not possess formal authority and does not explicitly threaten other organizational members.

Conflict, Tension, and the Space Before Open Conflict

Organizational conflict literature provides another useful perspective (Gaur, 2024). Conflict has traditionally been understood as a process that may develop from underlying conditions into perceived, experienced, and eventually observable disagreement. This perspective is useful because it recognizes that organizational tension may exist before conflict becomes formally visible.

However, the phenomenon considered in this study is not necessarily conflict. An academic environment can become tense without individuals openly disagreeing. Members may simply become more careful about what they say, whom they speak to, or how they express their opinions. Meetings may remain orderly while spontaneous discussion decreases. Communication may continue while becoming increasingly formal. Colleagues may cooperate while simultaneously reducing interpersonal contact.

Consequently, the absence of formal conflict should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of a healthy organizational climate. Silence, caution, and interpersonal distance may represent important experiential changes occurring before any visible conflict emerges. This distinction is particularly important for qualitative inquiry because such changes may only become visible through participants' narratives, observations, and descriptions of everyday organizational life (Renaldo et al., 2025).

The Chilling Effect and Self-Restraint

The notion of a chilling effect offers another useful conceptual reference (Segijn et al., 2026). Across different fields, the term has been used to describe circumstances in which individuals become reluctant to express themselves or engage in particular behaviors because they anticipate negative consequences.

Within higher education, the concept has been particularly relevant to discussions of academic freedom and freedom of expression. Scholars have examined circumstances in which institutional, political, social, or professional pressures cause academics to become more cautious about what they say or research (Renaldo et al., 2022).

The relevance of the chilling-effect perspective to this study lies in the possibility of self-restraint without explicit prohibition. Individuals do not necessarily need to be instructed to remain silent. Instead, they may gradually learn to regulate themselves based on how they perceive their environment.

Nevertheless, the chilling effect does not fully describe the phenomenon under investigation. Chilling primarily describes the restraint experienced or enacted by individuals, whereas this study is concerned with the broader transformation of the organizational atmosphere in which that restraint emerges.

The distinction can therefore be expressed conceptually:

Chilling describes what individuals may do; climate compression describes what may happen to the space in which they interact.

This distinction provides an important foundation for the proposed concept.

Hybrid Educational Organizations as Multi-Space Environments

The development of hybrid educational practices has further complicated the meaning of organizational climate (Viera Trevisan et al., 2024). Educational organizations increasingly operate across physical and digital environments. Academic members may interact in classrooms, offices, and meetings while simultaneously communicating through messaging applications, email, learning management systems, and video-conferencing platforms.

As a result, organizational relationships are no longer confined to physical institutional spaces. A conversation that begins in a physical meeting may continue in a digital group. A disagreement occurring face-to-face may influence subsequent online communication. Similarly, an individual's presence may continue to be experienced even when that person is not physically present.

This creates what can be understood as a multi-space organizational environment, where physical and digital interactions are interconnected rather than completely separate. For qualitative research, this is important because organizational climate may be experienced differently across these spaces. Participants may describe a meeting as formally successful while simultaneously reporting discomfort in subsequent digital communication. Alternatively, a person may rarely interact physically with colleagues but remain highly influential through digital communication. The hybrid organization therefore creates a broader context within which interpersonal influence and organizational atmosphere can be experienced, reproduced, and interpreted.

From Climate Change to Climate Compression

The literature discussed above provides several perspectives for understanding organizational experience: organizational climate explains the broader atmosphere of an organization; psychological safety explains the experience of interpersonal security; conflict literature explains the emergence of organizational tension; the chilling effect explains behavioral restraint; and hybrid-organization literature explains the increasingly interconnected spaces in which organizational interaction occurs (Ito et al., 2022).

However, these perspectives leave an interesting phenomenon insufficiently conceptualized. Consider an educational organization in which the arrival of a particular individual is followed by noticeable changes in everyday interaction. Members remain formally professional. Classes continue. Meetings continue. Administrative procedures continue. There may be no documented conflict.

Yet members begin to describe the environment differently. They become more careful when speaking. They think twice before expressing disagreement. Informal conversations decrease. Meetings become more guarded. People begin choosing words more carefully. Digital communication becomes more restrained. Some members prefer silence to unnecessary interaction.

The organization has not necessarily become dysfunctional in a formal sense. Rather, the space in which people feel comfortable interacting has become narrower. It is this phenomenon that this study proposes to explore through the concept of the Climate Compression Effect (CLC Effect).

The Climate Compression Effect

The Climate Compression Effect (CLC Effect) is proposed as a qualitative conceptual lens for understanding how the presence or arrival of a particular individual may alter the experienced climate of an educational organization. The term compression is used deliberately. Compression does not imply that the organization physically becomes smaller. Instead, it refers to the perceived narrowing of psychological, interpersonal, and communicative space available to organizational members.

Under conditions of climate compression, individuals may still be able to speak, disagree, participate, and communicate. However, they may experience these activities as requiring greater caution or consideration than before. The central concern is therefore not simply:

“Is there conflict?”

but rather:

“Has the space for comfortable academic interaction become narrower?”

The concept also does not require the individual responsible for the change to occupy a formal leadership position. The relevant individual may be a lecturer, staff member, administrator, new organizational

member, or another person whose presence becomes meaningful within the social environment of the organization.

The emphasis is consequently placed on experienced influence rather than formal authority.

Climate Compression in Hybrid Educational Organizations

The concept becomes particularly relevant in hybrid educational organizations because the compressed climate may extend across multiple interaction spaces. A change in face-to-face interaction may influence digital communication, while digital interactions may subsequently shape physical encounters. Consequently, climate compression should not necessarily be understood as something occurring within one location.

Instead, it may move between:

Physical Academic Space



Digital Academic Space

For example, a member may become more cautious during face-to-face meetings and subsequently communicate less in a digital group. Alternatively, a pattern of uncomfortable digital interaction may influence how members behave when they encounter one another physically.

The hybrid environment therefore potentially makes organizational climate more continuous across spaces. This perspective also highlights an important qualitative question: how do organizational members themselves describe and interpret this change? Rather than assuming that a particular individual objectively creates tension, a qualitative approach allows the researcher to examine how members perceive the person's presence, how they interpret changes in the atmosphere, and how they adapt their everyday behavior.

Toward a Qualitative Understanding of the CLC Effect

The existing literature suggests that organizational climate is experienced through everyday interaction, psychological safety shapes willingness to participate openly, conflict can develop before becoming visible, chilling effects can produce self-restraint, and hybrid structures expand the spaces through which organizational interaction occurs (Mogård et al., 2022). The proposed Climate Compression Effect brings these perspectives together around a specific phenomenon: the perceived narrowing of psychological and interpersonal space following the presence or arrival of a particular individual.

The purpose of introducing CLC is not to prematurely establish a fixed causal model. Rather, it provides a sensitizing concept through which qualitative inquiry can explore participants' experiences. Several questions consequently become central:

- How do members describe the organizational atmosphere before and after the arrival of a particular individual?
- What changes do they perceive in everyday academic interaction?
- How do they describe feelings of tension, caution, or discomfort?
- Do they change the way they communicate?
- Does the perceived change occur only in physical spaces, or also in digital environments?
- How do members interpret the role of the individual's presence in producing these changes?
- How does the organization continue functioning formally despite changes in its experienced climate?

These questions allow the CLC Effect to emerge from participants' lived organizational experiences, rather than imposing a predetermined quantitative structure upon them.

Conceptual Position of the Present Study

Based on the literature, this study positions the Climate Compression Effect (CLC Effect) as a proposed qualitative concept rather than an established theory. Its conceptual distinction can be summarized as follows.

Existing perspective	Main concern	CLC perspective
Organizational climate	How members experience the organizational environment	How that experienced environment may become narrower
Psychological safety	Whether people feel safe to speak and act	How perceived interpersonal space may become constrained
Organizational conflict	Opposition and disagreement	Tension that may exist without overt conflict
Chilling effect	Self-restraint and inhibited expression	The broader climate in which restraint emerges
Collegiality	Quality of academic relationships	How collegial space may contract
Hybrid organization	Interaction across physical and digital spaces	How climate compression may move across those spaces

Accordingly, this study treats CLC Effect not as a predetermined causal mechanism but as a sensitizing concept for qualitative exploration.

The central proposition is therefore deliberately open:

The Climate Compression Effect describes the experienced narrowing of psychological, interpersonal, and communicative space within an educational organization following the presence or arrival of a particular individual.

The qualitative task is then to determine whether, how, and under what circumstances such compression is experienced by organizational members, and how it becomes visible in everyday academic life.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative exploratory research design to investigate how members of hybrid educational organizations experience and interpret changes in organizational climate following the presence or arrival of a particular individual (Urrila et al., 2025). The study is concept-oriented, with the Climate Compression Effect (CLC Effect) positioned as a sensitizing concept rather than a predetermined theoretical model. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because climate compression is fundamentally an experiential and interpretive phenomenon that may not be visible through formal organizational indicators. An educational organization may continue to conduct teaching, meetings, research, and administrative activities normally while its members simultaneously experience changes in interpersonal comfort, communication, psychological tension, and academic openness. The study therefore focuses on how organizational members describe, interpret, and make sense of these changes within their everyday academic experiences.

The research is situated in hybrid educational organizations in Indonesia, particularly higher-education environments in which academic activities occur across interconnected physical and digital spaces. The hybrid context is important because contemporary academic interaction increasingly takes place through classrooms, offices, meetings, messaging applications, electronic mail, learning management systems, and online meeting platforms. Consequently, organizational climate cannot necessarily be understood only through physical interaction. An individual's presence may be experienced during face-to-face meetings and may subsequently influence communication in digital environments. The study therefore considers the educational organization as a multi-space environment in which physical and digital interactions are interconnected and may collectively shape members' perceptions of the organizational climate.

Participants will be selected through purposive sampling, focusing on individuals who have direct experience of organizational interaction within a hybrid educational environment. Participants may include lecturers, academic staff, administrative personnel, academic managers, and other organizational members who regularly participate in academic activities. Particular attention will be given to individuals who have experienced a noticeable change in organizational atmosphere following the arrival, presence, or increased involvement of a particular individual. The study does not seek statistical representativeness; instead, participant

selection is intended to capture diverse organizational experiences and perspectives. Variation in organizational roles, length of membership, frequency of interaction, and exposure to physical and digital communication will be considered in the sampling process. Data collection will continue until additional interviews no longer provide substantially different insights into the emerging phenomenon.

Primary data will be collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews designed to encourage participants to describe their experiences in their own words. Rather than directly asking participants whether the CLC Effect exists, the interviews will initially explore how participants perceive the academic atmosphere, whether they have noticed changes over time, how interpersonal communication has changed, and whether the arrival or involvement of particular individuals has affected everyday organizational interaction. Participants will also be invited to describe changes in meetings, academic discussions, informal communication, digital interaction, and their own behavioral responses. This approach allows the phenomenon to emerge from participants' accounts rather than imposing the researcher's conceptual interpretation at the beginning of the inquiry. Where access and ethical approval permit, interviews may be supplemented by non-participant observation of academic meetings, classroom activities, departmental interactions, or other relevant organizational events. Observation will focus on interactional patterns such as participation, hesitation, silence, conversational dynamics, interpersonal distance, and changes in communication. Relevant digital interactions may also be considered when appropriate authorization and ethical safeguards are available, particularly where digital communication forms an important part of the organization's hybrid environment.

The qualitative data will be analyzed through an inductive thematic analysis. The researcher will begin by repeatedly reading interview transcripts, field notes, and other relevant materials to develop familiarity with participants' experiences. Meaningful segments of data will then be assigned initial codes, preferably using participants' own expressions where appropriate. Codes may reflect experiences such as becoming more careful when speaking, thinking before expressing an opinion, avoiding disagreement, reduced informal communication, increased formality, interpersonal distancing, or changes in the atmosphere of digital communication. Related codes will subsequently be compared and developed into broader experiential categories. For example, expressions concerning choosing words carefully, avoiding disagreement, and thinking before speaking may contribute to a broader understanding of communicative restraint, while reduced informal interaction, increased interpersonal distance, and increasingly formal meetings may contribute to an understanding of interpersonal narrowing. These categories will not be treated as predetermined dimensions of the CLC Effect but will be developed and refined through engagement with the empirical material.

The analysis will pay particular attention to participants' temporal narratives concerning organizational life before and after the arrival or increased presence of a particular individual (Rustan et al., 2025). The researcher will examine how participants describe the organizational atmosphere before the change, what they experienced following the individual's arrival or increased involvement, how their own and others' interactions subsequently changed, and whether those changes continued across physical and digital environments. Attention will also be given to similarities and differences among participants and to negative or contradictory cases. Instances in which the arrival or presence of an individual did not produce perceived climate compression will be examined rather than excluded, allowing the emerging concept to be challenged and refined. Through this process, the study seeks to determine whether recurring patterns of psychological tension, communicative caution, interpersonal distancing, and reduced academic openness can be understood as manifestations of a broader phenomenon of climate compression.

Researcher reflexivity will form an important part of the analytical process because the study concerns potentially sensitive interpersonal and organizational experiences. The researcher will maintain reflexive notes throughout the research process to distinguish participants' descriptions from the researcher's interpretations and from the subsequent conceptual development of the CLC Effect. The study will not assume that a particular individual objectively causes organizational tension. Instead, it will focus on how that individual's presence is experienced and interpreted by organizational members and how such perceptions may influence everyday interaction. This distinction is essential because perceptions of an individual's influence may be shaped by organizational position, previous relationships, personal experiences, and existing organizational narratives.

The trustworthiness of the study will be addressed through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility will be strengthened through detailed interviews, comparison of experiences across participants, prolonged engagement with the research setting where feasible, and triangulation among interviews, observations, and relevant digital interaction. Transferability will be supported through rich descriptions of the organizational context, participants' roles, interaction patterns, and characteristics of the hybrid environment, allowing readers to assess the relevance of the findings to other educational organizations. Dependability will be supported through an audit trail documenting participant selection, interview development, coding decisions, category development, and conceptual refinement. Confirmability will be

enhanced through reflexive documentation and systematic comparison of participant accounts to ensure that the emerging concept is grounded in the empirical data rather than solely in the researcher's assumptions.

Ethical considerations are particularly important because the study addresses potentially sensitive interpersonal experiences within educational organizations. Participants will be informed about the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality procedures, and their right to withdraw from the study. Participant identities and identifiable organizational information will be anonymized. Because the research concerns perceptions of particular individuals, the study will avoid unnecessary identification or labeling of persons and will focus on organizational experiences and interactional patterns rather than judging whether an individual is inherently responsible for organizational problems. Any use of digital communication data will require appropriate permission, institutional authorization where applicable, and protection of participant confidentiality.

The conceptual development of the CLC Effect will emerge through an iterative movement between empirical experience and theoretical interpretation. The researcher will begin with participants' descriptions of organizational life, identify recurring patterns of climate change, examine experiences of tension, caution, reduced openness, and interpersonal distance, and then assess whether these patterns reflect a perceived narrowing of psychological, interpersonal, and communicative space. The resulting interpretation will be used to refine the Climate Compression Effect (CLC Effect) as a qualitative conceptual lens. Accordingly, CLC Effect is not treated as an established construct to be statistically tested but as a proposed concept whose meaning, characteristics, boundaries, and explanatory value are developed through qualitative evidence (Fransisca et al., 2025). The ultimate methodological objective is therefore not to prove the CLC Effect through numerical relationships but to understand how, when, and under what circumstances members of hybrid educational organizations experience their psychological and interpersonal space as becoming compressed following the presence or arrival of a particular individual.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The Emergence of Climate Compression

The findings are expected to indicate that the presence or arrival of a particular individual can gradually alter the atmosphere of an educational organization, even when the individual does not occupy a formal leadership position (Graham et al., 2022). Participants may describe changes in the way colleagues communicate, interact, and participate in academic activities after the individual becomes present within the organization. The change may not initially appear as an explicit conflict or confrontation, but rather as a subtle transformation in the emotional and interpersonal atmosphere. Conversations may become more formal, spontaneous exchanges may decrease, and members may become increasingly attentive to how their words or actions could be interpreted. This pattern represents the central phenomenon proposed in this study as the Climate Compression Effect (CLC Effect), in which the presence of one individual is experienced as narrowing the psychological, interpersonal, and communicative space available to other members of the organization.

The significance of this finding lies in the distinction between a change in organizational structure and a change in organizational experience. An educational organization may continue to operate according to its formal procedures, schedules, responsibilities, and hierarchical arrangements while its members experience a considerably different interpersonal environment. The compression therefore does not necessarily involve institutional dysfunction in a formal sense. Instead, it appears through everyday experiences such as reduced openness, greater caution in communication, avoidance of unnecessary interaction, and a feeling that certain forms of expression are no longer equally comfortable. In this sense, the CLC Effect draws attention to an organizational phenomenon that may remain invisible when organizational functioning is evaluated primarily through formal structures and observable outcomes.

Increased Caution in Academic Communication

A second emerging theme concerns the development of caution in communication. Participants may report that they become more selective about what they say, to whom they say it, and when they express particular opinions. This caution does not necessarily result from explicit instructions or formal restrictions. Rather, it may emerge from members' perceptions of the individual's reactions, communication style, interpersonal influence, or previous interactions. As a consequence, members may choose safer forms of communication, avoid controversial subjects, postpone certain discussions, or communicate only with individuals whom they perceive as more comfortable or trustworthy. The important point is that communication continues to occur, but its openness and spontaneity become reduced.

This finding extends the discussion of psychological safety by suggesting that the experience of safety within an organization can be influenced by the presence of a particular individual even when formal organizational policies remain unchanged (Dong et al., 2024). Psychological safety literature generally emphasizes whether individuals feel able to speak, contribute, ask questions, and express concerns without interpersonal consequences. The CLC Effect provides a complementary perspective by focusing on the perceived shrinking of the space in which such interaction takes place. Rather than asking only whether members feel psychologically safe, the concept asks whether the interpersonal environment itself has become narrower, more cautious, and less accommodating of spontaneous academic interaction.

The Reduction of Collegiality and Informal Interaction

The findings may also reveal a gradual reduction in informal collegial interaction. Educational organizations depend not only on formal meetings and administrative communication but also on informal conversations, spontaneous exchanges of ideas, mutual assistance, and social interaction among members. When the climate becomes compressed, these informal interactions may become less frequent or more carefully managed. Members may still cooperate when cooperation is required by their formal responsibilities, but voluntary interaction may decline. The distinction between formal cooperation and genuine collegiality becomes particularly important because an organization can remain operational while experiencing a decline in interpersonal connectedness.

This pattern suggests that climate compression should not be interpreted simply as interpersonal dislike or incompatibility between individuals (Jalonen, 2024). The more important issue is the organizational consequence of the perceived interpersonal environment. When members begin to modify their behavior because the presence of one person changes how comfortable they feel interacting, the effect extends beyond the individual relationship and becomes an organizational phenomenon. The CLC Effect therefore provides a conceptual bridge between individual interpersonal experience and collective organizational climate.

Climate Compression Without Open Conflict

An important finding within the proposed framework is that the CLC Effect does not require open conflict. Traditional organizational conflict perspectives, including Pondy's process model, distinguish between underlying conditions of conflict and its subsequent perception, experience, manifestation, and aftermath. The CLC Effect may occur at a different point or under a different condition because the organization may never reach an identifiable stage of manifest conflict. Members may simply become more cautious, less expressive, or less socially engaged without any formal disagreement taking place.

This distinction is theoretically important because organizations frequently recognize conflict only when it becomes visible (Engin et al., 2024). Complaints, arguments, formal disputes, resistance, or interpersonal confrontation are relatively easy to identify, whereas silence, avoidance, withdrawal, and excessive formality are considerably more difficult to detect. The CLC Effect directs attention toward this quieter dimension of organizational experience. The absence of visible conflict should therefore not automatically be interpreted as evidence of a healthy organizational climate. An organization may appear peaceful while its members experience a progressively restricted interpersonal environment.

From Chilling Effect to Climate Compression

The findings further distinguish the CLC Effect from the established concept of the chilling effect. A chilling effect generally refers to a situation in which individuals refrain from expressing themselves or engaging in particular behaviors because they anticipate negative consequences. The CLC Effect incorporates this possibility but places greater emphasis on the transformation of the surrounding climate. Members may self-censor, but the phenomenon is broader than self-censorship because it can also involve changes in interpersonal warmth, spontaneity, trust, informal communication, and collective interaction.

Accordingly, the chilling effect can be understood as one possible behavioral manifestation within climate compression, while the CLC Effect refers to the broader experiential condition in which the organization's psychological and interpersonal space is perceived as becoming narrower. This distinction strengthens the conceptual originality of the proposed framework. The central question is not simply why an individual becomes silent, but how the presence of a particular person can alter the atmosphere within which organizational members communicate and relate to one another.

Climate Compression in Hybrid Educational Organizations

The hybrid nature of contemporary educational organizations appears to provide additional spaces through which the CLC Effect can operate. Interactions among lecturers, academic staff, administrators, and managers increasingly occur across physical and digital environments, including classrooms, offices, meetings,

messaging applications, email, learning management systems, and online meetings. Consequently, the influence of an individual's presence is not necessarily confined to physical encounters. A member may experience the same caution in a face-to-face meeting and subsequently carry that perception into digital communication.

This multi-space character makes climate compression particularly relevant to hybrid educational organizations. In a conventional organization, an uncomfortable interpersonal atmosphere may be associated primarily with physical proximity (Syeda et al., 2026). In a hybrid organization, however, the perceived presence of an individual can extend beyond physical space through digital visibility and communication. A person's messages, comments, responses, or participation in online meetings may continue to shape how other members communicate even when the individual is not physically present. The CLC Effect can therefore be understood as operating across interconnected organizational spaces rather than within a single location.

The Role of Perception and Interpretation

Another important dimension of the findings is the role of members' interpretations. Climate compression does not necessarily depend on the individual's objectively negative intention or behavior. The same communication style, personality, or interpersonal approach may be interpreted differently by different members. Some may experience the individual as demanding or intimidating, while others may perceive the same person as professional, direct, or simply unfamiliar. Consequently, the CLC Effect is fundamentally experiential and interpretive rather than exclusively behavioral.

This interpretive dimension is consistent with the qualitative understanding of organizational climate, in which climate is not merely a collection of observable organizational characteristics but also a shared or partially shared interpretation of organizational experience (Jankelova et al., 2025). The CLC Effect should therefore not be used to label an individual as inherently problematic. Instead, it identifies a pattern in which the presence of an individual becomes associated with a perceived narrowing of interactional space. Such an approach is particularly important in qualitative research because it allows contradictory experiences and alternative interpretations to remain visible rather than assuming that all members experience the same individual in the same way.

Discussion: The CLC Effect as a Proposed Concept

Taken together, the findings support the development of the Climate Compression Effect (CLC Effect) as a proposed qualitative concept for understanding subtle changes in educational organizational climate. The concept describes a process in which the presence or arrival of a particular individual is experienced as compressing the psychological, interpersonal, and communicative space of organizational members. This compression may be expressed through increased caution, reduced spontaneity, diminished informal interaction, selective communication, withdrawal, and greater interpersonal formality. Importantly, the phenomenon can occur without formal authority, explicit threats, or visible conflict.

The conceptual contribution of the CLC Effect lies in shifting attention from the question of whether conflict exists toward the question of whether the space for healthy organizational interaction is becoming narrower. Organizational climate research, psychological safety research, conflict theory, and chilling-effect literature each provide important explanations for particular aspects of this phenomenon. However, the CLC Effect brings these observations together around a different conceptual center: the experience of compression. The metaphor of compression is useful because it captures a gradual reduction in room for openness and collegiality without assuming that organizational relationships have completely broken down.

A Qualitative Interpretation of the CLC Process

The proposed interpretation suggests that the CLC Effect may develop through a gradual experiential process. Initially, members become aware of a particular individual's presence or interpersonal influence. Through repeated interactions, they begin to interpret certain situations as requiring greater caution. This interpretation can subsequently influence communication choices, interpersonal behavior, and participation in informal organizational activities. When similar responses are experienced by multiple members, the change may become recognizable as a broader alteration in organizational atmosphere. The organization may consequently retain its formal functionality while its psychological and interpersonal space becomes progressively compressed.

The process should not, however, be treated as a rigid linear sequence. Qualitative evidence may reveal that some individuals adapt to the situation, some openly challenge it, some maintain normal interaction, and others withdraw. The intensity and persistence of the CLC Effect may therefore vary across individuals, groups, organizational settings, and communication spaces. This variability is not a weakness of the concept; rather, it reinforces the need to understand climate compression through members' lived experiences and interpretations.

Implications for Hybrid Educational Organizations

The proposed concept has practical implications for educational organizations seeking to maintain healthy academic climates. Organizational leaders and managers should recognize that the absence of formal complaints or visible conflict does not necessarily indicate the absence of interpersonal problems. Changes in informal interaction, participation, communication patterns, and collegiality may provide earlier indications that members are experiencing a narrowing of psychological and interpersonal space. In hybrid organizations, attention should also extend to digital interaction because climate may be reproduced across online and offline environments.

Ultimately, the CLC Effect offers a way to conceptualize a subtle organizational phenomenon that can remain hidden beneath formal institutional functioning. Its central proposition is that one individual's presence can alter not only individual behavior but the perceived space in which an organization communicates, collaborates, and relates. Further qualitative investigation is needed to examine how members recognize climate compression, how they interpret the presence of the individual involved, how the phenomenon differs across physical and digital spaces, and under what circumstances compression is resisted, normalized, reduced, or intensified. Thus, the CLC Effect should be regarded at this stage as a proposed sensitizing concept that can be refined through empirical qualitative research rather than as an already established organizational theory.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

This study proposes the Climate Compression Effect (CLC Effect) as a conceptual lens for understanding a subtle form of organizational climate change within hybrid educational organizations. The CLC Effect refers to a situation in which the presence or arrival of a particular individual is experienced as compressing the psychological, interpersonal, and communicative space of other organizational members. This compression may be reflected in increased caution, reduced openness, diminished informal interaction, greater interpersonal formality, selective communication, and withdrawal, even when no explicit conflict or formal organizational disruption occurs. The concept therefore shifts attention from visible conflict toward the less observable ways in which an individual's presence can influence the atmosphere of an educational organization.

The study further argues that the CLC Effect is particularly relevant to hybrid educational organizations because organizational interaction now occurs across interconnected physical and digital spaces. The perceived influence of an individual may therefore extend from classrooms, offices, and meetings into messaging applications, email, learning management systems, and online meetings. The CLC Effect should not be understood as a judgment that a particular individual is inherently problematic, but rather as an experiential and interpretive phenomenon in which organizational members perceive their interactional space to become narrower. At this stage, CLC is best understood as a proposed qualitative sensitizing concept that requires further empirical examination and conceptual refinement.

Implications

The conceptualization of the CLC Effect has implications for both organizational theory and educational management. Theoretically, it expands discussions of organizational climate by directing attention toward the perceived narrowing of psychological, interpersonal, and communicative space. While organizational climate, psychological safety, conflict, and chilling effects provide important explanations for organizational interaction, the CLC Effect offers a distinct conceptual emphasis on how the presence of one individual may transform the atmosphere experienced by others without necessarily producing overt conflict. This perspective may help researchers identify subtle forms of organizational tension that are difficult to capture through conventional indicators of organizational functioning.

For educational management, the concept suggests that maintaining a healthy academic environment requires attention not only to formal structures, policies, and performance but also to everyday interactional experiences (Delyana Rahmawany Pulungan et al., 2025). Educational managers may need to recognize changes in communication patterns, collegiality, participation, and informal interaction as potential signals of climate compression. In hybrid organizations, this attention should extend across both physical and digital environments because interpersonal perceptions may be reproduced and reinforced through multiple communication channels. Early recognition of such patterns may allow organizations to address interpersonal difficulties before they develop into more visible organizational problems.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the CLC Effect is presented as a proposed conceptual framework rather than an established theory supported by extensive empirical evidence. Consequently, the concept should not yet be interpreted as universally applicable to all educational organizations or organizational contexts. Second, the phenomenon is inherently interpretive because perceptions of interpersonal atmosphere may differ among organizational members. The same individual may be experienced differently by different people depending on their previous interactions, roles, expectations, and organizational relationships. Third, the proposed framework focuses primarily on educational organizations, particularly hybrid educational environments, which may limit its immediate applicability to other organizational settings without further investigation.

Another limitation concerns the possibility of alternative explanations. Changes in organizational climate may result not only from the presence of a particular individual but also from leadership transitions, workload, institutional restructuring, organizational politics, technological changes, or other contextual factors. A qualitative investigation of the CLC Effect therefore needs to carefully distinguish climate compression from broader organizational changes. Furthermore, because the concept emphasizes subtle experiences such as caution, discomfort, reduced openness, and withdrawal, these experiences may be difficult to observe directly and may depend substantially on participants' willingness to articulate them.

Recommendations

Educational organizations are recommended to develop greater sensitivity toward subtle changes in interpersonal and academic climate rather than relying exclusively on formal complaints or visible conflict as indicators of organizational well-being. Leaders and academic managers can create opportunities for confidential communication, reflective discussion, and constructive feedback so that members have safe spaces to express concerns about interpersonal dynamics. In hybrid organizations, organizations should also consider how communication norms across digital platforms influence perceptions of openness, accessibility, and psychological space.

From a research perspective, future qualitative studies should use the CLC Effect as a sensitizing concept rather than imposing it as a predetermined explanation. Researchers should allow participants to describe their experiences in their own terms and subsequently examine whether recurring patterns correspond to the dimensions proposed by the CLC framework. Particular attention should be given to contradictory experiences, cases in which the presence of an individual does not produce compression, and situations in which initially compressed climates recover over time. Such evidence can help prevent the concept from becoming overly broad and can contribute to a more precise conceptual definition.

Future Research

Future research should empirically examine the CLC Effect through qualitative studies involving lecturers, academic staff, administrators, managers, and other members of educational organizations. In-depth interviews, observations, and, where ethically and institutionally appropriate, analysis of organizational communication may provide insight into how members recognize, interpret, and respond to climate compression. Longitudinal qualitative research would be particularly valuable because it could examine organizational experiences before and after the arrival or increased presence of a particular individual and identify how perceptions of the organizational atmosphere evolve over time.

Future studies should also investigate whether the CLC Effect operates differently across physical and digital environments. Comparative research between conventional and hybrid educational organizations may reveal whether hybrid communication intensifies, reduces, or transforms climate compression. Further research could also examine different forms of individual influence, including formal authority, informal influence, personality, communication style, professional status, or perceived interpersonal power. Most importantly, subsequent studies should determine whether the CLC Effect represents a sufficiently distinct and empirically recognizable phenomenon to warrant development into a broader organizational theory. In this way, the concept can progress from an initial qualitative sensitizing concept toward a more clearly bounded and empirically grounded theoretical contribution.

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