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The Relationship between Organizational Climate and Job Satisfaction: A Study on Production Operators of a Car Manufacturing Company in Malaysia

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ABSTRAK

Kajian ini mengkaji perhubungan di antara iklim organisasi dengan kepuasan kerja. Data-data diperolehi daripada 346 orang pekerja pengeluaran sebuah syarikat pengeluaran kereta. Sebanyak 10 dimensi iklim telah dihasilkan melalui analisis faktor ke atas item-item iklim organisasi. Hasil dari analisis korelasi juga telah menunjukkan perhubungan yang bermakna di antara dimensi-dimensi iklim tersebut dengan ukuran-ukuran kepuasan kerja.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between perceived organizational climate and job satisfaction. Data were obtained from 346 production operators of a car manufacturing company. Factor analyses of climate items yielded 10 climate dimensions. Correlation results showed significant relationships between the derived climate dimensions and measures of job satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

A considerable number of climate studies by researchers in the United States have found organizational climate to be related to job satisfaction (Downey, Hellriegel & Slocum 1975; Friedlander & Margulies 1969; Kaczka & Kirk 1967; Lawler, Hall & Oldham 1974; Litwin & Stringer 1968;

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Pritchard & Karasick 1973; Schneider & Snyder 1975). However, relatively few studies of this nature have been done using subjects brought up in an Asian culture and environment. It is, therefore, the objective of the present study to identify specific climate dimensions for a group of production workers in Malaysia and examine the relationships between these dimensions and job satisfaction. It is hoped that findings from this study will provide further insight into the climate-satisfaction relationship, specifically climate-satisfaction relationship of employees in the Southeast Asia region.

ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

Organizational climate has been the focus of numerous research studies over the years. Its importance as a research topic is partly due to its hypothesized relationship to other organizational phenomena including job satisfaction, job performance, leadership behaviors, and the quality of work group interaction (Schnake 1983).

Many definitions have been offered to clarify the climate concept. Forehand and Gilmer (1964), for example, have defined climate as a set of relatively enduring characteristics that describe an organization, distinguish it from other organizations, and influence the behavior of organizational members, while Litwin and Stringer (1968) viewed climate as a set of measurable properties of the work environment perceived by the people in it, and these properties are assumed to influence motivation and behavior. By synthesizing the definitions of various researchers, Pritchard and Karasick (1973) defined organizational climate as a relatively enduring quality of an organization's internal environment which results from the behavior and policies of its members, is perceived by its members, and acts as a source of pressure for directing activity. Schneider and Snyder (1975) have conceptualized organizational climate to be a characteristic of organizations which is reflected in the descriptions employees make of the policies, practices, and conditions which exist in the work environment. Finally, Steers (1977) referred to climate as the perceived characteristics found in the work environment that result largely from actions taken by the organization and the presumably affect subsequent behavior. In sum, organizational climate can be defined as employees' subjective perceptions of the work environment which are descriptive and these perceptions can lead to affective responses which govern employees' behavior.

Since organizational climate involves perceptions of an organization's environment, different organizations with differing practices and procedures may have different climates (Muchinsky 1976). One of the problems with the climate concept is the specification of appropriate climate dimensions. Several studies have tried to identify the specific factors in the work environment which seem to influence climate. Campbell, Dunnette,

Lawler, and Weick (1970) in a review of four studies identified four dimensions that seemed to be common to these studies: individual autonomy, structure, reward, and consideration, warmth, and support. One of the studies reviewed was that of Litwin and Stringer (1968) in which nine a priori climate dimensions (structure, responsibility, reward, risk, warmth, support, standard, conflict and identity) were identified. Muchinsky (1976) factor analyzed the Litwin and Stringer climate questionnaire and isolated six dimensions which he referred to as interpersonal milieu, standards, general affective tone toward management, organization structure and procedures, responsibility, and organizational identification. Other attempts to generate taxonomies of climate using factor analysis techniques, including those of Payne and Pheysey (1971), Pritchard and Karasick (1973), and Joyce and Slocum (1984), yielded 2, 11 and 6 dimensions respectively.

The above studies indicate that there is still considerable diversity in the number and type of dimensions used to explain the climate construct. The multidimensional nature of climate allows it to encompass several dimensions and it is difficult to identify specific climate dimensions that can be applied to all organizations. As yet, no one has succeeded in constructing a climate instrument that will manifest high validity and reliability across different types of organizations. In view of this, Muchinsky (1976) suggested a routine factor analysis of a climate questionnaire when the type of organization of interest has not been examined before.

JOB SATISFACTION

Employee job satisfaction remains an area of concern for employers and has received a great deal of attention from researchers. This construct has been used as both an independent and dependent variable in research studies. However, a number of different definitions, both conceptual and operational, have been offered for this concept. Schneider and Snyder (1975), for example, have conceptualized job satisfaction as an affective response of individuals which is reflected in the evaluations employees make of all the individually salient aspects of their job and the organization for which they work, while Porter and Lawler (1968) have operationalized satisfaction as a discrepancy. They defined it as the extent to which rewards actually received, meet or exceed the perceived equitable level of rewards. The greater the failure of actual rewards to meet or exceed perceived equitable rewards, the more dissatisfied a person is. Smith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969) have simply defined job satisfaction as the feelings a worker has about his job.

Job satisfaction has also been defined as the sum of job facet satisfaction across all facets of a job (Wanous & Lawler 1972). Hence a dis-

inction is made between overall job satisfaction and satisfaction with a particular aspect of a job, that is, job facet satisfaction. A person can be satisfied in general with his job and yet be dissatisfied with certain facets of that job. Different researchers have included different job facets in defining job satisfaction as well as used different approaches in combining job satisfaction. Wanous and Lawler (1972) in their study of the measurement and meaning of job satisfaction have suggested that there is no one best way to measure job satisfaction and that it is possible to measure satisfaction validly with different job facets.

In studying the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational climate, it is important to distinguish between the two concepts. Job satisfaction differs from organizational climate in that it focuses upon a particular job and concerns a person's affective response to the job. Climate, on the other hand, refers to the organization as a whole and is derived from a person's description of the organization (Payne, Fineman & Wall 1976).

METHOD

SAMPLE

The study was conducted in a large car manufacturing company employing more than 1,000 employees. The sample consisted of 346 production operators selected randomly from an employee listing provided by the company.

All the respondents were males and about 69% were below 25 years of age, with the mean age being 24. The median salary was \$425 per month with 84% of the respondents earning less than \$500 per month.

PROCEDURE

A four-part questionnaire was administered on company premises with the help of company officials. In order to allay any fears and suspicions and hence reduce respondent bias, the respondents were informed that the study was a university-sponsored research project and not company-connected, and that their individual responses would be kept completely confidential. The completed questionnaires were collected on the same day that they were administered.

MEASUREMENT

Climate Measure Perceived organizational climate was measured using 39 statements from Form B of the Litwin and Slinger questionnaire (1968) (Appendix A). These statements were selected based on the results obtained from factor analyzing preliminary data collected using the original Litwin

and Stringer questionnaire and on the subjective judgements of the researchers. This revised measure was scored on a 4-point scale ranging from disagree (1) to agree (4). The statements were factor analyzed via principal factor analysis and components with eigenvalues ≥ 1.0 were rotated by the varimax procedure.

Job Satisfaction Measure Satisfaction was measured using the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) developed by Smith, et al. (1969). The JDI was chosen as it has been shown by extensive research to be a reliable and valid measure of job satisfaction (Muchsinky 1977). This instrument was designed to measure satisfactions with five aspects of a job: the work itself, pay, promotion, supervision, and co-workers. Respondents were asked to indicate whether a statement describing a particular aspect of their job applied, did not apply, or unsure whether it applied.

Satisfaction scores for each job aspect were obtained by summing the assigned weight for each item across all items covering the particular job aspect. Satisfied responses were assigned a weight of 3 while dissatisfied responses were assigned a weight of 0. A weight of 1 was assigned to those items where respondents could not decide. An overall job satisfaction score was obtained by summing the five job aspect satisfaction scores.

RESULTS

The factor analysis of the climate items yielded 10 factors which together accounted for 52.4% of the total variance (Table 1). Procedure for selecting items to represent each factor consisted of retaining only those items with a loading of at least 0.40 on that factor and low loadings on all other factors. The climate dimensions obtained are described in Table 2.

The number of items selected to represent each climate scale and the mean, standard deviation, and internal consistency reliability (Spearman-Brown estimates) of each of the climate and satisfaction scales are shown in Table 3. Only factors with reliabilities of 0.50 and above are used for further analysis, this being the reliability level which is considered sufficient for basic research purposes (Guilford 1954). The reliability estimates for the satisfaction scales ranged from 0.71 to 0.90.

As can be seen from Table 3, the mean ratings for pay and promotion were much lower than those of the other satisfaction scales indicating the operators' dissatisfaction with these two facets of their job. This is not surprising since promotional opportunities for production operators in the organization under study are somewhat limited. In addition, their pay was based on their level of education and not on performance nor the nature of the job. Hence, two operators could be doing similar jobs and yet be under different pay grades.

TABLE 1. Results of factor analysis for the climate items

Item	Factor										h ²
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	
1. Meetings to get decisions quickly	.66										.52
2. Take risks at the right time	.61										.47
3. Feel like member of a good team	.60										.46
4. High standards of performance set	.49										.54
5. Take a chance on a good idea	.42										.49
6. Happy people are productive	.39										.32
7. Relaxed, easy-going work climate		.64									.50
8. Friendly atmosphere prevails		.61									.53
9. Warmth in relationships		.58									.51
10. Emphasize human factor		.54									.40
11. Talk about career aspirations		.49									.60
12. Proud to belong to organization	.37	.40									.48
13. Clearly defined and structured jobs			.78								.67
14. Clear policies and structure			.78								.65
15. Job could always be done better			.37								.47
16. People tend to be cool and aloof				.73							.59
17. Not much sympathy for mistakes made				.57							.45
18. People do not trust each other			.51		.41						.50
19. Hard to get to know people			.50								.46
20. Have to take risks to be ahead			.37								.64
21. Can use discretion on the job					.69						.59
22. Allowed to take responsibility					.64						.54
23. There is a great deal of criticism					.50						.46
24. Not enough reward and recognition					.48						.42
25. People look out for own interests						.78					.69
26. Not much loyalty to the company						.73					.60
27. Individuals shirk responsibility							.62				.60
28. Poor organization and planning							.62				.59
29. Less concern for formal organization							.53				.35
30. Not sure who boss was							.48				.52
31. Rewards outweigh punishments								.72			.57
32. Lots of excuses when mistakes made								.50			.55
33. Rewarded based on performance								.48			.48
34. Red-tape is kept to a minimum								.47			.40
35. Speak out, even if disagree								.37			.45
36. Steer clear of open arguments									.76		.63
37. To get ahead, must get along									.71		.58
38. Individual judgement not relied on										.75	.60
39. Excessive rules and red-tape										.54	.59
Eigenvalues	2.76	2.61	2.04	2.00	2.00	1.93	1.92	1.79	1.78	1.61	
Percent of variance explained	7.07	6.69	5.23	5.13	5.13	4.95	4.92	4.59	4.56	4.13	
Cumulative variance (%)	7.07	13.76	18.99	24.12	29.25	34.20	39.12	43.71	48.27	52.40	

Note: Only loadings $\geq |\pm .35|$ are presented.
See the appendix for a more complete description of the climate items.

TABLE 2. Derived climate dimensions

Dimension	Description
1. Organizational vitality	The perception that the organization is willing to take calculated risks and chances on employees' ideas, sets high performance standards, and has an efficient team of employees.
2. Warmth and consideration	The feeling of warmth in the relationships among members, supported by a relaxed, friendly, and people-oriented work atmosphere.
3. Structure	The perception that jobs, policies and organizational structure are clearly defined and explained.
4. Social relations	The feeling that people in the organization are cool and aloof, do not trust each other, and are not sympathetic towards those who make mistakes.
5. Responsibility	The perception that employees are given the opportunity to take responsibility for their jobs and to use their own initiative and discretion in performing their jobs.
6. Individualism	The feeling that people in the organization are self-centered and not loyal to the company.
7. Organization clarity	The perception that the company lacks organization and planning and is less concerned about formal organization and authority than in getting the right people for the right job.
8. Reward orientation	The feeling that employees are rewarded based on performance and that rewards and recognition usually outweigh threats and criticisms in the organization.
9. Conflict avoidance	The feeling that one has to maintain good interpersonal relations and avoid open arguments and disagreements to get ahead in the organization.
10. Management style	The perception that management double-checks everything and that excessive rules and red-tape in the organization make it difficult for new ideas to receive consideration.

TABLE 3. Means, standard deviations, and reliabilities of the climate and satisfaction scales

Scale	No. of Items	Mean	SD	Reliability (Spearman-Brown)
Climate				
Organizational vitality	5	3.07	.63	.56
Warmth and consideration	6	2.24	.69	.66
Structure	2	2.46	.93	.63
Social relations	4	2.25	.72	.55
Responsibility	4	2.96	.71	.46
Individualism	2	2.65	.88	.58
Organization	4	2.51	.73	.49
Reward orientation	4	2.51	.61	.22
Conflict avoidance	2	2.40	1.04	.60
Management style	2	2.88	.87	.42
Job satisfaction				
Work	18	1.12	.64	.75
Supervision	18	1.59	.78	.86
Pay	9	0.58	.72	.76
Promotion	8	0.77	.75	.86
Co-workers	18	2.03	.90	.90
Total satisfaction	71	1.36	.56	.71

Table 4 presents the correlations between the derived climate factors and the job satisfaction measures. Thirty-one (86%) of the 36 correlation coefficients obtained were statistically significant at the 0.05 level of significance. The correlations were, however, generally small in magnitude.

As Table 4 clearly shows, the climate dimension of organizational vitality, structure, and social relations correlated significantly with all the job satisfaction dimensions, while the other remaining dimensions were significantly related to only some of the satisfaction dimension. The total satisfaction dimension correlated significantly with all the climate dimensions. The above results support the view that perceptions of climate have an influence on employees's level of job satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

In general, the results of this study are consistent with the findings of previous climate research which found organizational climate to be related to job satisfaction. It can be seen from Table 4 that significant relationships exist between employees's overall job satisfaction and the derived climate dimensions of this study. For example, this study provides strong evidence

TABLE 4 Correlations between satisfaction scores and organizational climate dimension scores

Climate Dimension	Job Satisfaction						Total
	Work	Supervision	Pay	Promotion	Co-workers		
Organizational vitality	22**	28**	19**	16*	20**	30**	
Warmth and consideration	27**	18*	22**	29**	09	25**	
Structure	22**	26**	26**	28**	17*	35**	
Social relations	- 23**	- 19**	- 10*	- 20**	- 22**	- 30**	
Individualism	- 21**	- 15*	- 06	- 23**	- 23**	- 30**	
Conflict avoidance	- 15*	- 03	- 06	- 11*	- 06	- 15*	

*p < .05, **p < .001

that employees' satisfaction is related to their perceptions of the dynamism of the organization. This is evidenced by the significant and positive correlation between organizational vitality and all five satisfaction facets. Employees who perceive their management as willing to take calculated risks and chances on their ideas seem to be more satisfied than those who perceive otherwise.

The finding that the warmth and consideration and social relations dimensions correlated significantly with satisfaction is consistent with the findings of Friedlander and Margulies (1969) who found a climate characterized by considerate management and friendly social relations to be associated with higher satisfaction, especially satisfaction with opportunities for recognizable advancement. Pritchard and Karasick (1973), in their study of the effects of organizational climate on managerial job performance and satisfaction, also found social relations and a supportive climate to have a significant impact upon satisfaction. Hence, employees who find themselves in a friendly, supportive, and people-oriented work atmosphere are likely to be more satisfied with all aspects of their jobs.

Structural factors such as clear company policies and well-defined jobs also seem to influence employees' level of satisfaction. This finding is congruent with previous findings where, for example, Muchinsky (1977) in a study of 695 employees of a large public utility found the organizational structure and procedures dimension to correlate significantly with all the JDI satisfaction components. Pritchard and Karasick (1973) also found a significant relationship between structure and satisfaction. The above findings are further supported by a study by Downey et al. (1975) of 92 managers from an industrial firm, in which the researchers concluded that individuals who perceived the policies, organizational structure, and responsibilities of the organization to be well-defined were more satisfied with their co-workers than those individuals who perceived the organization as unstructured.

The individualism dimension was found to be significantly and negatively related to every dimension of job satisfaction except the pay component. Apparently, employees' feelings about the degree of self-centeredness and company loyalty prevalent among organizational members have little effect on how satisfied they were with their pay but do influence their satisfaction with work, supervision, promotion, and co-workers.

Employees who are discouraged from speaking up and voicing their disagreements were found to be less satisfied with their work and promotion as indicated by the significant and inverse relationship between the conflict avoidance dimension and satisfaction with work and promotion. However, the weak correlations indicate that this dimension has relatively little effect on employees' satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

The climate dimensions obtained from factor analyzing the climate items in this present research were quite similar to those identified in earlier climate studies. The correlation results between the climate and satisfaction dimensions were also congruent to the findings of other organizational behavior researchers.

The findings from this study suggest that employees, specifically those involved in production work, are likely to be more satisfied in a work environment characterized by an open, supportive, and friendly work atmosphere, high performance standards, well-defined jobs and policies, and an equitable pay system. Therefore, measures to initiate such a climate may be justified since satisfaction is also closely related to employee turnover and absenteeism. Measures that can be taken include redesigning jobs, laying down clear policies and work guidelines, organizing more informal activities, training supervisors to adopt a more participative style, and establishing a quality of work life program.

Appendix A

The 39-item measure of organizational climate

Item No.	Item
1	In management meetings the goal is to arrive at a decision as smoothly and quickly as possible.
2	Our business has been built up by taking calculated risks at the right time.
3	I feel that I am a member of a well functioning team.
4	In this Organization we set very high standards for performance.
5	Our management is willing to take a chance on a good idea.
6	Management believes that if the people are happy, productivity will take care of itself.
7	This Organization is characterized by a relaxed, easy-going working climate.
8	A friendly atmosphere prevails among the people in this Organization.
9	There is a lot of warmth in the relationships between management and workers in this Organization.
10	The philosophy of our management emphasizes the human factor, how people feel, etc.
11	Management makes an effort to talk with you about your career aspirations within the Organization.
12	People are proud of belonging to this Organization.
13	The jobs in this Organization are clearly defined and logically structured.
14	The policies and organization structure of the Organization have been clearly explained.

continued

Appendix A (continued)

-
- 15 Our management believes that no job is so well done that it couldn't be done better.
 - 16 People in this Organization tend to be cool and aloof toward each other.
 - 17 You don't get much sympathy from higher-ups in this Organization if you make a mistake.
 - 18 People in this Organization don't really trust each other enough.
 - 19 It's very hard to get to know people in this Organization.
 - 20 We have to take some pretty big risks occasionally to keep ahead of the competition in the business we're in.
 - 21 Around here management resents your checking everything with them; if you think you've got the right approach you just go ahead.
 - 22 Supervision in this Organization is mainly a matter of setting guidelines for your subordinates; you let them take responsibility for the job.
 - 23 There is a great deal of criticism in this Organization.
 - 24 There is not enough reward and recognition given in this Organization for doing good work.
 - 25 In this Organization people pretty much look out for their own interests.
 - 26 As far as I can see, there isn't very much personal loyalty to the company.
 - 27 One of the problems in this Organization is that individuals won't take responsibility.
 - 28 Our productivity sometimes suffers from lack of organization and planning.
 - 29 Our management isn't so concerned about formal organization and authority, but concentrates instead on getting the right people together to do the job.
 - 30 In some of the projects I've been on, I haven't been sure exactly who my boss was.
 - 31 In this Organization the rewards and encouragements you get usually outweigh the threats and the criticism.
 - 32 There are an awful lot of excuses around here when somebody makes a mistake.
 - 33 In this Organization people are rewarded in proportion to the excellence of their job performance.
 - 34 Red-tape is kept to a minimum in this Organization.
 - 35 We are encouraged to speak our minds, even if it means disagreeing with our superiors.
 - 36 The best way to make a good impression around here is to steer clear of open arguments and disagreements.
 - 37 To get ahead in this Organization it's more important to get along than it is to be a high producer.
 - 38 We don't rely too heavily on individual judgement in this Organization; almost everything is double-checked.
 - 39 Excessive rules, administrative details, and red-tape make it difficult for new and original ideas to receive consideration.
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