

EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTIONS OF WORK ENVIRONMENT IN CERTAIN SETTING OF HYDERABAD CITY

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The study was designed to examine differences in employees' perceptions of social climate dimensions in two different work settings. The Urdu version of the Work Environment Scale developed by Rudolf Moos (1986) was administered on 45 employees of Aga Khan Maternal and Child Care Center, and Zeal-Pak Cement Factory and Others in Hyderabad City. The results indicated that the employees of the Health Care group perceived greater Involvement, Task Orientation, Clarity, Control, and Innovation than the employees of the Business and Industry group did on the Work Environment Scale. The mean differences between the two groups on these scales were found to be highly significant. The results are discussed in terms of the differences in social climate as it exists in the two work settings.

The social-psychological conditions under which people work exert a strong influence on their levels of performance and job satisfaction. Recently, the industrial and organizational psychologists of developed societies have become sufficiently interested in a variety of physical, social, and psychological factors which would be satisfying to the needs of the workers. The participatory style of social climate which focuses on human needs and values assumes that people are motivated to seek and accept responsibility in their work if they are provided with greater opportunity for active participation in policy making at all levels. The human resources theory of management developed by Wexley and Yukl (1984) emphasizes the fact that various human needs (for example, achievement, affiliation, esteem, independence, power, and security) can be fulfilled (or frustrated) in the work setting. The role of management is to create appropriate environmental conditions to facilitate job performance.

Moos (1987) viewed the social climate as a setting or environment in an organization that gives unity and coherence. Just as some people

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are very task-oriented and competitive, some environments encourage achievement and competition. Social climate can have strong influence on people in a work setting. Researchers have shown how it affects individuals' aspirations, achievement, self-esteem, and personal growth.

The present study was designed to examine differences in social climate dimensions of two different work settings in Hyderabad city. In line with human resources theory of management, the paper assumes that in a social climate where multiple needs of the employees are fulfilled will have greater scores on the Work Environment Scales than in a social climate where the needs of the employees are not fulfilled. The results of this investigation might be utilized by the organizations under study to create a social climate so that the employees could best perform their jobs in order to take full advantage of human potentials.

METHOD

Sample

The sample was 45 employees drawn from different work settings (viz., Aga Khan Maternal and Child Care Center, Zeal-Pak Cement Factory Ltd., and Habib Bank Ltd.) in Hyderabad city by trained investigators. Among the employees of the Aga Khan Maternity Hospital, 59% were females, whereas in other organizations all respondents were males. The mean age of the employees of the Health Care group, and Business and Industry group was 25.6 and 53.3 years, respectively. Most of the respondents of the Business and Industry group were senior and middle-level executives, while the female staff of the Health Care group were nurses, mid-wives, staff nurses, and lady doctors. Here, it may be indicated that the nurses and mid-wives are generally of younger ages. Majority of the subjects in both the work settings belonged to the middle socio-economic status. However, 20% of the respondents in Business and Industry group were from upper strata of the society.

The Settings

The Aga Khan Maternal and Child Care Center in Hyderabad was designed with an innovative approach, incorporating 'Hospital' based

maternal and child health care services, and 'Community' based maternal and child care services to improve the current health situation. It is under the management of Aga Khan University, Karachi.

Zeal-Pak Cement Factory Ltd. was used to be under the State Cement Corporation of Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd. In pursuance of national policy of privatization of public sector industries, in 1992 it was handed over to private management.

Instrument

Work Environment Scale

The Urdu version of the revised Work Environment Scale (WES) developed by Moos (1986) was used. The Urdu translation of the scale was accomplished by the first author using backward translation technique. Earlier, the WES has been translated into many languages, and has been found to be cross-culturally valid instrument. It comprises of 10 subscales that measure the social climate of different types of work settings. These subscales tap three sets of dimensions: (a) the Relationship Dimension (i.e., the personal relations in a work setting); (b) the Personal Growth Dimension (i.e., the work environment encourages the personal growth); and (c) the System Maintenance and System Change Dimension (i.e., how orderly and organized the setting is, how clear it is in its expectations, how much control it maintain, and how responsive it is to change). Representative items with subscales in parenthesis are: "The work is really challenging" (Involvement); "People go out of their way to help a new employee feel comfortable" (Peer Cohesion); "Supervisors usually compliment an employee who does something well" (Supervisor Support); "Employees have a great deal of freedom to do as they like" (Autonomy); "Things rarely get "put off till tomorrow" (Task Orientation); "There are always deadlines to be met" (Work Pressure); "Activities are well planned" (Clarity); "There is a strict emphasis on following policies and regulations" (Control); "Doing things in different way is valued" (Innovation); and "The lighting is extremely good" (Physical Comfort).

The respondents were instructed to mark "True" or "False" besides each item on the questionnaires. In order to avoid response set bias, some of the items in each subscale were negatively phrased, and were

not counted while calculating the average scores for all the members of the two work groups for each subscale.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The split-half reliability of WES was calculated and found to be highly significant, $r = .9683$. Further, the correlation coefficients of all the ten subscales were computed with the total WES scores which indicated highly significant results (e.g., Involvement, $r = .9777$; Peer Cohesion, $r = .9645$; Supervisor Support, $r = .9679$; Autonomy, $r = .9431$; Task Orientation, $r = .9327$; Work Pressure, $r = .9774$; Clarity, $r = .9880$; Control, $r = .9611$; Innovation, $r = .9591$; Physical Comfort, $r = .9471$).

The means of the 10 subscales were calculated so that greater scores indicate healthy social climate in a particular work setting. The means, standard deviations and t -test scores of Aga Khan Maternity Hospital and Zeal Pak Cement Factory on 10 subscales are presented in Table 1.

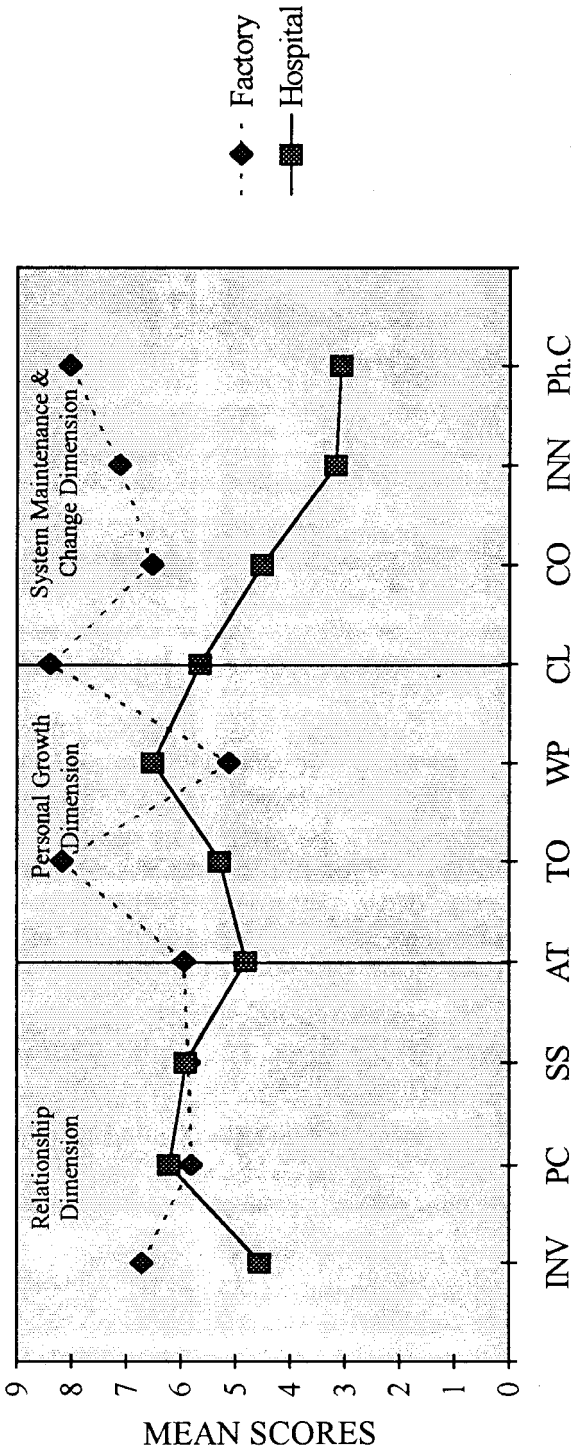
Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and t-tests on Work Environment Scale of Work Settings Related to Health-Care, and Business and Industry

Work Environment Scale	Work Settings				
	Aga Khan Hospital (n= 22)		Zeal-Pak Cement & Others (n= 23)		t
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	
Involvement	6.72	.75	4.56	1.90	5.39*
Peer Cohesion	5.81	1.18	6.21	1.44	1.08
Supervisor Support	5.86	1.08	5.91	1.80	0.11
Autonomy	5.95	1.34	4.82	2.90	1.43
Task Orientation	8.18	.85	5.30	2.03	5.23*
Work Pressure	5.13	1.20	6.52	1.41	3.75
Clarity	8.40	.79	5.65	1.61	6.11*
Control	6.54	2.84	4.52	2.48	4.42*
Innovation	7.30	1.20	3.17	1.78	9.20*
Physical Comfort	8.04	0.84	3.08	2.25	10.33
Total	67.59	5.52	48.78	12.61	6.42

* $p < .001$

Figure 1: Mean ratings of Aga Khan Hospital and Zeal Pak Factory



WORK ENVIRONMENT SCALES

Note: The abbreviations are: (1) INV= Involvement, (2) PC= Peer Cohesion, (3) SS= Supervisor Support, (4) AT= Autonomy, (5) TO= Task Orientation, (6) WP= Work Pressure, (7) CL= Clarity, (8) CO = Control (9) INN = Innovation, and (10) PhC= Physical Comfort.

Comparing the results of the two work settings, the table 1 shows that the employees of the Aga Khan Maternity Hospital perceive significantly greater job commitment: Involvement, and, Task Orientation (i.e., good planning, efficiency and getting the job done) than the employees of the Zeal-Pak Cement Factory do. The staff members of the Health Care group are also significantly higher on Clarity (i.e., daily routine, rules and policies explicitly communicated), Control (i.e., rules and policies to keep employees under control), Innovation (i.e., emphasis on variety, change and new approaches), and Physical Comfort (i.e., pleasant work environment), than the employees of the Business and Industry group.

Figure 1 represents graphically mean ratings of the two work settings on 10 subscales of the Work Environment Scale with reference to three dimensions namely: the Relationship Dimensions; the Personal Growth Dimension; and the System Maintenance and Change Dimension. The employees of the Aga Khan Hospital as compared to the employees of the Zeal-Pak Cement Factory rate quite high on all the four subscales of the System Maintenance and Change Dimension (i.e., Clarity, Control, Innovation, and Physical Comfort). It may be seen in Figure 1 that in the other two dimensions namely, Relationship and Personal Growth Dimensions, the means of only two subscales (viz., Involvement and Task Orientation) on each dimension rate quite high in respect of Aga Khan Health Care Hospital. The findings, therefore, indicates that the staff members of Aga Khan Hospital know pretty well what is expected of them in the daily routine (viz., Clarity), and the rules and regulations of the organization (viz., Control). In this work setting variety, change and new approaches (viz., Innovation) are emphasized, and the employees find physical environment as pleasant and full of comforts (viz., Physical Comfort).

On the other hand, the employees (mostly senior and middle-level executives) of Zeal-Pak Cement Factory and Others perceive less regard for rules and regulations (viz., Control), and know not much what is expected of them in daily routine (viz., Clarity). They also perceive less emphasis on variety and change (viz., Innovation), and the physical environment is seen as lacking in comforts (viz., Physical Comforts). Here, it may be observed that in the Business and Industry group those who rated moderate or slightly low on the System Maintenance and System Change Dimension also rated moderate on the commitment to job or Involvement i.e., Human Relationship Dimension, and on Autonomy and Task Orientation i.e., Personal Growth Dimension. Thus, it appears that the System Maintenance and

System Change Dimension is more central to the development of healthy social climate in an organization than the other two dimensions.

Here, some elaboration about organizational values of the two work settings seems pertinent. The Hyderabad Maternal and Child Care Centre is the responsibility of the reputed Aga Khan Health Service, Pakistan, managed in consultation with the Aga Khan University, Karachi. Prince Karim Aga Khan inaugurating the Hyderabad Maternal and Child Care Centre observed: "Any person admitted to any hospital for treatment of a disease that could have been prevented, represents a failure in the efforts of the Health System". The Health Care Centre is being professionally managed with an effective communication mechanism crucial to ensure that the management structure is fully responsive to the programme needs. The programme management staff are fully trained in rendering the best health services. The staff members are adequately paid. The management by objective is participatory rather than bureaucratic or authoritarian, and therefore, multiple needs of the staff are gratified in this work setting. In sum, the management of Aga Khan Health Care Centre is consistent with human resources approach (Wexley & Yukl, 1984). On the other hand, since the privatization of the Zeal-Pak Cement Factory in 1992, the philosophy of the new management according to one senior executive has been "to maximize productivity and to maximize profits". It may be indicated that some of the employee informally reported that after the takeover of the factory from the State Cement Corporation of Pakistan Ltd., the present management has either withdrawn or curtailed a number of welfare facilities available to the employees (e.g., all senior and trained teachers of the factory High School were forced to resign just after the privatization). The management by objective is authoritarian, and hence opposed to human resources approach. Thus, in a work setting where multiple needs of the employees are frustrated will not only bring about job dissatisfaction among the employees, but will also adversely affect the productivity.

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