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Employees' perception about organizational culture; with and without ethnic diversity

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ABSTRACT

Conducive organizational culture has been proved to be imperative for an efficient organizational performance. Organizations that ensure a favorable work environment for their employees are able to achieve a higher level of professionalism than others. Literature also reveals that a diverse workforce has advantages of more dynamic knowledge, variety of experiences from different backgrounds and multicultural pool of human capital that help create an improved organizational climate through better work involvement, supervisory support, innovation & flexibility, clarity of goals and welfare. Thus if ethnic diversity is integrated with organizational culture of an organization, then it creates a better work environment that leads to an enhanced employees' productivity. The study was conducted on two higher level educational institutions in two different countries: a university in Pakistan having a homogeneous workforce and a college in the Sultanate of Oman carrying a heterogeneous workforce where diversity is integrated with organizational culture as a diverse work force from many different cultural backgrounds and nationalities is working in Omani educational institutions. After data analysis, it was found that faculty members working in a diversity integrated culture have a better perception about their organization than those serving in a culture without diversity. It was concluded that Employees perceive an organizational culture as more attractive and better in which workforce in ethnically diverse, which also means a favorable organizational climate.

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Introduction

The existing studies have found Diversity to be an important factor in developing organizational culture. A well-developed organizational culture cultivates a healthy and productive work environment where employees are satisfied and their performance level is high which in turn, is useful for the organization itself. It was found in literature review that employees have better perception about the organizational culture where workforce is dynamic in ethnicity. While the organizations carrying homogeneity for ethnicity in workforce, the employees perceive that organizational culture less attractive to work in. Employee's perception about organizational culture is named as organizational climate by many researchers. The present study was conducted to compare the measures of organizational climates of educational institutions with and without a diverse work force to find out whether a diverse work force ensures a better organizational climate. These organizations are: Ibr College of Technology (the Sultanate of Oman) where faculty represents an assortment of more than 12 nationalities working together, and COMSATS University of Information Technology, Lahore (Pakistan) where only one nationality i.e. Pakistan, is represented by the faculty.

The present study is founded on a strong review of literature about diversity, perception of employees about organizational culture (organizational climate), climate of educational institutions, effect of organizational climate on employees' performance and measurement of diversity integrated

organizational climate. A questionnaire was used with a five level scales. The questionnaire was developed and verified for its validity and reliability to get more authentic results by using Cronbach's alpha. Data was collected through a careful random sampling so that all departments are covered for the study. After data collection, 85 surveys were selected for analysis which was then completed in a fair way. Statistical tools were applied in SPSS and findings were derived from the data. The results were in line with the literature and a comparison of the measurements of both organizational climates revealed that as hypothesized, the diversity integrated organization (Ibri College of technology) was a more favorable organizational climate than COMSATS University of Information Technology, which has no ethnic diversity among its faculty members.

Literature Review

Literature review was gathered to develop more deep insight on current research problem and to get a support for this study.

Diversity

Diversity is considered to be the degree of differences among groups of workers in any organization. Many of the researchers analyzing diversity at workplace focus more on gender, race, and ethnicity (Sheau-yuen Yeo, 2006). In a broader perspective, diversity reflects the wide range of socio-cultural variations represented by people from different backgrounds and it is important to address these variations and differences at workplace. Research explores diversity constitute one or more of the several factors like differences in of age, gender, race,

nationality, disability, religion, lifestyle, language, politics, education, socioeconomic status and/or geographical locations. In the current global economy, a great majority of organizations represents a diverse workforce and managing that workforce, organizations are in an advantageous position in the shape of an enhanced business (Cox, 2003). A well-managed diversity is beneficial for improving organizational behavior, ensuing in numerous benefits to the organization such as variety of experience, better problem solving, improved decision making, increased creativity, innovation and added flexibility (Cox, 2003). Having a diverse customer base and a varied labor market, the organization can achieve a competitive advantage through its diverse workforce. If employees need to be made to work more effectively and the organization wants to get the best out of them, it is indispensable to create a climate where employees respect and value differences and also celebrate the differences at workplace (Thomas, 1990). Literature reveals that a well-managed diverse workforce is usually successful in taking initiatives to solve business problems and providing innovative and exclusive solutions empowered by different backgrounds of employees (Thomas, 1990).

Research suggests that usually diversity is helpful in improving employees' performance. People from different nationalities bring in diverse, unique and innovative ideas for expanding business and resolving employees' conflicts. But at the same time, there is a need to invest in training people for adapting to diversity in their organizations (Hansen, 2003). The developed organizations spend money and other resources for training diverse employees and for taking diversity related initiatives that enhance employee performance and satisfaction. These efforts attract people towards the organization and are also beneficial for retaining employees in the organization for a longer period of time (Corporate Leadership Council, 2003). Some researchers have explored that diversity induces a better group performance e.g., enhanced innovation and creativity (Bantel & Jackson, 1989).

Diversity in Educational Institutions

Educational environment provides substantial opportunities to its stake holders including teachers, students, parents and administration for frequent interaction with people from different ethnic backgrounds and getting multicultural experience in their academic and professional life (Kipp, 1998). Students should be flexible in the process of learning because a bunch of knowledge is available in diverse workforce but teachers from different ethnic backgrounds may have different ways of imparting knowledge. That is why if students bring creativity, multiplicity and active learning during their learning process, they can have better knowledge intake from the diverse climate (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 1995, p. xxii, cited in Hurtado, 1997).

Some educational institutes hire teachers from different ethnic groups and nationalities so that a diverse climate can attract more students to get admission in the colleges and universities (Hurtado et al., 1999). In a relevant study of the subject, Globetti, Brown, & Smith (1993) explore that management have to plan and make policies to build a multicultural sensitivity and awareness of cultures of different nationalities in students as well as in teachers so that they develop a positive attitude to accept and respect a diversity integrated climate. Moreover, a few programmed efforts can be helpful in developing a climate in educational institutions that welcome diversity and enhance the outcomes by benefitting

from a multicultural workforce serving in the organizational climate (Richardson, Matthews, & Finney, 1992).

Organizational climate

All the measurable properties of any work environment as perceived by its work force are summed up to get that work place's organizational climate which in turn impacts employees' motivation and overall behavior strongly (Litwin and Stringer, 1968). It is a measure of how the employees of an organization see perceive or weigh it. Reichers and Schneider (1990) contend that organizational climate is the joint perception of employees about "the way things are around in the organization". Organizational climate highlights the goals of any organization and the means to achieve those goals (Schneider, 1975). It can also mean the employees' approach and perception about their organization at some point of time (Momeni, 2009). Organizational culture not only affects organizational climate but also plays an important role in shaping it up. (Hunt & Ivergard, 2007). Organizational culture finds more place in literature than organizational climate does which reflects that organizational culture has a broader scope and it reflects beliefs and values of employees and also employees' assumptions about the organization that produce the experienced organizational climate (Brown & Brooks, 2002). Organizational climate is a sign or symbol of about the "here and now" of an organizational culture. (Sowpow, 2006). Organizational climate is an important element of work environment influencing employees' behavior in the organization. Reichers & Schneider (1990) further term organizational climate as a concern depicting the way employees make some sense concerning the work environment of their organization. Socialization and interaction among the employees of an organization are the means for learning or determining organizational climate. Most of the existing analyses on organizational climate have been derived from the aggregate of some factors like employees' working groups, divisions, departments, teams etc. because it is assumed that every unit or department has its own climate- different from that of the other units- and that within a unit, there exists a high level of agreement regarding climate (James, 1982). Researchers focus is now shifting on the aggregate perception of employees about the organization from the individual psychological meaning and understandings of the climate (Schneider, Bowen, Ehrhart, & Holcombe, 2000). In other words, researchers are beginning to describe and study climate in the form of measurement of climate at organizational level and give more emphasis on developing theories on an organizational level (Schneider, Smith, & Goldstein, 2000).

Impact of Organizational Climate on performance

Research reveals that the perception of organizational climate is related to many important dynamics of employees, groups and organization as a whole. An organization's climate is important to form the behavior of its leader and management. (Rousseau, 1988; Rentsch, 1990). Similarly, climate can attract and retain employees and vice versa. Job satisfaction can also be a positive consequence of organizational climate. Employees' satisfaction level is higher in an organization where they find a better climate despite very modest salary packages (Brown & Leigh, 1996). Individual employees' performance is also influenced by the organizational climate. An unfavorable climate finds employees not performing up to the desired standard. Hence climate plays a key role in the overall organizational performance (Patterson et al., 2004).

Reliability and agreement of scales

	Cronbach's alpha	ICC	Average agreement (rWG(j))
Scale			
Involvement	0.87	0.12	0.8
Supervisory Support	0.88	0.1	0.83
Welfare	0.91	0.17	0.77
Clarity of Goals	0.73	0.15	0.77
Innovation& Flexibility	0.86	0.12	0.83

Source: Sheau-yuen Yeo (2006)

**Reliability of the data from Ibri College of Technology
Case Processing Summary**

		N	%
Cases	Valid	35	100
	Excluded ^a	0	0
	Total	35	100

a. List wise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.951	25

Reliability of the data from COMSATS University

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	28	96.6
	Excluded ^a	1	3.4
	Total	29	100

a. List wise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.946	25

Respondents' Nationality Status at Ibri College, Oman

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Local	9	20	20	20
	Expatriate	36	80	80	100
	Total	45	100	100	

Respondents' Nationality Status at COMSATS University

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Local	40	100	100	100
	Expatriate	0	0		
Total		40	100	100	

Descriptive analysis of Ibri College (With Diverse workforce)

Factors	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Involvement	22%	41%	26%	7%	4%
Supervisory Support	32%	47%	17%	3%	1%
Welfare	30%	40%	16%	11%	3%
Clarity of Goals	23%	37%	20%	13%	7%
Innovation& Flexibility	10%	29%	21%	25%	15%

Descriptive analysis of COMSATS University (No diverse workforce)					
Factors	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Involvement	13%	26%	15%	33%	13%
Supervisory Support	7%	16%	20%	37%	20%
Welfare	10%	14%	18%	40%	18%
Clarity of Goals	17%	17%	29%	26%	11%
Innovation& Flexibility	21%	27%	21%	21%	10%

One-Sample Test

Questions	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Q1	13.601	44	0	1.774	1.51	2.04
Q2	16.955	44	0	1.852	1.63	2.08
Q3	18.053	44	0	2.317	2.05	2.57
Q4	15.872	44	0	1.858	1.62	2.09
Q5	15.716	44	0	2.119	1.84	2.39
Q6	13.211	44	0	1.744	1.47	2.01
Q7	13.717	44	0	1.947	1.65	2.23
Q8	10.553	44	0	1.451	1.18	1.74
Q9	12.438	44	0	1.342	1.12	1.56
Q10	10.512	44	0	1.576	1.27	1.88
Q11	13.349	44	0	1.335	1.53	2.07
Q12	11.516	44	0	1.942	1.6	2.29
Q13	10.014	44	0	1.668	1.28	1.92
Q14	11.173	44	0	1.625	1.31	1.89
Q15	11.569	44	0	2.205	1.84	2.62
Q16	14.189	44	0	1.979	1.69	2.25
Q17	10.916	44	0	1.883	1.53	2.24
Q18	12.495	44	0	1.851	1.56	2.16
Q19	11.794	44	0	1.707	1.42	2.01
Q20	15.301	44	0	2.403	2.13	2.78
Q21	15.317	44	0	1.825	1.59	2.07
Q22	15.082	44	0	2.082	1.8	2.37
Q23	11.946	44	0	2.141	1.78	2.51
Q24	11.813	44	0	1.893	1.49	2.11
Q25	13.168	44	0	1.825	1.55	2.11

COMSATS University data was also analyzed under t-test. Level of significance is 0.00 that is a favorable indication. Values of t are also ranging between 13 and 16 that shows acceptance of the data for further proceedings. Upper and lower reading of the values in this t-test are also a favorable sign to accept the data.

One-Sample Test

Questions	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Q1	1.536	39	0	3.214	2.77	3.65
Q2	17.589	39	0	3.641	3.22	4.07
Q3	16.592	39	0	3.469	3.04	3.89
Q4	17.886	39	0	3.752	3.32	4.18
Q5	14.713	39	0	2.716	2.34	3.09
Q6	11.721	39	0	2.648	2.18	3.11
Q7	13.605	39	0	2.823	2.4	3.24
Q8	15.374	39	0	2.427	2.1	2.75
Q9	11.838	39	0	2.601	2.16	3.06
Q10	13.242	39	0	2.398	2.02	2.76
Q11	13.749	39	0	2.536	2.13	2.87
Q12	12.941	39	0	2.601	2.19	3.02
Q13	13.059	39	0	3.074	2.59	3.55
Q14	14.583	39	0	3.213	2.76	3.67
Q15	15.026	39	0	3.649	3.15	4.14
Q16	14.308	39	0	2.892	2.48	3.31
Q17	13.389	39	0	3.902	2.54	3.46
Q18	13.916	39	0	3.255	2.77	3.73
Q19	14.734	39	0	2.928	2.52	3.34
Q20	13.912	39	0	2.891	2.47	3.32
Q21	17.108	39	0	3.105	2.8	3.56
Q22	17.871	39	0	3.323	2.94	3.7
Q23	16.203	39	0	3.358	2.93	3.78
Q24	15.578	39	0	3.534	3.07	4
Q25	15.954	39	0	3.102	2.71	3.51

Research suggests that climate is supportive to augment the employees' motivation level hence making them work with extra zeal and efficiency (Brown & Leigh, 1996). Climate also being associated with safety, employees working in a safe climate feel themselves invulnerable to accidents and hence show better performance and more concentration on work (Hofmann & Stetzer, 1996).

Diversity & Organizational climate

Research supports that an organizational climate which is favorable for a diverse workforce, maintains an attractive environment for the incumbent. The work force can anticipate support and acceptance in that organization notwithstanding their diverse backgrounds, cultures and/or nationalities (Sheau-yuen Yeo, 2006). A favorable climate in educational institutions needs efforts from its faculty, staff, coordinators, management, students and parents. Research explores that organizations offering a fair and multicultural climate usually not only welcome diversity but also acknowledge and celebrate it at their workplaces.

Research Methodology and Design

This is a quantitative research which is done with the help of primary data through surveys. Literature review provides a strong support for the hypothesis of this study. Employees perception and image about the organization is known as organizational climate. In this study, organizational climate was measured and analyzed in a college of Sultanate of Oman (Ibri College of technology, Ibri) in which a diverse workforce is serving. On the other hand organizational climate was also measured in a Pakistani university (COMSATS University of Science and Technology, Lahore) where homogeneous workforce is working that is only from Pakistan. Close ended questions were used in a structured questionnaire to measure organizational climate (employees' perception & image about organization) in both educational institutions in two different countries. Random sampling method was considered as the best method for data collection so that all departments of both institutions would be covered. Totally 92 surveys were distributed for data collection but **85 surveys** were taken under study which were completed in all aspects. As statistical tools **descriptive analysis and T- test** were used for data analysis. After careful study of previous researches in credible Journals, researchers selected five factors to measure organizational climate of both educational institutes in this study. Following are the factors to measure organizational climate:

Work involvement, Supervisory support, Innovation and Flexibility, Clarity of Organizational goals, Welfare

Validity and reliability

The validity of the factors which are used to measure organizational climate, Sheau-yuen Yeo (2006) conducted several interviews in many organizations from middle management to senior level to explore the validity of these factors through questioning on employees' behavior, organizational practices, organizational structure and different human resource issues. The results of those interviews were also verified with the help of documents available in the various departments of organizations. Intensive rating of those interviews provided sufficient evidence of validity of these factors to measure organizational climate.

Then reliability of the factors was measured with the help of Cronbach's Alpha, interclass correlation coefficient (ICC) and average agreements are provided in the following table.

The value of Cronbach's Alpha for the data collected from Ibri College of Technology is 0.951 which is acceptable.

The reliability value of the data collected from COMSATS University OF Information Technology, Lahore, Pakistan is 0.946 that is in the range of a well accepted level.

Data Analysis and Findings

The study was conducted through a comprehensive statistical analysis with the tools of descriptive analysis and T-test. The detailed analysis and the findings under those analyses are given below:

Descriptive analysis:

A comprehensive descriptive analysis was done to analyze organizational climate in both the institution in this study. Total 85 Surveys (45+40)

Frequency distribution of Ibri College of Technology (Sultanate of Oman) is given in below table, it has an ethnically diverse work force. There were 36 expatriate respondents and only 9 were local respondents.

The frequency distribution of COMSATS University is given below, it has no diverse work force in terms of ethnicity. All employees are local and here, it can be seen that all 40 respondents were local and there was no employee from any other nationality.

Following table shows that 4 factors have very many favorable results. Employees perceive positive about Involvement, supervisory support, welfare and clarity of goals. The highest agreement comes in supervisory support and welfare represent highest values of 70% and 70% respectively. The exception is only innovation and flexibility that has a very low level of agreement i.e 39% which is highlighted in red color.

Below is the descriptive analysis of COMSATS University. Here one can observe that almost all factors do not have positive values for employees agreement for organizational climate. Maximum disagreement was found in Supervisory support and welfare which is 57% and 58%. Another factor Clarity of goals is relatively balanced values but even then it's more tending towards disagreement. Here exception is again innovation and flexibility that has a value of 48% (highlighted in red color) for agreement which reflects employees' satisfaction from innovation and flexibility that they enjoy in COMSATS University.

T-Test Analysis:

Following is t-test analysis of the data collected from Ibri College of Technology. The result in below table shows 0.00 levels of significance in all questions that allows us for acceptance of the data for current study. In addition to that, most of the questions carry t value in the range of 11 and 14 that is also a positive sign to accept the data for results.

Conclusion:

The data analysis of this study verified the results of many previous studies being done on ethnicity and perception of employees about organizational culture. After a detailed descriptive analysis and t-test analysis it is concluded that employees have better perception about the organizational culture in Ibri College of Technology (where ethnic diversity is prevailing) as compared to COMSATS Institute of Information Technology where we find faculty without any ethnic diversity. Further it is studied that faculty members of Ibri College of Technology have much positive perception for supervisory support and welfare. Here employee also feel better work environment in with a diverse workforce. Whereas in

COMSATS Institute of Information Technology these three factors do not put that much positive perception for the employees and these three factors have relatively lower values of satisfaction in the work environment without diversity.

Innovation and flexibility is the only exceptional factor of organizational climate for which COMSATS Institute of Information Technology employees are more satisfied than the employees of Ibr College of Technology. This demonstrates that Ibr College of Technology employees do not find more room for innovation and flexibility even having a diversified ethnic workforce. That may be due to controlled management by the higher authorities. This can be verified through another research work on this topic.

It is concluded that ethnic diversity present an organizational culture that exhibit better perception of employees by increased satisfaction in the factors of work involvement, helpful supervisory support, welfare for faculty and clarity of goals. Employees working in an organization with homogeneous workforce do not perceive organizational culture more favorable and the rating of organizational climate remains low there. Employees working with ethnic diversity have more respect, consideration and admiration for colleagues, bosses and subordinates that causes improves organizational climate. Hence ethnic diversity assist is providing a better organizational culture that can lead to higher motivation & satisfaction of employees to work with efficiency and effectively to achieve organizational goals.

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