

Organizational Climate: Perceptions of Women Extension Personnel in Kerala

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ABSTRACT

Reducing gender inequalities in access to productive resources and services is the need of the hour. The present study has been done to understand the perceived organizational climate of women extension personnel. The study was conducted in the state of Kerala. A sample of 210 respondents was studied. Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA for organizational climate showed that Agricultural Officers, Agricultural Assistants and VFPCCK staffs were significantly different from each other. Further two-way analysis using Friedman test showed that there was a statistically significant difference among different dimensions identified under organizational climate for all the three groups with a higher mean rank for cohesion followed by positive climate and a lower mean rank for gender discrimination.

Key Words: *Organizational climate; Gender discrimination; Women Extension Personnel;*

Women comprise on an average 43 per cent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries, ranging from 20 per cent in Latin America to 50 per cent in Eastern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Reducing gender inequalities in access to productive resources and services could produce an increase in yields on women's farms of between 20 per cent and 30 per cent, which could raise agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 per cent to 4 per cent (FAO, 2011). Hence, the need of the hour is men and women farmers to have access to the information, skills and tools they need to improve their yields. For achieving this extension personnel, especially women extension personnel need to be motivated in order to perform their duties effectively which is highly dependent on several factors of which organizational climate is the most important one. Organizational climate describes the personality of the organization and influences the motivation and behavior of the members of the organization. Organizational climate is the result of interaction among an organization's structure, systems, culture, leader behavior and employees' psychological needs (Pareek,

1989). It depends on the perception of the individuals in the organization about organizational working and problems therein (Hellriegel and Slocum, 1974; Pareek, 2002). In this context, the present study has been undertaken to understand the perceived organizational climate of women extension personnel in Kerala.

Organizational climate has generally been defined as an individual's perception of his work environment, and individual perception is often argued as to affect individual behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Organizations are most complex social structure because of their dynamic nature. The relationship between the organizations and people is however interdependent in nature (Kerego & Mthupha, 1997), and both have a synergistic impact on one another's ability to achieve positive results. Research proved that job satisfaction doesn't happen in isolation, but it depends on organizational variables such as structure, size, pay (Zagenczyk & Murrell, 2009), working conditions and leadership (Dimitriades 2007) which constitute organizational climate. Organizational Climate (OC) is

a fundamental construct in work and organizational settings, as it provides an appropriate context for studying organizational behaviour, allowing the exploration of individual and group behaviours (Asif, 2011).

Mathew (2008) opined that organizational climate is a relatively enduring quality of the internal environment that is experienced by its members, influences their behaviour and can be described in terms of the value of a particular set of characteristics of the organization. It may be possible to have as many climates as there are people in the organization when considered collectively, the actions of the individuals become more meaningful for viewing the total impact upon the climate and determining the stability of the work environment. A study conducted by Hunt and Ivegard (2007) in government employment agency in Sweden found that organizational climate is related to work efficiency. Schulte et al., (2006) reported that organizational climate emerges from the idiosyncratic interpretations of the work environment when individuals within a particular unit share similar perceptions of the situation. Nasrudin, Ramayah and Yeoh (2006) indicated that organizational climate is a multidimensional construct and is comprised of five dimensions which were named inadequacy of rewards and planning, standards, structure, inadequacy of support and control.

According to Schnake (1983), the dimensions of organizational climate include participation and reward orientation, structure, warmth and support, standards and responsibility. Churchill et al., (1976) reported that organizational climate represents that workers' perceptions of his or her objective work situation, including the characteristics of the organization he or she works for and the nature of his or her relationship with other people while doing his or her job. Jianwei (2010) reported that organizational climate had significant main effects on organization effectiveness like staff members' organization commitment and collective identity.

Svyantek and Bott (2004) defined organizational culture as a set of shared values and norms held by employees that guide their interactions with peers, management and clients while organizational climate as more behaviourally oriented which represent employees' perceptions of organizational policies, practices and procedures, and subsequent patterns of interactions and

behaviours that support creativity, innovation, safety or service in the organization.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in the state of Kerala. Research design followed was *Expost -facto*. A sample comprising of women extension personnel from Kerala State Department of Agriculture and Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council Keralam (VFPCCK) were selected through stratified random sampling method. Sixty Agricultural Officers, 120 Agricultural Assistants and 30 VFPCCK personnel were represented the sample. Thus, a total of 210 extension personnel were studied.

The data were collected through administering questionnaire from respondents during office hours. The scale used by Jacobs, Bergen, and Korn (2000) was selected because of the fit with the instrument's psychometric properties for the present study. Self-report measures were used to obtain the data. Pilot study was conducted before the final data collection to pre-test the interview schedule. Data were subjected to descriptive statistics and non-parametric tests such as Kruskal-Wallis H test and Friedman test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results from the data obtained from pre-testing of organizational climate questionnaire indicated that the instrument is reliable for the situation. The Chronbach alpha obtained for the instrument was 0.892 (Table 1).

Table 1. Reliability of the variable

Variable	Chronbach alpha
Organizational Climate	0.892

Table 2. Comparison of Perception of Organizational Climate among Extension Personnel Based on Mean Ranks as per Kruskal-Wallis Test

Category	Mean Rank	Test Statistics	ρ -value
Agril. Officers	98.95		
Agril.Assistants	99.03	14.434	<0.01
VFPCCK Personnel	144.48		

Non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis H test was used to determine whether any difference lies between different groups. Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in perceived organizational climate between different groups, $\chi^2(2) = 14.434$, $\rho < 0.01$ with a mean rank of

98.95 for Agricultural Officers, 99.03 for Agricultural Assistants and 144.48 for VFPCCK personnel (Table 2). Hence, the results indicate that VFPCCK personnel perceive their organizational climate as more favourable than state department personnel.

Table 3. Dimensions of Organizational Climate among Agricultural Officers Based on Mean Ranks of Friedman Test

Dimensions of OC	Mean Ranks	Test statistics	ρ value
Positive Climate	4.29		
Cohesion	4.71		
Gender Discrimination	1.19	211.338	<0.01
Gender Insensitivity	2.28		
Sexual Harassment	2.53		

Further non-parametric Friedman test was used to determine whether any difference lies between different dimensions of organizational climate among agricultural officers. The test showed that there was a statistically significant difference among agricultural officers regarding different aspects of climate with, $\chi^2(4) = 211.338$, $\rho < 0.01$ (Table 3).

Table 4. Dimensions of Organizational Climate among Agricultural Assistants Based on Mean Ranks of Friedman Test

Dimensions of OC	Mean Ranks	Test statistics	ρ value
Positive Climate	4.21		
Cohesion	4.79		
Gender Discrimination	1.38	408.628	<0.01
Gender Insensitivity	2.24		
Sexual Harassment	2.38		

Non-parametric Friedman test was used to determine the difference between 5 dimensions identified under organizational climate of agricultural assistants. The test

showed that there was a statistically significant difference among agricultural assistants regarding different dimensions with, $\chi^2(4) = 408.628$, $\rho < 0.01$ (Table 4).

Similarly non-parametric Friedman test for VFPCCK personnel showed that there was a statistically significant difference regarding different dimensions of organizational climate with, $\chi^2(4) = 105.814$, $\rho < 0.01$ (Table 5).

Table 5. Dimensions of Organizational Climate among VFPCCK Personnel Based on Mean Ranks of Friedman Test

Dimensions of OC	Mean Ranks	Test statistics	ρ value
Positive Climate	4.05		
Cohesion	4.95		
Gender Discrimination	1.43	105.814	<0.01
Gender Insensitivity	2.23		
Sexual Harassment	2.33		

CONCLUSION

The study showed that perception of organizational climate among different groups of women extension personnel are significantly different with mean ranks of 98.95, 99.03 and 144.48 for agricultural officers, agricultural assistants and VFPCCK personnel respectively. Two way analysis of organizational climate using Friedman test for the three groups also found to be significantly different. Mean ranks obtained from non-parametric Friedman test indicated that cohesion followed by positive climate are the most important dimensions of organizational climate. Comparatively low mean rank for gender discrimination indicated that all the three groups perceive that gender based discriminations are not prevailing in the working environment.

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