Influence of the Emotional Climate on the Affective Organizational Commitment

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Abstract

The impact of emotional events have been much studied in diverse settings: school, home, prisons, sports, etc but only few researches in working settings. The emotional climate is the aggregated of perceptions a person has regarding the affective relationships with his/her environment. These perceptions impact the worker's attitudes and subsequent behaviors, according to the Affective Events Theory proposed by Weiss and Cropanzano.

An instrument was built using a qualitative approach to define the categories and a quantitative analysis of data collected in Peruvian services organizations. The validation process included the correlation of the instrument outcomes with the affective component of the Meyer and Allen model of Commitment, and the moderation effect of the emotional intelligence quotient measured under the Bar-On model.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter describes the intention and approach used to study the relationship between the emotional climate and the affective component of the organizational commitment, moderated by the emotional quotient of Peruvian service workers. The background of the problem, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the problem, and the nature of the study are developed here. Then the research questions and the theoretical framework that sustain the research are presented. The definition of terms, assumptions, limitations and delimitations, and a summary, close the chapter.

Background of the Problem

Organizational performance is based on the employees' decisions and behaviors. These behaviors are strongly influenced by the attitudes these persons carry on to the job, understanding attitude as a multi-component construct composed of three classes of evaluative responses: affective, cognitive, and conative (Mignonac & Herrbach, 2004). Then, being the attitudes strong influencers of behaviors, we can infer that affects (moods and emotions) are very important components to be considered when studying and explaining the behaviors in the workplace (Cropanzano, 2005). Moods are generalized affective states, and emotions more intense feeling specifically related to some event capable of disrupt our usual behavior because they are "…organized psychophysiological reactions to news about ongoing relationships with the environment" (Lazarus, 1991, p. 38). Notwithstanding the importance of the affects in the workplace this concept was not acknowledged until the 90's, influenced by the idea that emotional responses lead to

weak answers in human decisions (Loewenstein & Lerner, 2003). To concrete this approach, for instance, Simon (1947/1997) defined the concept of *bounded rationality* to recognize the limitations of human rational economic decisions, and, in the other side, he considered irrational the presence of emotions in this process, not only regarding the "economic man" but also with "his brother 'the administrative man'…" (1955, p. 99). Following that idea "economists as well as psychologists have mainly focused on cognitive constraints while neglecting to integrate the growing body of research on emotion which indicates that reason and emotion are interconnected" (Hanoch, 2002, p. 1). So the emerging behavioral decision theory, in late 60s did not considered emotions as a matter of interest when studying how human beings take decisions (Loewenstein & Lerner, 2003).

In opposition to the approach of ignoring the interrelationship between affects and reason, Mumby and Putnam considered that the power of emotions should be taken into account complementary to the way of knowing. "Researchers using the bounded rationality concept treat emotional experience (defined as the feelings, sensations, and affective responses to organizational situations) as a weak and handicapped appendage to reason, [and consequently] emotions are devaluated, trivialized, or treated as inappropriate at work" (1992, p. 471). So, as a reaction, they defined a new term, bounded *emotionality*, to extend the idea of a bounded rationality and accepted that "emotions can be analyzed systematically and should be included in models of organizational behavior and decision making" (Härtel, Zerbe & Ashkanasy, 2005, para.

7). So researchers began to devote a large interest in the role of affect in decision making and organizational behavior.

The many definitions of emotions all of them reflect the presence of several components in this complex process (Keltner & Lerner, 2003). So researchers have defined *affect* as a superior concept that encompasses all what we usually know as emotion. "The current broad conceptualization of affect incorporates… constructs such as mood, trait affect, specific emotions and emotional labor" (Barsade, Brief & Spataro, 2003, p. 5). Others consider that there are three different types of feelings, (a) those discrete, short lived *emotions*, like anger, surprise, etc.; (b) *moods* which are longer lasting feelings not necessarily related to an specific object, person or event, for instance sad, happy, etc.; and (3) dispositional or personality *traits* (Briner, 1999).

One application of the role of affects in the work environment is contained in the Meyer and Allen three-component model of organizational commitment, that is, in the construct that describes our decision to stay or not in an organization. This model affirm that in relationship to organizational commitment "there are three simultaneous mindsets encompassing affective, normative, and continuance organizational commitment" (Jaros, 2007, p.7). The affective commitment (AC) "[denotes] an emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization…" (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002, p. 20). Employees who show AC prefer to stay at the organization, with less absenteeism, performing better and showing good organizational citizenship behaviors (Meyer & Maltin, 2010). Meyer et al. (2002) studied the antecedents of the AC and found that work experiences and personal characteristics could

be drivers of that kind of commitment. Additionally it seems that the some dimensions of the organizational climate correlates with the AC (El-Kassar, Chams & Karkoulian, 2011). So personal characteristics and organizational climate are worth of being analyzed in relationship to get commitment from workers.

The concept of climate in the organizations is also a long time studied social construct that has revealed its usefulness. After all, "there appears to be some agreement on a climate approach to understanding organizational phenomena" (Schneider & Reicher, 1983, p. 25). Tagiuri (1968) defined climate in general as "the relatively enduring quality of the total environment that (a) is experienced by the occupants, (b) influences their behavior, and (c) can be described in terms of the values of a particular set of characteristics (or attributes) of the environment" (p. 25). When applied to an organization, Tagiuri notes that climate refers to the quality of the organization's internal environment, especially as experienced by the insider, but as also relevant to outsiders. But these researchers alert about two methodological issues. One is the multi-dimensional nature of the construct and the possibility, or not, of data aggregation. The multidimensional warning signals that there is not a unique climate but several climates in the organization, so it has to be very clear what climate is the research trying to figure out. The second issue is described as the question "how can we meaningfully aggregate individual's descriptions of their work environment so as to represent larger social units?" (p. 23). Then probably is not meaningful to correlate AC with the organizational climate as a whole; instead it should be done with an specific climate, such as the emotional climate.

By positive emotional climate, we mean an organizational environment where managers take into consideration the emotional needs and personal growth of employees and encourage the sharing of positive emotions. In that line one organizational emotional climate definition is "organizational environment where managers take into consideration the emotional needs and personal growth of employees and encourage the sharing of positive emotions" (Ozcelik, Langton, & Aldrich, 2008, p. 187). Yurtsever and De Rivera define emotional climate as "how a member of the organization perceives the feeling of the majority of its members in the situation constructed by the organization" (2010, p. 502). They designed and validated a questionnaire in Turkey but advise "to verify the factor structure of the questionnaire using larger samples, since [they used] less than four participants per item when at least five are desirable" (p. 512), and also "Further research is also encouraged in countries other than Turkey, since national culture may affect perceptions of the general feelings in organizational situations" (p. 512).

In terms of personal characteristics, one related construct directly related to affects is the emotional intelligence (EI), broadly described as how effectively deal with emotions (Geher & Renstrom, 2004). EI has been formally defined in multiple ways but there is certain kind of consensus around two types of definitions. One measures emotional traits defined as "a cluster of personality characteristics or non-cognitive abilities related to life success" (p. 7). The other type is based on mental or cognitive abilities not related to personality to recognize and express emotions. (MacCann, Matthews, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2004). Recognized as a trait based approach the Bar-On

model is defined as " a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands" (Bar-On, 2006, p. 3). The Bar-On Model of Emotional-Social Intelligence (ESI). This model is operationalized by the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) test producing five scores: intrapersonal, interpersonal, stress management, adaptability and general mood.

So it is remarkable to note that the organizational commitment defined by Meyer and Allen has been measured in many researches but mostly in USA settings, then there is a need to validate the cultural influences over that instrument. In the same vein the emotional climate measure of Yurtsever and De Rivera should be validated in other countries.

Statement of the Problem

The actual modern way of working and living makes people "… depend upon their workplaces for primary links for other people as well as for their social identity" (Jurkiewiz & Giacalone, 2004, p. 129). Organizational leaders need to know how to set up a positive and productive environment so to cope with the workers' emotional needs and expectations. This environment could make the difference between an affectively committed worker and one without intentions to stay. But without an objective measurement of that setting it is difficult to plan and control the effectiveness of the organization actions. So the objective of this research is to find a way to describe and compare the affective effects of different working setting over the workers, in terms of an emotional climate index. In this way organizations could monitor their effectiveness.

Until now it seems that only one attempt to present a valid instrument to characterize the

emotional climate (Yurtsever & De Rivera, 2010), but its design and validation suffered

from some limitations in terms of supporting the factor structure and considering the

influence of local cultural factors. Additionally, being the emotional climate a construct

formed by perceptions it is reasonable to think that the emotional intelligence of the

involved persons will attribute more or less importance to the same working experiences.

So these personality traits should be taken into account.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative correlational research study is to determine the

degree to which the emotional climate influences the affective commitment of Peruvian

service workers, controlled by the emotional intelligence of them. The independent

variables will be the emotional intelligence quotient reported by each worker and the

emotional climate index as perceived by each person. The dependent variable will be the

individual affective commitment score.

Significance of the Problem

Until now the emotional climate has been conceptualized in broad terms and

applied to a nation, schools, prisons, sporting persons, but not significatively to the

workplace. One of those studies collected the data sending a survey to small business

owners. The survey asked about the intentions they had to improve the emotional climate

and the consequences in performance (Ozcelik, Langton & Aldrich, 2001). The authors

did not developed neither validated an instrument that could be used in other settings. De

Rivera and Yutsever (2010) developed an instrument and validated it in four

organizations but the factor analysis was done with less than five participants per item. Additionally, as per the researches advise, "Further research is also encouraged in countries other than Turkey, since national culture may affect perceptions of the general feelings in organizational situations" (p. 512). Following that direction the emotional climate index defined by Yurtserver and De Rivera will be used as a starting point and validated or modified by a exploratory factor analysis.

The Affective Commitment has been used in some other places outside USA with mixed results. Meyer et al. (2002) reported cases in Korea and Turkey where when the questionnaire was back-translated, as is standard, the three-factor structure was not reproduced. Only when the items were adapted to the local cultures the original structure emerged. Ten years later Meyer et al. (2012) reported much more non USA studies but in Spanish only three in México and one in Spain. Then it is interesting to probe and refine that instrument in our culture.

Nature of the Study

The bases of the research will a constructivism position using empirical methods in a pragmatic implementation. It is assumed that the affective effects exists (ontology) and that it can be described by the human beings (epistemology). The research will try to describe how the working setting contributes to build the worker's perception of the affective characteristics (emotional climate) of his/her job.

The workers samples will be selected from people with no subordinates in service enterprises. In this way the multilevel effects of the social processes being researched will be controlled. In first phase the Yurtsever and De Rivera emotional climate instrument

will be validated. It will be translated and back-translated into Spanish. Then a pilot test will confirm the items are univocally understood and that they describe attributes a worker uses to describe the emotional influences of the environment. An exploratory factor analysis will be conducted to see if the three factor structure of the test, that is trust, hope, and security, is reproduced. If not, a new structured will be proposed.

In the second phase the data collected from the Spanish version of the Meyer y Allen test will be used to confirm the factor structure of affective, normative and continuance scores. Also the correlation between emotional climate and affective commitment will be analyzed. Being both phenomenon related to affects, a good correlation will be support the reliability of the emotional climate instrument. Finally the data collected from the Emotional Quotient Inventory will used to analyze its role in the Emotional Climate – Affective Commitment relationship.

Research Questions

The proposed research questions are:

1. Is the Yurtsever-De Rivera scale for measuring the Emotional Climate valid for Peruvian workers supporting the three factors trust, hope, and security?

2. Is there a significant relationship between workers' Emotional Climate, as measured by the Yurtsever-De Rivera scale, and the Affective Component of their Organizational Commitment, as measured by the Allen-Meyer model?

3. Is there a significant influence of the Emotional Quotient of the workers, as measured by the Bar-On model, moderating the perception of the Emotional Climate felt by them?

Hypothesis

The statistical null hypotheses derived from the research questions are:

Hypothesis 1a: The 28 variables of the Yurtsever-De Rivera model, when taken collectively, don't show significant correlations.

Hypothesis 1b The 28 variables of the Yurtsever-De Rivera model, when analyzed under a scree test, don't show enough loading to suggest a three factors structure.

Hypothesis 1c The resulting factors from the 28 variables of Yurtsever-De Rivera model, don't show enough internal consistency reliability.

Hypothesis 2. There is not a significant relationship between workers' Emotional Climate, as measured by the Yurtsever-De Rivera scale, and the Affective Component of their Organizational Commitment, as measured by the Allen-Meyer model.

Hypothesis 3a. There is not a significant influence of the overall Emotional Quotient Inventory of the workers moderating the perception of the Emotional Climate felt by them.

Hypothesis 3b. There is not a significant influence of the Intrapersonal scale of the Emotional Quotient of the workers moderating the perception of the Emotional Climate felt by them.

Hypothesis 3c. There is not a significant influence of the Interpersonal scale of the Emotional Quotient of the workers moderating the perception of the Emotional Climate felt by them.

Hypothesis 3d. There is not a significant influence of the Stress Management scale of the Emotional Quotient of the workers moderating the perception of the Emotional Climate felt by them.

Hypothesis 3e. There is not a significant influence of the Adaptability scale of the Emotional Quotient of the workers moderating the perception of the Emotional Climate felt by them.

Hypothesis 3f. There is not a significant influence of the General Mood scale of the Emotional Quotient of the workers moderating the perception of the Emotional Climate felt by them.

Theoretical Framework

This study will be based in the Affective Events Theory proposed by Weiss and Cropanzano in 1996. It will justify that work environmental conditions produce an accumulation of a succession of positive or negative affective events that leads to positive or negative affective states in employees that, in turn, precedes attitudinal and behavioral responses, (Ashkanasy, 2005). Based in that theoretical assumption and using a grounded theory approach a set of categories will be discovered and a questionnaire proposed to figure out the emotional climate.Taking into account that the study will use the grounded theory approach to arrive to a set of categories before the design of the instrument. In that sense the grounded theory methodologists (Charmaz, 2006) advise to delay the literature review "to avoid importing preconceived ideas and

imposing them on your work. Delaying the review encourages *you* to articulate your ideas" (cursives in the original) p. 165.

The consideration of the Bar-On model of Emotional Intelligence will test the influence of particular sensitivity to emotional events. This sensitivity could produce different perceptions of emotional climate from similar working events.

To confirm that we are measuring emotional reactions is appropriated to correlate the emotional climate results with a well known questionnaire, the Meyer and Allen survey for Commitment. This model established that a commitment to stay in the organization depends of three perceptions: affective, continuance and normative. It is an hypothesis to be tested that positive emotional climates produces affective commitments.

Assumptions

Emotions are short lived events of no more than a fraction of a second. As such are hard to articulate in a vivid and accurate report and it will be an obstacle to study its effects in the working attitudes. But what really affects attitudes and behaviors are the subsequent cognitive appraisal of the situation, or moods. This study will examine the mood that emotional events in the workplace produces and how much it affects the perception, positive or negative, of the working setting. So we assume that moods are more important to the emotional climate than the discrete emotions themselves.

Scope and Limitations

People interviewed could not express freely their perceptions and changes in their attitudes regarding the emotional events they lived. This study will be limited to a sample of workers who doesn't have subordinates and that reports to a first-line supervisor..Only

the influence of his/her supervisor (dyadic relationship) and the influence of the group will be considered. The impact of other levels will be controlled.

Summary

A way to use constructively the emotional capabilities of supervisors leading workers is making them aware of the impact they build in their subordinates. Emotional climate is the name for that impact and this study pretends to define and validate an instrument to characterize that climate.

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