Impacts of Department Climate on Job Satisfaction, and Organizational Commitment in Higher Education

Roseanne Foti, Jack Finney, Patricia Iyer, Elizabeth Creamer, Peggy Layne & Jaron Holmes

Introduction

- Organizational climate is the individual’s perceptions of the organization’s policies, practices and procedures, both formal and informal (Carr, Schmidt, Ford, & DeShon, 2003; Hulin, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 1996).
- It has been demonstrated to be associated with a variety of important outcomes at the individual level, including job satisfaction, productivity, and organizational commitment (for a review, see Carr et al., 2003).
- Several studies of men and women have found that supportiveness, teamwork, and positive treatment from coworkers and superiors were positively related to job satisfaction (Joyce, Slocum, & Von Glinow, 1982).
- However, while the concept of climate has been proposed as important in the context of higher education (Allen, 2003), it has not been well researched.
- Settles, Cortina, Malley, & Stewart (2006) found that women scientist who reported a more positive department climate described themselves as more productive. August & Waltman (2004) found that department climate was a significant predictor of job satisfaction for women faculty.
- The purpose of the current study was to develop a scale of climate at the departmental level in higher education and to then test a theoretical model involving climate, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment using a sample of faculty from a large university.

Conceptual Model

Method

- In fall 2008, AdvanceVT conducted its second Faculty Work-Life Survey, a follow up to an initial survey in spring 2005. The purpose of both surveys was to assess faculty perceptions of their overall job satisfaction and various attributes of the work environment.
- A link to the on-line survey was sent via email to all full-time instructional and research faculty.
- A total of 700 tenured and tenure-track faculty responded to the survey, representing a response rate of 53%.
- All response were made on likert type scales anchored from 1= Strongly Disagree to 4=Strongly Agree.
- Based on an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) of the 2005 Faculty Work-Life Survey, we created a measure of Department Climate consisting of two scales. The first scale measured perceptions of department leadership (14 items) and the second scale measured perceptions of equity/fairness (3 items). In addition we created a measure of Job Satisfaction (3 items) and Organizational Commitment (1 item).

Results

- Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to assess the validity of the previously developed scales measuring Department Climate (Department Leadership and Equity/Fairness), Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment. Our hypothesized measurement model was compared to a null latent model (i.e. model with no correlations among factors).
- The measurement model fit the data fairly well and significantly better than the null latent model. Chi-square = 2422.90, p <.01; GFI = .77; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .12; Chi-square difference (6) = 855.7, p <.001. The scale items are presented in the next panel.

Discussion

- Departmental climate appears to play an important role in affecting the job satisfaction of faculty members. Additionally, departmental climate, by virtue of the positive relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment, can have a positive impact on faculty members intentions to remain in their current role.
- Future Directions should investigate the antecedents of departmental climate. Specifically, what are the “levers” of departmental climate? How can departmental climate be improved?

Acknowledgments

AdvanceVT would like to thank the National Science Foundation (Grant #02304916) and Virginia Tech. Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation or Virginia Tech.