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Organizational Climate Factors of Successful and Not Successful Implementations of Workforce Innovations in Voluntary Child Welfare Agencies

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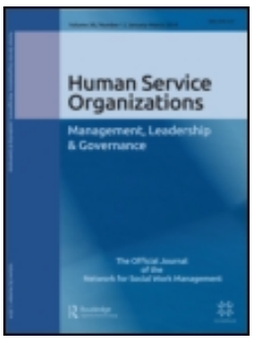

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Organizational Climate Factors of Successful and Not Successful Implementations of Workforce Innovations in Voluntary Child Welfare Agencies

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This study advances research on implementing innovations in child welfare organizations, confirming the association between a positive organizational climate and successful change initiative implementation. Administrators and child welfare workers from six agencies were surveyed using independent samples t-and OLS regressions. The organizational climate dimensions found significant were organization, job and role, indicating the three agencies that fully implemented a change initiative enjoyed a more positive organizational climate. The organization dimension was also significant for administrators, indicating a more positive climate perception than workers. Supervisor dimension was not significant, indicating no association whether or not the change initiative was implemented.

Keywords: child welfare, organizational climate, workforce change initiative

BACKGROUND

In building the capacity of the child welfare workforce to serve children, youth and families, we cannot divorce the workforce from the workplace. To be effective in serving vulnerable children and families, child welfare workers need healthy, well-functioning organizations. Even the most resilient, well-trained worker requires an organization that supports them professionally. Subsequently, organizational factors, and efforts to support organizational change, have become a major focus in child welfare workforce research.

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Implementation

Research shows that the nature of agency climate is a fundamental feature involved in organizational change. Organizational climate is associated with worker performance and the ability of the agency to achieve successful client outcomes (Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998; Gutierrez, GlenMaye & Delois, 1995; Wagner, van Reyk & Spence, 2001). Organizations with a stronger innovation climate facilitate employee's innovative behavior (Yu, Yu, & Yu, 2013). In particular, Glisson and Hammelgarn (1998) found that organizational climate (including role conflict, cooperation, role clarity, and personalization) was the primary predictor of positive service outcomes, including improved psychosocial functioning, and a significant predictor of service quality.

In addition, a number of studies link organizational climate factors to job satisfaction (Claiborne et al., 2011; Ellett, 2009; Freund, 2005; Parker et al., 2003). Decreased role clarity, job importance, job autonomy, and job challenge climate factors have been found to have a negative relationship to job satisfaction (Baltes, Zhdanova & Parker, 2009), which in turn impacts worker retention (Freund, 2005).

More recent studies identified the need for a strong organizational climate for implementing innovations in child welfare (Hurlburt, Aarons, Fettes, Willging, Gunderson & Chaffin, 2014; Williams & Glisson, 2014). These studies highlight that significant guidance is required for change initiatives to be successfully implemented. Concurrently, a number of frameworks have emerged that guide innovation implementation and research (Barbee, Christensen, Antle, Wandersman, & Cahn, 2011; Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005; Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998; Greenhalgh, Robert, Macfarlane, Bate, & Kyriakidou, 2004; Proctor, et al., 2011).

Greenhalgh and associates' (2004) model "Considering the Determinants of Diffusion, Dissemination, and Implementation of Innovations" was developed from an extensive multidisciplinary literature review addressing how innovation can be sustained in the delivery of services and organizations. This implementation framework identifies the process of adoption of innovation throughout all stages of an innovation. It is not a smooth process. The stages are: assess readiness for change and organization antecedents; assess organizational culture and climate; identify workforce innovation as the medium for change; conduct adoption, diffusion and assimilation; conduct implementation; and achieve organizational change. Charles Glisson's research using the ARC model found changing the organizational culture and climate to be an important factor for improved child welfare performance (Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998).

Barbee and colleagues provided the "Getting to Outcomes" implementation framework for ensuring all areas to support changes in public child welfare practice were addressed (Barbee, Christensen, Antle, Wandersman, & Cahn, 2011; Pipkin, Sterrett, Antle, & Christensen, 2013). The framework's 10 steps are: identify needs and resources; set goals; determine the practice to meet the need(s); assess actions to fit the organization; create and implement a plan to develop organizational capacity within the current context; conduct process evaluation to assess implementation fidelity; conduct outcome evaluation to determine if desired results are achieved; conduct continuous quality improvement; and take steps to ensure sustainability. Proctor and associates conceptualized for research eight implementation outcome measures of: acceptability, adoption, appropriateness, feasibility, fidelity, implementation cost, penetration, and sustainability (Proctor, et al., 2011).

Fixen and associates (2005) established the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) framework for implementing innovations. They posit that implementation moves forward through six predictable stages, each of which addresses important goals that serve to support the next stage. These stages of implementation are exploration and adoption, program installation, initial implementation, full operation, innovation and sustainability.

A Study of Organizational Change

This article reports on one part of a larger research project, a comprehensive workforce intervention supported by the Children's Bureau that targets not-for-profit agencies serving children and families in the public child welfare system. The intervention is informed by Learning Organization theory and practice, which provides a coherent framework. Learning Organization principles include: building a shared vision; fostering leadership; employing solution-based, inquiry communication; focusing on team learning; and implementing participatory-based decisions.

The project collaborated with participating agencies for approximately 18 months to address a substantial change initiative. The required criteria for the change initiative were a workforce challenge or opportunity having an organization-wide impact. The criteria were intentionally broad to allow agency leaders to identify a change initiative project that would address the unique workforce needs of their agency. All change initiatives represented a broad range of systems changes related to the workforce and included the following: the design of an employee recruitment and retention system to attract and retains appropriate staff; implementation of a single evidenced-based practice model across multiple agency partners; development & implementation of an agency-wide, value-based employee performance review; and developing the infrastructure for implementing, training and disseminating an agency specific evidenced-based practice outcome system.

An agency design team consisting of managers, supervisors and line staff were given authority to develop strategies and implement the change. The grant provided a facilitator with expertise in organizational development to work closely with the design team in implementing the workforce change initiative. Facilitators were guided by the project's four phase model: The first phase is exploring the change initiative, which initiates a communication and assessment processes with agency stakeholders. The second phase is 'solution and planning' in which the design team agrees to strategies for ensuring successful implementation. The third phase is 'implementation'. Strategies are executed during this phase. The fourth phase is 'evaluation and stabilization'. Strategies and implementation efforts are evaluated for intended and unintended effects, needed adjustments, and embedding innovations as an ongoing function of the agency's operations.

The research presented here focuses on understanding the relationship of organizational climate to innovation implementation for private child welfare workers in non-governmental organizations. Specifically, we ask, does the organizational climate differ between those that successfully implement a change initiative and those that do not? We employed NIRN framework stages to assess if agencies successfully implemented their change initiative. Three agencies were identified as successfully implementing the change initiative and three were identified as not being successful. The successful agencies completed all NIRN stages. Those that were not successful did not achieve full operation, innovation and sustainability. Hypothesis 1: Successful implementation of a change initiative is associated with a more positive organizational climate. Hypothesis 2: Administrator job position is associated with a more positive perception of the organizational climate.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This study employed a pre-post, longitudinal design comparing three agencies that completed the implementation of a change initiative to three that did not. The total sample consisted of 870 employees, including managers, child welfare workers, educators, and support staff. This represents 83 percent of all employees across the six agencies that completed the baseline survey. Of those, 65 percent responded to the follow-up survey. All were employed at voluntary child welfare agencies in a northeastern state. These are not-for-profit agencies under contract to county public child

welfare agencies to provide community and residential services. A sub-sample of 209 child welfare administrators, supervisors, social workers, caseworkers, case planners and childcare workers was extracted for this study.

Data Collection

Institutional Review Boards of two universities approved the protocol for the protection of research subjects. Staff at each agency were asked to attend one of several meetings offered and voluntarily complete the survey. Employees in an administration role were surveyed separately to allay concerns of confidentiality and possible bias. To protect the identity of study participants, each individual was assigned a survey number at the first data collection, and the individual's name was obtained separately. The follow-up data collection included only those who completed the baseline survey and remained employed at the agencies.

Methods and Measures

Independent samples t-tests were used to measure significant organizational climate differences between agencies implementing and not implementing their change initiative, as well as perceived climate differences between administrators and non-administrators. Administrators were defined as Executive Director/CEO, program director, manager, and department head. Individuals in these positions provide organizational direction and have fiscal responsibilities. Non-administrators ensure service delivery quality and effectiveness. OLS regressions were completed for each of the four Psychological Organizational Climate dimensions as a dependent variable. Stata 12.1 (StataCorp, 2011) was used to conduct the analysis.

Parker et al. (2003) developed the Psychological Climate Survey by modifying James and James psychological climate theory that consisted of five domains (James & Jones, 1974; James & Sells, 1981). The five domains are job characteristics, role characteristics, leadership characteristics, social characteristics, and organizational attributes. Parker et al. do not include James' social characteristics. The dimensions of role and job are essentially the same. Parker's supervisor dimension and organization attributes are similar to James' leadership characteristics and organizational dimension.

The Parker et al. Psychological Climate Survey has four dimensions, each comprising three subsales, measuring employee's perception of the organizational climate. A total of forty-eight items are measured on a 5-point Likert scale with items ranging from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree. The dimension compositions are as follows:

1. Role Dimension includes the ambiguity, conflict and overload sub-scales. Ambiguity is operationalized as: unclear authority for decision-making, unclear goals and objectives, and unclear job responsibilities and expectations. Conflict is operationalized as: rules and regulations interfere with doing a good job, workers must do things against their better judgment, too many people are directing the worker, and the worker is held responsible for things they have no control. Overload is operationalized as: more work than workers can do, the amount of work interferes with doing a good job, and workers are constantly under too much pressure.
2. Job Dimension includes the importance, autonomy and challenge sub-scales. Importance is operationalized as: people outside the organization are affected by how workers do their job, the job is important to the workers' team functioning, and the work makes a meaningful contribution and is highly important. Autonomy is operationalized as: the freedom to decide how the job is done, control is assigned so that the worker has authority to make decisions in the work area, the worker decides how best to do the job, and has freedom to complete

assignments without over supervision. Challenge is operationalized as: the job requires a wide range of skills and effort to do it well, it challenges workers' abilities, and workers use their full knowledge and skills.

3. Organization Dimension includes the innovation, justice and support sub-scales. Innovation is operationalized as: workers are encouraged to develop ideas and try new ways of doing the job, improve on their boss's methods, and find new ways around old problems. Justice is operationalized as: decisions about worker jobs are made fairly, with concerns being heard, and accurate and complete information is collected before decisions are made. Support is operationalized as: the organization shows concern for the wellbeing and general satisfaction of workers, as well as their opinions.
4. Supervisor Dimension includes the trust and support, goal emphasis, and work facilitation sub-scales. Trust and support is operationalized as: the supervisor treats workers with respect, listens to problems and cares about workers' satisfaction and opinions. Goal emphasis is operationalized as: supervisors emphasize high stands of performance, and set and emphasize the importance of measurable goals for performance and improvement. Work facilitation is operationalized as: supervisors demonstrate how to improve performance, model working hard, and help workers solve job-related problems to complete work on time.

RESULTS

Description of the Sample

The majority of the respondents were direct care workers, which represented supervisors, social workers, caseworkers, case planners and childcare workers (n = 125; 59.5%). Administrators, which include upper and middle managers, were 40.5 percent (n = 85) of the sample. The difference in age between administrators and direct care workers was statistically significant ($t = 4.1$; df = 201; $p = 0.000$). Administrators were on average 7 years older (mean = 44.9 years) than direct care workers (mean = 37.2 years). Fifty-six percent (n = 119) were from agencies that did not implement the change initiative; 43.3 percent of the sample implemented the change initiative.

As displayed in Table 1, the majority of the respondents were female (n = 141; 68.2%). The average age of respondents was 40.3years (sd = 12.6 years). The workers in this sample were predominantly white (n = 171; 82.6%). In terms of education, over half (n = 117; 57.1%) held non-professional degrees while almost a quarter (n = 51; 24.9%) held a BSW or MSW. The remainder, 18.1% (n = 37) held other graduate degrees. The largest group of workers (n = 40; 21.6%) had a salary between $35,000 and $45,000 per year while the next largest group (n = 40; 21.6%) made over $50,000. As would be expected, 90% of those earning over $50,000 were administrators ($X^2 = 84.1$; df = 5; $p = 0.000$). Household income for the workers was higher and more variable with the largest group of workers having household incomes of greater than $70,000 per year (n = 63; 38.2%) while the next largest group (n = 18; 10.9%) had a total household income between $25,001 and $30,000.

For nearly two-thirds of the sample (n = 139; 63.4%), this was their first job in child welfare, but for the majority (n = 132, 66.3%), child welfare had not been their first choice of fields in which to work. Still, almost two-thirds (n = 126; 63.6%) would make the same decision to take their current job if they could turn back the clock. The largest group of respondents (n = 122; 58.9%) indicated that they thought about leaving "some of the time." A larger proportion of direct care workers (n = 86; 70.0%) thought of leaving compared to less than half (n = 36; 42.9%) of the administrators ($X^2 = 15.1$; df = 2; $p = 0.000$). This is important to note because while actual turnover data was not collected from the agency, the intent to leave measure does predict turnover (See Auerbach, Zeitlan, Lawrence, Claiborne & McGowan, 2014).

TABLE 1
Demographic Description of Sample (n = 209)

	n	%	*mean*	*sd*
Change Initiative Status				
Implemented Change	90	43.30		
Not Implemented Change	119	56.70		
Job Position				
Administrators	85	40.50		
Direct Care	125	59.50		
Gender				
Female	141	68.45		
Male	65	31.55		
Race/Ethnicity				
African-American	23	11.11		
African	1	0.48		
Caribbean	3	1.45		
Hispanic/Latino(a)	4	1.93		
White	171	82.61		
Native American	1	0.48		
Other	4	1.93		
Highest Level of Education				
Non-professional	117	57.07		
BSW/MSW	51	24.88		
Graduate degree (non-social work)	37	18.05		
Current Salary				
$25,000 or less	17	9.19		
$25,001 – $30,000	38	20.54		
$30,001 – $35,000	35	18.92		
$35,001 – $45,000	40	21.62		
$45,001 – $50,000	15	8.11		
More than $50,000	40	21.62		
Age			40.33	12.58

TABLE 2
Means by Dimension of Agencies Implementing and Not Implementing a Change Initiative

	Implemented		*Not Implemented*	
Domain	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Role	3.47**	0.58	3.23	0.65
Job	3.86	0.50	3.89	0.51
Organization	3.39	0.64	3.27	0.78
Supervision	4.00	0.69	3.86	0.74

**$p < .01$.

Implementation and Role Association to Organizational Climate

Table 2 displays the means and standard deviations for the four Parker dimensions between agencies that did or did not implement the change initiative. A higher mean for a dimension represents a perception of a more positive climate. Except for the *job* dimension, the means for the agencies implementing are higher. The only statistically significant difference was for the *role* dimension $t = 2.7$; df = 205; $p = 0.008$).

TABLE 3
Comparison of Means by Domain of Administrators and Non-Administrators

	Administrators		*Non-Administrators*	
Domain	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Role	3.34	0.63	3.33	0.63
Job	4.09***	0.41	3.73	0.51
Organization	3.53***	0.72	3.18	0.69
Supervision	3.99	0.69	3.87	0.74

***p < .001.

TABLE 4
Regression Models: Outcomes are Climate Domains; Predictors are *Implemented* and *Administrators*

	Implemented					*Administrators*						*Model*	
Domain	*Coef*	*SE*	t	p	*95% CI*	*Coef*	*SE*	t	p	*95% CI*	*F*	*Significance*	R^2
Role	0.245	0.89	2.75	0.007	0.069–0.421	0.059	0.090	0.65	0.515	−0.119–0.237	3.77	0.025	0.026
Job	0.055	0.68	0.80	0.424	−0.079–0.189	0.369	0.069	5.36	0.000	0.233–0.505	14.43	0.000	0.115
Organization	0.199	0.10	1.97	0.050	−0.000–0.398	0.392	0.102	3.83	0.000	0.190–0.593	8.03	0.000	0.064
Supervision	0.181	0.10	1.75	0.081	−0.023–0.385	0.166	0.104	1.59	0.114	−0.039–0.372	2.29	0.104	0.012

Table 3 displays the means and standard deviations on the four climate dimensions between administrators and non-administrators. The mean scores on all four dimensions were higher for administrators. There was a statistically significant difference for the *job* ($t = 5.3$; df = 205; $p = 0.000$) and *organization* ($t = 3.5$; df = 204; $p = 0.000$) dimensions.

Table 4 displays the results of four OLS regressions; one regression was completed for each of the Parker dimensions as a dependent variable. Each model included *implemented* and *administrator* as dummy variables. *Implemented* was coded as 1 = implemented and 0 = non-implemented. *Administrator* was coded as 1 = administrator and 0 = non-administrator. The column labeled "coef " is a unit increase in the dimension when both *implemented* and *administrator* equals one. The column labeled "SE" is the standard error of the coefficient; the column labeled "p" is the statistical significance of the coefficient; and finally the column labels "95% CI" is the 95% confidence interval of the coefficient. The column labeled "F" is a measure of the statistical significance of the model. The "Model Sig" is the significance of the "F."

For the *role* dimension, the *implemented* coefficient was statistically significant with a $p = 0.0007$. The coefficient was significant indicating that agencies that implemented their intervention had increased role climate. *Administrator* did not have a statistically significant coefficient. The overall model was significant with a p-value = 0.025.

For the *job* dimension, the implementation of the intervention was not statistically significant. Unlike the role dimension the coefficient of .369 for administrators was significant ($p = 0.000$). The coefficient is positive indicating that being an administrator increases with the *job* climate dimension.

For the *organization* dimension, both covariates, *implemented* and *administrator* were statistically significant. The coefficient for *implemented* was .199 with a p-value of 0.05. The positive coefficient indicates that agencies that had implemented interventions had a higher level with *organization climate dimension*. Likewise, for administrators the positive coefficient of .392 ($p = 0.000$) indicates that climate perception with the organization increased with being an administrator. The overall model was significant (F = 8.03; $p = 0.000$).

For the *supervision* model, neither *implemented* nor *administrator* were statistically significant. Not surprisingly, the overall model was non-significant.

DISCUSSION

This study advances research on implementing innovations in child welfare organizations. Findings related to the first hypothesis was confirmed that having a significantly more positive climate allows change initiatives to be implemented more easily in these voluntary child welfare agencies. This finding is corroborated by other research demonstrating a positive relationship between innovative organizational climate and perceived organizational innovation (Rasulzada & Dackert, 2009; Williams & Glisson, 2014). Specifically in our study three of the four organizational climate dimensions were significant, *organization, job* and *role*. The organization dimension was also significant for administrators, indicating they have a more positive perception of the organizational climate than direct care workers, which supports the second hypothesis. The organization dimension consists of three sub-scales: perceptions of the organization's innovation, justice and support. Role climate dimension consists of three sub-scales: ambiguity, conflict, and overload. Job climate dimension consist of three sub-scales: importance, autonomy and challenge.

Organizational environments of innovation, fairness and support are important factors in initiating change in agencies. Innovation is the ability of an organization to adopt or implement new ideas, processes, or products successfully (Hurley & Hult, 1998). Perceptions of a work environment being less supportive and unfair arouse employee dissatisfaction, leading to high turnover rates among child welfare employees. Factors related to high turnover include discontent with contingent rewards, high caseloads, paperwork demands, quality of supervision, and pay (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2003; Auerbach, McGowan, Ausberger, Strolin-Goltzman, & Schudrich, 2010; Boudrias, Desrumaux, Gaudreau, Nelson, Brunet, & Savoie, 2011; Zlotnik, DePanfilis, Daining, & Lane, 2005). Further, high turnover interrupts the relationship between workers and the children and families, which can have negative outcomes. These include lengthening the time for children to attain permanency, interrupting home visits to assess child safety, and possibly re-traumatizing children who have already experienced significant disruptions in forming trusting relationships (Flower, McDonald, & Sumski, 2005; Strolin-Goltzman, Kollar, & Trinkle, 2010).

The job dimension was significant for administrators, also supporting the second hypothesis. This dimension involves the job being meaningful and important; having autonomy and authority to make decisions; and using full knowledge and skills. These findings indicate administrators have a more positive perception than direct care workers. These findings are not surprising since employees operating at administrative levels are given a wider scope of authority and empowerment. Empowerment, defined to include job importance and autonomy, was identified as the mechanism operating in organizational climate that influence individual attitudes and behaviors (Lee, Weaver, & Hrostowski, 2011). Administrators in both groups, successful and not successful implementation, are empowered to call for innovation in their respective agencies. Consequently, it appears that successful implementation is not associated with administrator authority. We know that successful agency-wide implementation requires employees to participate in the change process. A more salient relationship to successful implementation than administrative authority may be administrators' approaches and behaviors toward employees during the innovative process.

The supervisor dimension was not significant for either hypothesis. It includes employees feeling their supervisor is trustworthy and supportive; provides specific goals for work accomplishment and performance; and assists in improving performance and solving job-related problems. Therefore, there was no impact on the perception of supervision whether or not the change initiative was implemented. In addition, administrators and direct staff had similar perceptions of supervision. Implementing innovations requires a coherent organization-wide support that marshals exceptional

interactions. Having supervisor support may alleviate some of the difficulties with implementing change initiatives, yet it may be that the conceptualization and execution of innovation implementation realigns employees' priorities. The benefits of existing supervision may be assumed during innovation, and the organizational, job and role dimensions associated with implementation may supersede the one-to-one supervision relationship.

To summarize, administrators and child welfare workers from the agencies that successfully implemented their change initiatives reported having a significantly more positive organizational climate. Administrators desiring to implement change initiatives can create a positive organizational climate by being attentive to the organizational, role and job dimensions. These factors go beyond the boundaries of direct supervision to include child welfare workers' agency-wide perspectives. Essential is creating a supportive environment in which employees feel their opinions are heard, decisions are made fairly with full information, and leaders impart a sense of concern and investment in employees. Administrators generate the foundation for an innovative environment by providing workers with a sense of security, recognition for accomplishments, clarity in job responsibilities, autonomy within their sphere of authority, and a creative atmosphere. Individual and organizational innovation engages employees in discussions and fosters a work environment that sustains learning and innovation. Organizations having such innovative capacity are more successful in responding to their environments with improved performance and outcomes.

Limitations

There are several limitations to the existing research. First, 35% of those eligible to participate in the study at the post-implementation measurement, did not do so. For what reasons these workers did not participate is unknown. It is unclear to what degree workers who chose to participate and did not choose to participate differed. That is, a larger sample at post-implementation could have led us to different results. Despite this, the current study supports previous research findings.

Another limitation is that all six sites were voluntary agencies; that is, these were all private agencies in one state under contract to provide child welfare services. The current findings, then, could not be generalized to public agencies as previous research has indicated that public and private agencies have different workforce characteristics (Auerbach, McGowan, Augsberger, Strolin-Goltzman, & Schudrich, 2010). Therefore, we recommend replicating this study in a sample of public child welfare workers.

Finally, while we found significant relationships between administrators and whether innovations were successfully implemented and various aspects of the psychological climate of the organizations, the relationships we uncovered are not causal. More research is needed to determine the directionality of these relationships and the degree to which climate factors specifically drive successful innovation in child welfare.

CONCLUSIONS & PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

This study offers several lessons for social work practice with organizations, especially the importance of understanding the impact of organizational climate at different levels of the workforce.

The role of organizational support, discussed above, is a key finding for social work managers and organizational leaders. Judgments of organizational support and fairness are not strictly rational or economical but psychological and heuristic. Perceptions of support occur if the organization shows concern for the wellbeing and general satisfaction of workers, as well as their opinions. The perception that the organization is invested in the individual worker and willingly provides resources leads to employees feeling they matter to the agency (Rasulzada & Dackert, 2009; Stamer, Materson,

& Knapp, 2009). Organizational justice exists when decisions about jobs are made fairly, with concerns being heard, and accurate and complete information collected before decisions are made.

Closely related to a supportive and fair work environment is the organizational climate regarding employees' role perceptions. Positive perceptions exists when authority for decision-making, goals and objectives, and job responsibilities and expectations are clear; rules and regulations don't interfere with performance; workers are held responsible only for their sphere of authority; and the work demand is reasonable for doing a good job. The demanding work and regulatory mandates in child welfare are linked with negative organizational consequences. High caseloads, lack of system integration, insufficient training, limited supervision, turnover and lack of resources were found to be barriers to implementation (King, de Chermont, West, Dawson, & Hebl, 2007; Wright, Hiebert-Murphy, & Trute, 2010). Leaders who sustain a consistent innovative organizational climate may relieve the negative consequences associated with demanding work. Unfortunately, organizations that most need to implement innovative change are those that find it most difficult due to shrinking resources and increasing demands. Creating an innovative climate requires leadership support that champions the innovative climate, distributes supportive resources fairly and gives unrelenting attention to individuals and systems.

However, by establishing an innovative climate, employees are inspired to develop approaches to workload issues that increase interconnection, improve functioning in demanding work environments, enhance creativity and increase job commitment. Yu and associates (2013) established that an innovative organizational climate facilitates innovative behavior in employees resulting in new products or services, techniques and processes. They posit that shared knowledge, created by discussion and participation, has a direct effect on employees' innovative behavior. The innovations in the six child welfare voluntary agencies we studied were conducted through a team process that was given the authority and autonomy to conduct the implementation. Participatory decision-making, solution focus problem solving, and systematic application of the model was the foundation of the intervention. It may be this approach was adopted more readily by the agencies that succeeded in full implementation, suggesting a supportive environment.

Cabrera & Carrera (2005) propose that innovative thinking is established by providing employees a supportive environment that provides a sense of security, a creative atmosphere, and the absence of unreasonable criticism. In addition, rewards in the form of recognition and support from management positively influences organizational climate (Bennett, Ross, & Sunderland, 1996). Latting and colleagues (2004) found that agency administrators who successfully create innovative climates produce an environment in which supervisors support employee empowerment and development, resulting in employees having greater trust in the agency management. Thus, the members of the implemented agencies may have engaged in discussion, shared knowledge, and creativity; forming the basis for innovative behavior that flourished in a positive organizational climate.

While this study offers some important lessons for organizational practitioners, it also raises further questions for the field. For example, does this intervention model best fit organizations that already have the capacity to implement changes, or can it also apply to organizations that need to build that internal readiness? Furthermore, what is the relationship between the type of change the agency hopes to see and their implementation success? Ultimately, however, the goal of this area of research and practice is to best understand how organizational change that supports the workforce translates into improved outcomes for the clients and communities we serve.

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