

**Innovative Work Behavior and Communication Climate among Employees
of Advertising Agencies**

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The present study intended to explore the relationship between communication climate and innovative work behavior among employees of advertisement agencies of electronic and print media. It was hypothesized that innovative work behavior will be differentially related with communication climate. Effect of gender and experience were also examined in relation to innovative work behavior and communication climate. Sample of the study consisted of 150 employees (both men and women) working in human resource, research, and project management departments. Innovative Work Behavior Inventory (Nafees, 2006) and Communication Climate Scale (Costegen & Schmidler, 2001) were used to assess the innovative work behavior and communication climate, respectively. Findings showed that supportive communication climate was positively correlated with innovative work behavior while defensive communication climate reflected negative association with innovative work behavior. Results also revealed significant differences across gender as women reflected more innovative work behavior and supportive communication climate as compared to men. It was also found that fresh employees exhibited more innovative work behavior and supportive communication climate as compared to experienced employees. Future implications of the study were also discussed.

Key words: Innovative work behavior, communication climate, advertising agencies, employees

Organizational behavior is the study of human behavior in organizational settings, depicting interface between human behavior and the organization, and of the organization itself. Similarly, organizations can only be explored by focusing explicitly on the people within them (Moorhead, 2007). Organizations achieve their goals by creating, communicating, and operating an organizational system. The primary purpose of the organizational behavior systems is to identify and manipulate major human and organizational variables that affect the results; therefore, the survival of human organizations greatly depends on their ability to cater the international sophistications specifically with reference to the organizational behavior (Ram, 2008). The organizational forces (culture, climate, implicit norms, and explicit rules) are significant factors in determining behavior within working organizations (Furnham, 2005).

In the present rapid changing environment, organizations are facing greater challenges, and they need to promote innovative behaviors to create and deliver their products and services, to stay competitive, and lead the change process itself. In order to accomplish their task successfully, organizations render support to their employees to innovate their process, methods, and operations (Ramoothy, Flood, Slattery, & Sardesai, 2005). In order to promote the performance of group and organizations innovative work behavior is considered as

intentional creation, development of new ideas within work role, group, and organization (Zaman, 2006). Innovative work behaviors are neither explicit nor implicit contact between employees and organizations, rather such behaviors are purely discretion behaviors referred as extra-role behavior and formally organized by the original system (Janssen, 2000). Similarly, it has been emphasized that innovation has to do not only with the intentional act of generating new ideas, but also with the introduction and application of new ideas, all aimed at improving organizational performance (Janssen & Vliert, 2004; Kanter, 1988; Scott & Bruce, 1994; West & Farr, 1989).

Innovation includes the implementation of ideas; that reflect the two-stage process: idea generation and application behavior. To initiate innovations, employees can generate ideas by engaging in behaviors in some activities to explore opportunities, identify performance gaps or produce solutions for problems and the social environment can also influence on both level and frequency of creative behavior (McClean, 2005). Opportunities to generate ideas lie in incongruities and discontinuities – things that do not fit in expected patterns, such as problems in existing work methods, unfulfilled needs of customers, or indications that trends may be changing (Nystrom, Ramamurthy, & Wilson, 2002). Innovative behavior is closely related to employees' creativity (Dodgson, Gann, & Salter, 2006) but the demarcation between the two is, however, blurred as some researchers have proposed models of creativity that also refer to the implementation of creative ideas e.g., distinguishing between problem finding, problem conceptualization, problem solving, and solution

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implementation (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2007; Huthwaite, 2007).

Impact of innovative work behavior indicated that conflict with co-workers mediate the interactive effect of innovative behavior and job involvement on satisfaction with co-worker relations (Handel & Levine, 2004). Similarly study of innovation with communication and leadership argues that communication should play a new role in promoting innovation management as a crucial process in today's society, and this can be achieved by a new understanding of leadership communication (West, 2002). Findings revealed that theoretical concepts and empirical evidence can be integrated into a wheel of leadership communication on innovations that combines the social, cognitive, and affective dimensions of a new role in the innovation process supported by communication management (Gilley, Dixon, & Gilley, 2008). It has been observed that the prevalence of innovative work behavior is moderately higher among managers of private-sector modernized organizations than their counterparts in public-sector organizations (Mukherjee & Ray, 2010). The trends of innovative work behavior of the managers indicated much variability due to interaction of their level of perceived stressful challenges for innovation and the global forces of change that have unleashed dynamic, systematic, and higher expectation level from them (Kanter, 1988).

Research exhibited a positive and significant relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior (Reuvers, Engen, Vinkenburg, & Wilson-Evered, 2008), whereas innovative behaviors and job satisfaction are usually found to be affected by individual characteristics and job/workplace characteristics (Chochlakis & Pseiridis, 2005). On the other hand, the relationship between innovative work behavior and job demands are assumed to be moderated by fairness perceptions of the ratio between rewards received and efforts spend on the work (Janssen, 2000). Findings demonstrated a positive relationship between job demands and innovative work behavior when employees perceived effort-reward fairness, rather than fairness or unfairness (West & Anderson, 1996). Investigation of relationships between employee empowerment, innovative behaviors, and job productivity led to the conclusion that innovative behaviors are the predictors of job productivity (Chang & Liu, 2008).

Communication Climate

Communication climate is the invisible concept of how communications are conducted within a workplace environment. Organizational communication can definitely affect employee's productivity and retention (Salin, 2003). Communication can be successfully evaluated in the workplace by knowing that employees have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and what are their duties (Crosling & Ward, 2001). Supervisors and managers can verify this effectiveness during employee performance reviews, while Job performance can be affected by inadequate understanding of expected details (Max, Alexander, & Turner, 1991). When managers

restate the expectations for the position while giving performance reviews, it can help to strengthen clear communication in the workplace (Vuuren, Jong, & Seydel, 2007).

Numerous researchers have noted that organizational climate can influence communication patterns regarding safety-related issues (DeJoy, 1985; Edmondson, 1996; Zohar, 1980), for instance handling errors in a negative way engendered a negative climate that in turn influenced the willingness of employees to discuss mistakes and problems (Edmondson, 1996). When errors are handled in a more constructive manner, employees are more willing to openly discuss errors and problems. It has been observed that certain organizational reactions to errors may stimulate a context within which errors are covered up and are not freely discussed (DeSalova & Zurcher, 1984). Taken together, it is suggested that the climate develops as a result of management's actions toward safety can influence the degree to which employees feel free to raise and openly discuss safety issues (Frese & Van, 1996).

Communication climate reflects communication on both the organizational and personal levels. Results showed that employee's communication augment perceived external prestige and helps to explain organizational identification (Bartels, Pruyn, & Jong, 2006). Therefore, communication climate plays a central role, mediating the impact of organizational identification of the content of communication. On one hand, it includes items such as the extent to which communication in an organization motivates and stimulates workers to meet organizational goals and the extent to which it makes them identify with the organization (Smidts, Pruyn, & Reil, 2001). On the other hand, it includes estimates of people's attitudes toward communication are healthy (or not) in the organization (Trombetta & Rogers, 1988). A basic assumption of this manual is that only organizations which are projectile and empower their employees, create a communication climate such as to work strategically, collaboratively, cost-effectively, being innovative, and accountable (Sharma, Gupta, & Wickramasinghe, 2005). In a research study employees' perceptions of organizational climate and communication climate are found to be correlated positively with the level of employees' organizational commitment (Ruth & Guzley, 1992). Another study (Trombetta & Rogers, 1988) suggested that communication does affect organizational commitment and job satisfaction (employee morale).

The role of organizational climate as it affects the impact of organizational context on innovativeness revealed three known climate dimensions as moderator variables: risk orientation, external orientation, and achievement orientation (Nystrom, Ramamurthy, & Wilson, 2002). Moreover, organizational size and profused resources are found to be positively related with innovativeness (Zerfass & Huch, 2007).

The relationship between organizational communication climate and interpersonal conflict (Malik, 2004) found that integrating, obliging, and compromising styles of handling

WORK BEHAVIOR AND COMMUNICATION AMONG EMPLOYEES OF ADVERTISING AGENCIES

interpersonal conflict has significant positive correlation with supportive communication climate, whereas dominating and avoiding style of conflict management showed positive correlation with defensive communication climate. Effects of communication climate on leadership styles (Ambreen, 2005) indicated strong positive correlation between defensive communication climate and task-oriented leadership style and supportive communication climate is positively related with person-oriented leadership style. The study of organizational culture as a predictor of innovative work behavior (Nafees, 2006) exhibited significant difference between small and medium size organizations indicating medium size organizations reflecting higher innovative work behavior but small size organizations exhibited low innovative work behavior. Moreover significant gender differences on innovative behavior, revealed higher mean score of women as compared to men.

The present study intends to focus on the relationship of innovative work behavior with communication climate. Innovative work behavior is the demand of modern era and essential criteria for organizational success; while communication climate is the crucial recourse element for the richest productivity; thereby contributing for the enhancement of the productivity. Organizations providing opportunities to employees for novel work settings with less emphasis on set patterns; possess higher probability of enhanced productivity and output. Organizations permitting and flourishing for innovation, certainly reach the height of success, although some pros and cons are the demands of success but experimenting new things is the necessity and chances of success are always there. Hence, both communication climate and innovative work behavior are the essentials for growth in industrial and organizational setups.

In the Pakistani context, most of the advertising agencies are operated in private sector. In these setups, organizations are more concerned with the generation of new ideas and themes to provide their related products and services. While in this procedure, there are instances of more focus on routine jobs, less effective handling of interpersonal conflicts, thereby, restricting the efficiency of the employees. Low practice of innovative work behavior may also induce problems of lower production and high turnover of the employees. To address these and other related issues, this study was under taken to explore innovative work and communication climate in the said organizational setups.

Objectives

The major objectives of the study were to explore relationship between innovative work behavior and the communication climate and to determine the role of different demographic variables in relation to communication climate and innovative work behavior.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated in accordance to the aforementioned objectives:

Innovative work behavior will be positively correlated with supportive communication climate and negatively associated with defensive communication climate

Women will reflect more innovative work behavior as compared to men.

Women are more likely to practice supportive communication climate as compared to their counterparts. New employees would exhibit more innovative work behavior and supportive communication as compared to experienced employees.

Method

Sample

A purposive sample ($N = 150$) constituting employees of advertisement agencies was acquired. Respondents included both men ($n = 76$) and women ($n = 74$) whereas minimal education of the sample was graduation ($n = 55$) and maximum up to Masters ($n = 81$) and M.Phil ($n = 14$) with specialized criteria. Participants were regular employees of their respective organizations, with age range of 22-35 years ($M = 28.7$, $SD = 2.9$). Experience of the employees was bifurcated into two groups, ranging from 1-3.11 years ($n = 67$) considered as new employees whereas experience of 4-8 years ($n = 83$) was regarded as experienced employees. Participants from eight advertising agencies comprising print and electronic media were approached. Most of the data was collected from human resource, research, and project management departments.

Measures

The following measures were used to assess the constructs of the study.

Innovative Work Behavior Scale (IWBS) (Nafees, 2006) was used to assess the innovative work behavior. IWBS comprised 28 items based on 5-point rating scale with possible score range of 28-140. The response options ranged from *Strongly Agree* (5) to *Strongly Disagree* (1). The scale has four subscales: Idea Generation (6 items), Idea Promotion (7 items), Work Communication (3 items), and Idea Implementation (12 items). All the items were positively stated, therefore, high scores were interpreted as reflecting more innovative work behavior. In the present study, reliability coefficient of IWBS was found to be .86, indicating the scale as a dependable measure.

Communication Climate Inventory (Costegen & Schmidler, 2001) was used in the present study. The inventory consisted of 36 items, where each item scored on 5-point rating scale i.e., *strongly Agree* (5) to *strongly Disagree* (1); with possible score range from 36-180. The scale assess two main patterns of communication climate i.e. Defensive Communication Climate

Subscale and Supportive Communication Climate Subscale, and each Subscale further consisted of six dimensions each. Within Defensive Communication Climate the dimensions included: Evaluation, Control, Strategy, Neutrality, Superiority and Certainty. Supportive Communication Climate Subscale included dimensions of Provisional, Empathy, Equality, Spontaneity, Problem Orientation, and Description. High scores on Defensive Communication Climate reflect vertical communication and set patterns of work were likely to be followed, whereas related score on the Supportive Communication Climate indicate horizontal communication climate. Reported reliability coefficient of the scale on the current sample was established as .80 reflecting high internal consistency. Likewise subscale of Communication Climate Inventory, Defensive Communication Climate Subscale (.76) and Supportive Communication Climate Subscale (.67) also achieved dependable reliability on the present sample.

Procedure

Data was collected from the employees of advertisement agencies of print and electronic media of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Formal permissions were acquired from the administrative heads of the organizations. Respondents were approached individually and those who gave their consent and willingness for participation were provided with questionnaires. Respondents were briefed about the purpose of research and assured about the confidentiality of the personal information provided by them. Filled questionnaires were collected later and participants were duly thanked for their valuable cooperation.

Results

To determine the relationship between innovative work behavior and communication climate, correlation and *t*-analysis was preformed. Results exhibited significant positive correlation between Supportive Communication Climate and Innovative Work Behavior Scale ($r = .64, p < .01$) while Defensive Communication Climate Subscale and Innovative Work Behavior Scale were significantly negatively associated with each other ($r = -.33, p < .05$).

Table 1
Gender Differences on Innovative Work Behavior and Communication Climate (N = 150)

Gender Variables	Women (n = 74)		Men (n = 76)		t(148)	p	LL	UL	Cohen's d
	M	S.D	M	S.D					
IWB Scale	97.81	5.58	94.68	4.91	5.25	.01	-1.80	8.05	1.20
SCC Subscale	63.22	7.5	61.70	9.05	6.80	.00	-4.51	1.47	1.64
DCC Subscale	60.70	6.32	60.14	8.64	1.28	.21	-3.51	2.63	0.34

Note: IWB = Innovative Work Behavior; SCC = Supportive Communication Climate; DCC = Defensive Communication Climate.

Table 1 showed significant gender differences in relation to innovation and communication climate. Findings showed that women scored high on Innovative Work Behavior Scale and Supportive Communication Climate Subscale as compared to men. However, non-significant difference was observed on Defensive Communication Climate Subscale.

Table 2
One way ANOVA on Job Experience in relation to Variables of the Study (N=150)

Job Experience Variables	1-3 Years (n = 5)		3.1-5 Years (n = 47)		5.1-8 Years (n = 49)		F	p
	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D		
IWB Scale	98.00	7.57	94.23	7.19	91.38	7.84	10.67	.00
SCC Subscale	62.35	8.71	63.52	8.66	62.56	8.43	10.67	.23
DCC Subscale	54.77	9.25	58.49	9.42	60.82	9.73	9.88	.01

Note: IWB = Innovative Work Behavior; SCC = Supportive Communication Climate; DCC = Defensive Communication Climate

Results of Table 2 indicated significant group differences pertaining to work experience inferring that employees with less job experience exhibited higher innovative work behavior as compared to those with extended work experience. Significant mean differences were also observed on communication climate revealing that employees with extended job experience were more inclined to use defensive communication style as compared to the fresh employees. However, non-significant difference was found in relation to supportive communication climate.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between communication climate and innovative work behavior. Another aim was to examine the gender and experience differences in innovation and communication climate.

Findings revealed results in the expected direction for first hypothesis predicted positive correlation between innovative work behavior and supportive communication climate while negative correlation with defensive communication climate.

WORK BEHAVIOR AND COMMUNICATION AMONG EMPLOYEES OF ADVERTISING AGENCIES

These findings are quite in line with the earlier evidence, for instance, proposed model of linking right, just, and fair treatment with supportive communication climate inferred that supportive communication climate positively associated with innovative work behavior in occupational settings (Ruppel & Harrington, 2000). Empirical inference also indicated negative relationship between defensive communication climate and innovative work behavior which leads to inhibited work behavior in interactional situations (Jam, Akhtar, Haq, & Rehman, 2010) and dissatisfaction in rendering customer services (Chang & Liu, 2008).

Second hypothesis formulated to determine gender differences with respect to innovative work behavior. Results showed that women exhibited more innovative work behavior as compared to men. The findings are strengthened by the earlier researches, which observed that women reflected high workplace creativity as compared to men (Donnel & Jay, 1980). Moreover, women as managers work better in organizational settings and are open to new ideas in enhancing the productivity of services oriented firms (Donnell & Hall, 2003). Women also exhibited high involvement on innovation and less resistance to transformations and variations in manufacture interface than their male counterparts (Chochlakis & Pseiridis, 2005).

Results also revealed that women tend to practice supportive communication as compared to men. Empirical evidence has shown better performance of female supervisors in challenging environment (Furnham, 2005); are more considerate about colleagues' opinions, subordinates' personal attitude, and work behavior (Ruth & Guzley, 1992). It has been observed that female line managers employ diverse communication skills and behavioral approaches in resolving group conflicts.

Inferences of the present study also led to the conclusion that innovation is a major hallmark of new employees as compared to experienced employees. Earlier data has shown that new employees are keener in generating new ideas as compared to experienced personnel (Ruth, Joe, & Christopher, 1999). In the backdrop of modern scenario, new technologies are introduced at a rapid pace and employees are required to keep them abreast with the constant revisions. Fresh graduates hired directly from university campus, productively presented new ideas and describe them in to new schemas to meet the needs of the emerging techniques and mechanisms (Passarelli, 2011). The ratio to generate inspired, imaginative, and original themes is greater among the newly hired project managers than their senior counterparts. Experienced employees are prone to work on the basis of their experience and previous perceptions (Gilley, Dixon, & Gilley, 2008); reluctant to complement new ideas (Smidts, Pruyn, & Riel, 2001), and work well in their set patterns (Rao, 1975). Experienced employees are found to be prone to use defensive communication climate as compared to new employees. Constructive communication positively influences knowledge donating, knowledge collecting, and affective commitment. Experienced employees are more

work oriented and knowledge donating, therefore, preferred to of defensive communication (Hooff, 2004). Additional evidence has shown that knowledge sharing must be integrated as a business strategy to reach goals such as competitiveness, effectiveness, and performance, which in turn, may promote defensive communication climate (Dung, 2007).

Limitations and Suggestions

The present study constituted employees of electronic and print media organizations only. Results would be more generalizable if workers of varying organizations are also incorporated. Only quantitative measures are employed with the current sample which might generate response bias. Therefore, it would be suggested that use of qualitative appraisal techniques would be more facilitative in understanding and grasping the constructs of the study. The present study focused on the relationship between communication climate and innovative work behavior. Considering other constructs and their relation with innovative work behavior would further enhance our understanding about the phenomenon.

Implications

The present study may assist in developing understanding about the importance of innovative work behavior in enhancing productivity of the organizations. Communication climate is one of the important components of almost every work setting. Current findings would facilitate in comprehending the effect of communication on work behavior and suggest ways to improve communication among employees working at different levels. Moreover, fostering positive patterns of communication would be effective in reducing interpersonal conflicts among employees. The study of innovative work behavior would help in generating proactive attitude towards novel technologies, developing new strategies in print and electronic media, and shaping new policies. Thereby, permitting employees to breed new ideas and to flourish their creativity at par with national and international requirements.

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WORK BEHAVIOR AND COMMUNICATION AMONG EMPLOYEES OF ADVERTISING AGENCIES

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Sumra Arif, Aisha Zubair & Yasmin Manzoor

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