



# The influence of ethical climate on marketing employees' job attitudes and behaviors

James B. DeConinck\*

Department of Marketing and Professional Selling, College of Business, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC 28723, United States

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 8 May 2008

Accepted 4 November 2008

### Keywords:

Ethical work climate  
Job satisfaction  
Role stress  
Performance  
Turnover

## ABSTRACT

In this study, two data sets were used to test the validity of the Babin, Boles, and Robin (Babin BJ, Boles JS, Robin DP. Representing the perceived ethical work climate among marketing employees. *J Acad Mark Sci* 2000;28(3):345–358.) measure of ethical work climate and its relationship with role stress, pay satisfaction, supervisor satisfaction, organizational commitment, performance, and turnover. The results indicated that ethical work climate is a multidimensional construct and that its dimensions influence marketing employees' job attitudes and job behaviors. Facets of job satisfaction and organizational commitment mediated the relationship between ethical work climate and turnover intentions and turnover.

© 2009 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

In order to encourage ethical behavior, organizations have adopted codes of ethics (Chonko et al., 2002; O'Fallon and Butterfield, 2005). However, the research that has investigated the effectiveness of business codes has produced mixed results with only 35% of studies reporting that codes are effective in deterring unethical behavior (Kaptein and Schwartz, 2007). Part of the reason for the ineffectiveness of codes of ethics is the lack of management's willingness to enforce the code. For business codes to be effective in deterring unethical behavior, management must be willing to enforce the code and punish employees who violate it (Chonko and Hunt, 1985; Trevino, 1992).

Because codes of ethics may not be effective in encouraging ethical behavior by employees, research has concentrated how an organization's ethical work climate influences ethical behavior. The ethical work climate has been proposed as an important element of an employee's psychological work climate (Babin et al., 2000).

During the last ten years, researchers have expanded their investigation of an ethical work climate beyond its effect on employees' ethical behavior. This research has investigated how ethical work climate affects employees' job attitudes and behaviors. Ethical work climate has been found to influence employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Parker et al., 2003), role stress (Babin et al., 2000; Jaramillo et al., 2006; Mulki et al., 2006), and turnover intentions (Mulki et al., 2006). While this research has expanded our understanding of the importance of an ethical work climate in organizations, a concern exists in how researchers have measured the construct.

Most of the past research has measured ethical work climate as a unidimensional construct (e.g., Schwepker et al., 1997). However, Babin et al. (2000) showed that ethical work climate is a multidimensional construct that can be used to better comprehend marketing employees' job attitudes and behavior. They developed and validated a 16-item scale consisting of four dimensions (trust/responsibility, peer behavior, ethical norms, and selling practices) using a sample of service providers and salespeople. Their research concluded that ethical work climate was related to these employees' role ambiguity, role conflict, overall job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Unfortunately, to the best of our knowledge, no attempt has been made to further validate or use the Babin et al. (2000) ethical work climate scale with other groups of marketing employees. Are the results reported by Babin et al. (2000) specific to salespeople and service providers? Or can the scale be used to predict job attitudes and behaviors of other marketing employees?

This study has several purposes. First, this study will attempt to validate the Babin et al. (2000) ethical work climate scale using two different groups of marketing employees (marketing managers and retail buyers) than was used by Babin and his colleagues. This study will test the proposed relationships with the first group of marketing employees and then validate the results using the second sample. Second, this study will expand the work of Babin et al. (2000) by including facets of job satisfaction, turnover intentions, turnover and performance in a structural equation model. Sparse research exists examining how an organization's ethical work climate influences actual turnover and performance. Is the relationship between ethical work climate and turnover direct or indirect through other variables? Does an ethical work climate influence marketing employees' performance? Although Babin and his colleagues reported that ethical work climate is a predictor of overall job satisfaction, what is its influence on specific facets of job satisfaction, especially satisfaction

\* Tel.: +1 828 227 3704.

E-mail address: [deconinck@wcu.edu](mailto:deconinck@wcu.edu).

with pay? This study will attempt to answer these questions. The hypothesized relationships appear in Fig. 1. The rationale for these relationships is presented below.

**2. Literature review**

*2.1. Perceived work climate*

Babin et al. (2000) proposed that ethical work climate was an important part of a marketing employee's perceived work climate. Lewin et al. (1939) were one of the first researchers to discuss the concept of perceived work climate when they discussed 'social climates.' Climate involves both formal and informal employees' perceptions of organizational processes, practices, and policies and influences employees' attitudes and behavior (Reichers and Schneider, 1990).

Perceived work climate has been related to various work outcomes such as job satisfaction (Schneider and Snyder, 1975; Schulte et al., 2006; Swift and Campbell, 1998), organizational commitment (DeCotiis and Summers, 1987), job involvement (Brown and Leigh, 1996), organizational citizenship behavior (Moorman, 1991), workplace violence (Cole et al., 1997), and job performance (Day and Bedian, 1991; Pritchard and Karasick, 1973). In their meta-analysis, Parker et al. (2003) reported that perceived work climate was related directly to job satisfaction and work attitudes (job involvement and organizational commitment) and related indirectly to performance. Another recent meta-analysis (Carr et al., 2003) reported similar findings as did Parker et al. (2003).

In a marketing context, one study reported that the level of trust that salespeople have with their sales manager influences their perception of the organization's psychological climate (Strutton et al., 1993). In addition, Evans et al. (2007), in a study involving 293 salespeople from a variety of industries, found that certain dimensions of perceived work climate impacted salespersons' job satisfaction and performance. In another study involving sales personnel, Martin and Bush (2006) found that certain dimensions of psychological climate (support, autonomy, and dimension or pressure) influenced both sales managers' and sales representatives' empowerment perceptions. In addition, the psychological climate dimensions of support, autonomy, and cohesion were related significantly to a customer-oriented selling approach.

These studies indicate the importance of psychological climate in explaining employees' attitudes and behavior. However, how does an organization's ethical work climate affect employees' behavior, especially job performance and retention? The next section presents

research that has examined the relationship between an organization's ethical work climate and employees work outcomes.

*2.2. Ethical work climate and job attitudes*

Ethical work climate has been defined as "the prevailing perceptions of typical organizational practices and procedures that have ethical content" (Victor and Cullen, 1988, p. 101). Research generally has found support that ethical climate or culture has a positive influence on ethical behavior (Schepers, 2003; Verbeke et al., 1996). The opportunity for unethical behavior appears to be more prevalent in organizations where the ethical climate is either unclear or unethical (Peterson, 2002).

Research in a variety of occupations has found that an ethical work climate is related to job satisfaction (Jaramillo et al., 2006; Mulki et al., 2006; Schwepker, 2001; Vitell and Davis, 1990), organizational commitment (Cullen et al., 2003; Mulki et al., 2006; Schwepker, 2001; Trevino et al., 1998; Weeks et al., 2004), role stress (Babin et al., 2000; Jaramillo et al., 2006; Mulki et al., 2008), and indirectly to turnover intentions (Jaramillo et al., 2006).

The lack of research investigating the link between ethical work climate and marketing employees' job performance indicates a need for further analysis. Does an organization's ethical climate impact employees' job performance? Or is the relationship mediated by other variables? In addition, what is the relationship between ethical climate and actual turnover? Rather, prior research has analyzed the relationship between ethical work climate and turnover intentions (Jaramillo et al., 2006; Mulki et al., 2006; Schwepker, 2001). In each of these studies, ethical work climate was an indirect predictor of turnover intentions through organizational commitment and/or job satisfaction. Thus, one of the purposes of this study is to determine whether ethical work climate is a direct or indirect predictor of actual turnover through turnover intentions or other variables.

In addition to the lack of research investigating the relationship between ethical work climate and performance and turnover, research has not analyzed the influence of an ethical work climate on marketing employees' satisfaction with pay. Babin et al. (2000) proposed that peer behavior may be linked with pay satisfaction. Pay is one of the most important elements in an employee's life (Gupta and Shaw, 1998). Although much research has been conducted on the antecedents and outcomes of pay satisfaction during the last 40 years (see Williams et al., 2006 for a review of the literature), Heneman and Judge (2000) have encouraged additional research to further understand the antecedents of pay satisfaction. Given the importance of pay

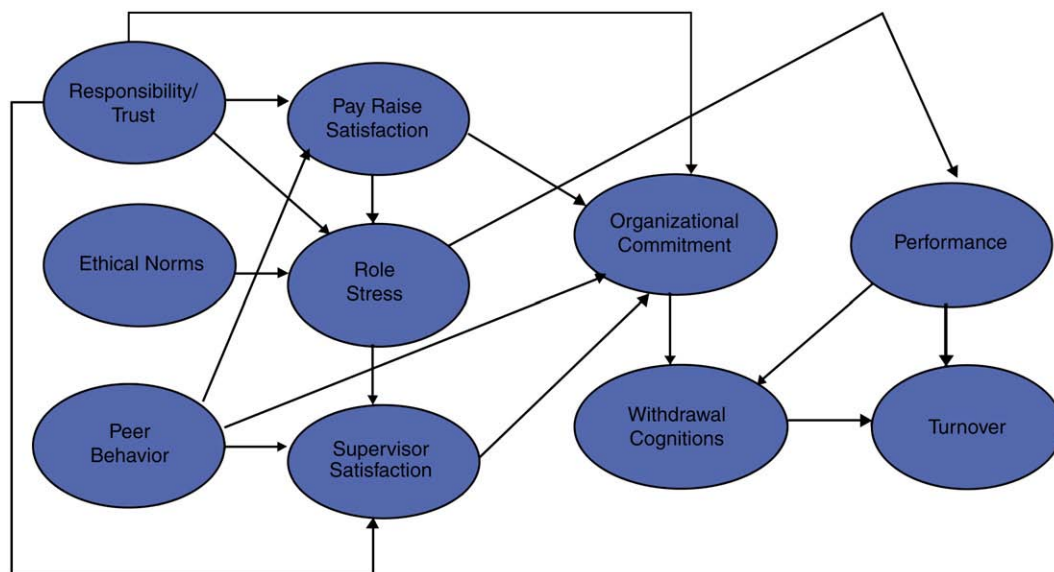


Fig. 1. Hypothesized model for study one.

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

**ISI**Articles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات