

Examination and Explanation of the Model of Superior Organizational Climate for the Promotion of Knowledge in Islamic Azad Universities

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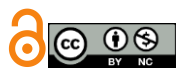
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ABSTRACT

Objective: The purpose of this research is to examine and explain the model of a superior organizational climate for the promotion of knowledge in the Islamic Azad Universities of Mazandaran Province.

Methodology: This research is applied in terms of its objective and descriptive-survey in terms of data collection method. Data were collected using a standard researcher-made questionnaire. The statistical population comprises 1,537 faculty members from various departments of Islamic Azad Universities in Mazandaran Province. The sampling method is cluster random sampling. Initially, the entire Mazandaran Province was divided into three clusters: eastern, central, and western. From each cluster, three counties were selected, making a total of nine counties chosen as the statistical sample. Subsequently, 308 faculty members from these counties were considered. Data analysis was conducted using structural equation modeling with Smart PLS4 software.

Findings: The results indicate that all indicators and factors influencing the superior organizational climate for the promotion of knowledge in Islamic Azad Universities have a factor loading greater than 0.4, thus confirming the indicators and influential factors. Furthermore, the model of factors influencing the superior organizational climate for the promotion of knowledge in Islamic Azad Universities was depicted. The impact of causal factors on the superior organizational climate within the university, and contextual and environmental factors on strategies were found to be significant. Additionally, strategies had a positive and significant impact on outcomes and results.

Conclusion: The factors of the model of a superior organizational climate in universities aimed at promoting knowledge can be generally recommended as a practical and comprehensive package for all university managers and executive bodies.

Keywords: Superior Organizational Climate, Promotion of Knowledge, Islamic Azad Universities, Faculty Members

1 Introduction

In the present era, which coincides with the fourth wave of organizational changes influenced by modern technology, the organizational climate prevalent in companies and organizations is considered an effective criterion for creating value and gaining competitive advantages for many organizations and holds significant importance for intelligent managers (Al-Kurdi et al., 2018; Charband & Jafari Navimipour, 2018). Over the past few decades, superior organizational climate has emerged as an important challenge in the field of management. Every organization possesses a unique culture, customs, values, norms, and relatively stable methods of operation that allow for the prediction of their behaviors based on these characteristics. This feature, which allows us to distinguish one organization from another, is called organizational climate (Fullwood & Rowley, 2017; Fullwood et al., 2013).

For instance, research shows that the organizational climate has a direct relationship with a manager's ability to motivate employees by fulfilling their psychological needs such as achievement and power. The reality is that if managers do not consider employees worthy of participation in decision-making, employees will not show enthusiasm for participation. Consequently, managers will be deprived of employees' intellectual contributions and participations (Magill et al., 2020).

The organizational climate prevailing in a unit can impact its success in various areas. Additionally, a favorable organizational climate fosters loyalty and strengthens cooperation among employees, positively influencing their performance and service delivery. Conversely, an unfavorable climate can lead to time wasted in discussions and disputes, high tension, job searching, reduced communication with supervisors, and job dissatisfaction (Qualls & Puto, 1989).

The world is changing its perception of work methods. Developments in all aspects of life, including lifestyle, behavior, and work environment, have led to organizational climate becoming a hot topic. It is considered a primary factor in enhancing employee capabilities, which in turn boosts overall organizational performance (Al-Kurdi et al., 2018; Rezazadeh et al., 2023).

Academics, as specialized knowledge workers engaged in educational and research activities, play a crucial role. However, knowledge accumulation remains a challenge in academic institutions (Fauzi et al., 2019). Scholars believe that enhancing the organizational climate leads to an

increase in organizational knowledge, which in turn enhances organizations' responsiveness, competitiveness, and flexibility, aligning them with environmental changes (Charband & Jafari Navimipour, 2018).

Factors creating a superior organizational climate include five variables: credibility, respect, justice, pride, and intimacy. A superior organizational climate results in efficient and competent management, highly motivated and spirited employees, and ultimately a thriving and leading organization. Achieving this position, especially in universities, leads to their elevation and growth (Al-Kurdi et al., 2020). Neglecting the creation of a superior organizational climate in higher education causes employee discouragement and despair regarding organizational goals and objectives, leading to various material and spiritual problems (Azimzadeh, 2023; Rezazadeh et al., 2023; Woznyj et al., 2019; Zuraik & Kelly, 2019). Therefore, managing knowledge sharing in universities is a new research topic. When knowledge workers distribute and disseminate their skills and expertise among organizational members, employee performance improves, and organizations become more innovative. Thus, efficiently and effectively promoting employee knowledge is essential for organizational success (Al-Kurdi et al., 2020).

Today, many organizations in other sectors have recognized the advantages and benefits of knowledge sharing. Research on knowledge sharing in these sectors has developed to achieve organizational goals. Several studies have examined factors affecting knowledge sharing in various environments (Ahmed et al., 2019). Universities, as knowledge organizations, create and distribute knowledge to students and society. Therefore, the superior organizational climate in universities aimed at promoting knowledge is an emerging issue that has not been adequately addressed. Few studies have investigated the impact of various factors, especially those influencing the superior organizational climate in universities aimed at promoting knowledge. Empirical evidence on the model of the superior organizational climate in universities aimed at promoting knowledge in Islamic Azad Universities of Mazandaran Province is scarce.

In this study, we aim to fill these gaps in the management literature by identifying key indicators and measures of the superior organizational climate in universities aimed at promoting knowledge and examining the factors influencing this climate. Finally, we will present the model of the superior organizational climate in universities aimed at promoting knowledge in Islamic Azad Universities of

Mazandaran Province. Based on the literature review and previous research, no study was found that examined and explained the model of the superior organizational climate in universities aimed at promoting knowledge and investigated the influencing factors. We will also look towards the future, predicting the systematic cycle to examine driving factors and then explaining the model of the superior organizational climate in universities aimed at promoting knowledge.

2 Methods and Materials

This research is applied in terms of its objective and descriptive-survey in terms of data collection method. The data collection method in this study is quantitative. Quantitative data were collected using a standard researcher-made questionnaire. The statistical population of this study consists of 1,537 faculty members from various departments of Islamic Azad Universities in Mazandaran Province, whose opinions were used in the quantitative section. Given the nature of the subject and geographical scope, the sampling method is cluster-stratified random sampling. Initially, the entire Mazandaran Province was divided into three clusters: eastern, central, and western. Randomly, three counties were selected from each cluster, making a total of nine counties chosen as the statistical sample. Subsequently,

308 faculty members from Islamic Azad Universities in Mazandaran Province were randomly selected as the sample.

For collecting data related to the variables, a researcher-made questionnaire derived from the doctoral dissertation of Mehdizadeh et al. (2023) was used. To determine the reliability coefficient, Cronbach's alpha was employed. The combined reliability and reliability of each research component were calculated, indicating the reliability of the measurement tool. The questionnaire's divergent and convergent validity were also obtained, showing appropriate validity. Similarly, causal relationships between variables were analyzed using structural equation modeling with Smart PLS4 software. Unlike variance-based structural equation modeling, which assesses the fit of the proposed model and estimates the model to explain, test, and confirm theories, the PLS method is prediction-oriented and can be used as a theory-explaining method.

3 Findings and Results

To gain a better understanding of the population under study, it is necessary to describe these data before analyzing the statistical data. The results of the descriptive findings indicate that most of the sample population are male, aged between 41 to 50 years, with a master's degree, and have 5 to 10 years of experience. The following factors were considered for this research (Table 1):

Table 1

Factors and Indicators Extracted from Theoretical Foundations and Interviews

Indicators	Factors
Setting operational goals	Causal factors
Setting practical goals	
University programs and policies	
Organizational culture	
Organizational structure	
Staff expertise	
Job standards	
Organizational resources	
Learning from experiences	
Increasing quality of work life	
Increasing organizational efficiency and profitability	
Enduring constant pressures to improve performance	
Increasing scientific outputs	
Enhancing productivity	
Increasing commitment and loyalty to the organization	
Staff responsibility towards assigned tasks	
Staff inclination towards accepting more responsibility	
Attention to staff efforts in achieving organizational goals	
Increasing staff perception of organizational responsibility	
Increasing staff flexibility in changing conditions	Strategies
Staff participation in organizational decision-making	

Aligning personal and organizational goals	
Designing work unit structures	
Task clarity for employees	
Applying knowledge	
Granting autonomy to staff for innovation	
Clarifying organizational goals for employees	
Utilizing staff creativity and innovation	
Granting autonomy to staff in strictly following rules	
Encouraging staff towards hard work	
Fairness of rewards	
Aligning rewards with work quality	
Using standard methods for determining qualifications and promoting staff	Contextual factors
Using uniform and predefined methods for performing tasks	
Using standard correspondence forms	
Leadership style	
Using monetary and financial rewards	
Empowering staff and managers	
Clarity of organizational mission and vision	
Clarity of organizational hierarchy for employees	
University environment	Intervening factors
Political environment	
Economic environment	
Cultural environment	

To examine the model fit, we use the fit of the measurement model, structural model fit, and overall model fit. To examine the reliability of the measurement model, we assess factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha coefficients, and composite reliability. The criterion for the suitability of factor loadings is 0.4. In Figure 1, all factor loading coefficients of the questions are greater than 0.4, indicating the suitability of this criterion. According to the data analysis

algorithm in SmartPLS4, after assessing the factor loadings of the questions, we calculate and report Cronbach's alpha coefficients and composite reliability. The second criterion for evaluating the measurement model fit is convergent validity, which examines the correlation of each construct with its questions (indicators). The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Results of Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability Criteria for the Study's Latent Variables

Latent Variables	Cronbach's Alpha (Alpha>0.7)	Composite Reliability (CR>0.7)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE>0.5)
Strategies	0.824	0.861	0.546
Contextual Factors	0.855	0.889	0.503
Causal Factors	0.870	0.890	0.513
Intervening Factors	0.795	0.862	0.563
Central Phenomenon	0.758	0.765	0.527
Outcomes and Results	0.883	0.862	0.550

Given that the appropriate value for Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability is 0.7, and according to the findings of the above table, these criteria have suitable values for the latent variables, confirming the reliability of the research. Since the appropriate value for AVE is 0.5, and according to the findings of the above table, these criteria have suitable values for the latent variables, confirming the convergent validity of the research.

To assess divergent validity, we used the Fornell-Larcker criterion. The results are shown in Table 3. Since the values of the main diagonal (square root of AVE) for each latent variable are greater than the correlation of that variable with other latent variables in the model, the divergent validity of the model is also confirmed.

Table 3

Calculation of Divergent Validity

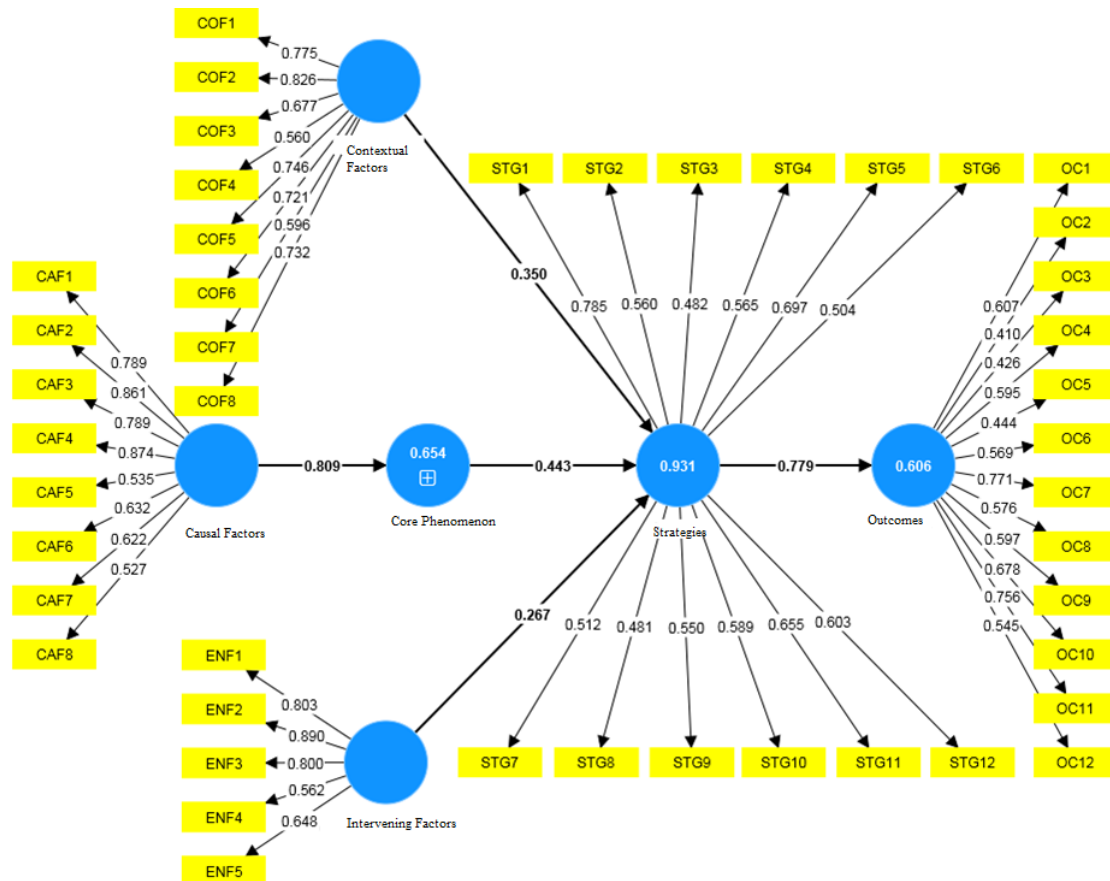
Latent Variables	Strategies	Contextual Factors	Causal Factors	Intervening Factors	Central Phenomenon	Outcomes and Results
Strategies	0.888					
Contextual Factors	0.531	0.709				
Causal Factors	0.667	0.601	0.716			
Intervening Factors	0.560	0.608	0.558	0.750		
Central Phenomenon	0.624	0.618	0.509	0.557	0.726	
Outcomes and Results	0.579	0.628	0.608	0.558	0.609	0.592

To assess the structural model fit in research, the R² coefficients of the endogenous (dependent) latent variables are considered. R² is a measure that indicates the effect of an exogenous variable on an endogenous variable. The values

of 0.19, 0.33, and 0.67 are considered weak, moderate, and strong criteria for R², respectively. According to Figure 1, the R² values for the endogenous constructs of the research have been calculated.

Figure 1

Model with Beta Values and R²



Considering the criteria values, the structural model fit is confirmed. To assess the overall model fit, the GOF criterion is used, with values of 0.01, 0.25, and 0.36 representing weak, moderate, and strong GOF values, respectively. Given

the obtained GOF value of 0.597, the overall model fit is confirmed. In this section, we examine the research hypotheses using PLS software.

Table 4*Results of Path Analysis Findings*

Path From	To	t-statistic	Significance Level	Path Coefficient	Result	R ²
Causal Factors	Central Phenomenon	56.209	0.000	0.809	Accepted	0.654
Contextual Factors	Strategies	7.589	0.000	0.350	Accepted	0.931
Intervening Factors (Environmental)		8.319	0.000	0.267	Accepted	
Central Phenomenon		7.502	0.000	0.443	Accepted	
Strategies	Outcomes and Results	27.777	0.000	0.779	Accepted	0.606

Since the t-value for the relationships is outside the range of (1.96 and -1.96) and their significance level is less than 0.05, at the 95% confidence level, the impact of factors on the central phenomenon and contextual and environmental factors on strategies is significant. Also, strategies have a positive and significant impact on outcomes. Additionally, considering the R² value for the central phenomenon, strategies, and outcomes, a strong prediction is estimated.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the causal conditions in the model of superior organizational climate in universities aimed at promoting knowledge showed that the superior organizational climate in universities is achieved through the logic and rationale of developing organizational culture and structure in universities, university programs and policies to transfer knowledge from the university to life and society, developing staff expertise, changing job standards in universities from traditional to modern, and ultimately, the superior organizational climate in universities. These characteristics, which form the logic of the superior organizational climate in universities, are the focal point of the superior organizational climate in universities. Consistent with these findings, the European Commission in 2011 stated that the superior organizational climate should be defined to prepare students for entry into society and should be such that individuals can apply knowledge always and everywhere throughout their lives. Another study also identified the superior organizational climate as an urgent need for implementing innovation at the university level and a necessary method for advancing higher education and an important action in promoting high-quality knowledge for university students (Berberoglu, 2018).

According to the results of the contextual conditions, using standard methods for determining qualifications and promoting staff, using uniform and predefined methods for performing tasks, using standard correspondence forms, leadership style, using monetary and financial rewards,

empowering staff and managers, clarity of organizational mission and vision, and clarity of organizational hierarchy for employees are essential. According to the results of the intervening factors (environmental), the intervening factors include the political, scientific, cultural, economic environment, and the university environment. In explaining these findings, some researchers (Berberoglu, 2018; Vasudevan & Iqbal, 2018) concluded that by specifying (1) the power and consistency of an organization's culture, (2) the familiarity of employees with the mission of that culture, (3) the emphasis of that culture on involving employees in decision-making, and (4) the ability of that specific culture to provide positive responses to organizational changes, the effectiveness of the organization can be predicted.

The results of the strategy study showed that staff participation in organizational decision-making, aligning personal and organizational goals, designing work unit structures, task clarity for employees, applying knowledge, granting autonomy to staff for innovation, clarifying organizational goals for employees, utilizing staff creativity and innovation, granting autonomy to staff in strictly following rules, encouraging staff towards hard work, fairness of rewards, aligning rewards with work quality should be implemented. These results are consistent with the research of Demircioglu and Berman (2019) which stated that an innovative organizational climate encourages staff participation and creativity, making jobs more interesting and reducing job turnover (Demircioglu & Berman, 2018). Furthermore, these results align with the research of Vasudevan and Iqbal (2018), which stated that all organizations should aim to increase organizational citizenship behavior to form a positive organizational climate among staff (Vasudevan & Iqbal, 2018).

The outcomes of a superior organizational climate in universities aimed at promoting knowledge include learning from experiences, increasing quality of work life, increasing organizational efficiency and profitability, enduring constant pressures to improve performance, increasing

scientific outputs, enhancing productivity, increasing staff commitment and loyalty to the organization, staff responsibility towards assigned tasks, staff inclination towards accepting more responsibility, attention to staff efforts in achieving organizational goals, increasing staff perception of organizational responsibility, increasing staff flexibility in changing conditions. These results are consistent with the research of Rangriz et al. (2020), which showed that increasing organizational efficiency and profitability, enhancing productivity, increasing quality of work life, enhancing organizational culture, and improving the organization's image are outcomes of a superior organizational climate. These results also align with the research of Beberoglu (2018), which concluded that the organizational climate is highly correlated with organizational commitment and performance (Berberoglu, 2018).

Based on the results of the causal conditions, it is recommended that the organizational structure be oriented towards empowerment because the more empowering the organizational structure is, due to its high flexibility in organizational rules, procedures, and processes, it facilitates attracting staff participation, commitment, optimism, enhancing trust, and motivation of members towards the organization. Based on the results of the contextual conditions, it is recommended to use standard methods for determining qualifications and promoting staff, and to use uniform and predefined methods for performing tasks. Furthermore, standard correspondence forms should be used. Based on the results of the environmental conditions, it is recommended that the university management should use a strategic approach and appropriate management strategies for the interactive environment to manage the organizational climate; the interactive environment refers to the environmental elements and domains that the manager or system interacts with and directly or closely influences.

The results of the strategy findings showed that the more the organizational climate is oriented towards staff participation in organizational decision-making, the more personal and organizational goals are aligned. By designing work unit structures, task clarity for employees is achieved, and by applying knowledge, granting autonomy to staff for innovation, organizational goals are clarified for employees. Based on the results of the outcomes, it is generally recommended that, given that the organizational climate is a fundamental and essential pillar of any organization, especially universities, and that the organizational climate, by creating and directing the ability to enhance knowledge

among organizational members, is one of the important factors that design the nature and quality of the entire organization, it is recommended that the organizational climate of Islamic Azad University be oriented towards empowerment; because the more empowering the organizational structure is, due to its high flexibility in organizational rules, procedures, and processes, it facilitates attracting staff participation, commitment, optimism, enhancing knowledge, and motivation of members towards the organization. Finally, based on the results of this research, it is recommended that policymakers, stakeholders, and planners at the macro management levels of higher education, when drafting upstream documents and determining approaches, organize seminars, workshops, and special courses on the superior organizational climate in universities aimed at promoting staff and student knowledge.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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