

THE ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL FAIRNESS AND INCLUSION IN WORKERS WELL-BEING AND BEHAVIOR: A PRELIMINARY STUDY

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1. Introduction

In the last 30 years there was a significant growth on research focusing Diversity issues and its impacts on the individuals and organizations. This interest captures the dynamic changes in our society and organizations. This context contributed much for the attention given to Diversity Climate and research about its nature and consequences. Nevertheless, not many studies considered this climate being a context variable could also act as a moderator that could buffer or increase the impact of other organizational and individual variables on the workers well-being and action at work. In the present exploratory study it was our intention to give a contribute to this knowledge.

Liang et al. (2012) introduced the *promotive voice* as employees' expression of new ideas or suggestions for improving the overall functioning of their work unit or organization. Considering its nature, it can be considered as an example of a proactive, extra-role behavior. It has been well recognized the relevance of having employees being active with voice behaviors order to avoid major problems for (Knoll et al., 2016). The opposite, choosing silence may mean that problems or possibilities for improvements are limited. Cynicism can be one reason behind silence behaviors. Cynicism serves as a form of self-defence, to cope with unpleasant thoughts and feelings of disappointment about actions taken by the organization and its management (Naus et al., 2007). Nowadays, it is essential to understand the motives and specially the organizational and work conditions that contribute for increasing or decreasing promotive Voice and cynicism. Furthermore, it is also recognised the relevance of employee's well-being and the different consequences for the individuals and for the organizations. As stated before, the organizational climate is a relevant contextual variable and in contexts characterised by diversity it is special relevant the diversity climate.

2. Basic Needs, Diversity Climate and workers well-being and behaviors

According to the Self-determination theory (SDT), there are some specific innate psychological needs which demonstrated to be differentially associated with individual effective functioning and well-being (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Among the others, the need for autonomy represents individuals' inherent desire to feel volitional in acting and to experience a sense of choice and authorship over their behavior (deCharms, 1968; Deci & Ryan, 2000), whereas the need for competence is defined as an individual's inherent desire to feel effective in interacting with the environment (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Those two needs have both been shown to play important roles in the workplace (Baard, Deci, & Ryan, 2004), as their inhibition and lack of satisfaction could potentially lead to strain and cynicism (e.g., Demerouti, Mostert & Bakker, 2010). Specifically, for the need of autonomy, there is a large

body of research showing that it is related to positive work outcomes and that it constitutes an effective buffer against negative impacts from the work situation. At the individual level employees who have more job autonomy show more satisfaction with the work context (Oldham & Hackman, 1981) and less mental strain (Karasek, 1979) . Also, autonomy will likely be associated with greater opportunities for employees to influence their environment and to withdraw from unpleasant circumstances. Apparently, cynical behavior is the kind of outcome expressed by employees with little autonomy (Naus , van Iterson & Roe, 2007). The relationship between job autonomy and organizational cynicism is also referred to by Abraham (2000a), who argues that “merely giving employees more control over decision making in planning the scope and nature of their jobs . . . may help to overcome employee and organizational change cynicisms” (p. 285).

Gillet, Forest, Benabou, & Bentein (2015) also found that basic needs for autonomy and competence related positively to positive affect, and negatively to cynicism and turnover intentions through the mediating effect of affective commitment. Then, more specifically for the need of competence, research showed that low work related sense of competence was an important predictor of work stress, that could be a risk factor for burn out. It seems indeed that when employees participate in workshops (opportunities for development) and learn how to deal with “difficult” situations (e.g., difficult patients), they increase their sense of competence at work, therefore being more prepared to confront such situations. As a result, they may dispose less energy and feel less cynical about their work, because they are more effective in dealing with its demanding aspects (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007).

Regardless, it seems that basic needs are not the only exhaustive explanation for cynicism and affect towards work, and that some organisational dimension – particularly some organisational climates – might play an important role. Specifically research underlined how organisational programmes can help professionals with the development of competences in their role (especially if it is a new one; Price, 2009); however, it seems that the satisfaction of the need for competence might be not enough and that an unsupportive climate between colleagues together with some organizational interferences (Cherniss, 1980a,b), might lead to develop negative changes in attitude and behavior, such as exhaustion and cynicism (Mackinstosh, 2006; Gustavsson, Hallsten and Rudman 2010). Other authors (Bakker, Demerouti and Euwema, 2005), found that high levels of workload, emotional demands, physical demands and work-home interference did not result in high levels of exhaustion and cynicism if employees experienced adequate levels of autonomy, received feedback and social support, or had a high-quality relationship with their supervisors.

Diversity climate is defined as “employee behaviors and attitudes that are grounded in perceptions of the organizational context related to women and minorities” (Mor Barak et al., 1998, p. 83). According to the authors, the elaboration of the construct of diversity climate can be conceptualized as a function of 4 factors, organized on two levels: an organizational and individual level. At the organizational level it covers the perceptions of fairness (such as discrimination or preferential treatment in hiring and promotion procedures) and inclusion in company policies and practices (intended as mentoring programs or other management decisions that affect the inclusion or exclusion of women and members of minority groups).

At the individual level, the focus is on individuals' views on the importance of diversity and personal degrees of comfort with diversity.

Diversity climate literature has revealed that there is no previous research about its relationship with basic needs and cynicism; nevertheless, there are other specific organizational climates, which have some similarity with diversity climate that have been linked to these topics. Specifically, several studies have pointed out how a positive relational climate, where employees can rely on social support and high quality relationships with their supervisors and colleagues, seemed to have a protective effect too with regards to some burnout dimensions, in terms of lower levels of exhaustion and cynicism (Castanheira and Chambel 2010; Van der Doef & Maes, 1999). Results showed also that ethical leader behaviors and fairness were negatively related with cynicism (Kalshoven, Den Hartog & De Hoogh, 2011; Simha, Elloy & Huang, 2014; Thompson et al., 1999), as well as having the chance to be involved by the management (e.g. in terms of wider participation) and receiving support from colleagues might protect employees from the pathological consequences of stressful experiences (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Other research showed that procedural justice (van Prooijen, 2009; Grenier, Gilbert, & Savoie, 2010) was found to be positively linked to SDT needs; specifically, the authors found that the extent to which people's autonomy needs are thwarted versus satisfied predicts their sensitivity to variations in procedural justice.

Organizational justice has long been viewed as one of diversity climate's main components (Mor Barak, Cherin and Berkman, 1998; McKay, Avery and Morris, 2008) and diversity climate has been considered as a reflection of organizational ethics (Singh and Selvarajan, 2013); despite this, the construct of diversity climate has some peculiarities which distinguish it from both justice and ethics, since it concerns the structural and social integration of minorities (which is totally missing in justice climate theory, McKay et al., 2008). Moreover it appears to fulfill the economic responsibility of a company by making jobs available to different groups, increasing the organization's public image and communicating the company's diversity value (which is missing in the ethical climate theory, since this latter is more focussed on the legal responsibility of an organization; Stewart, Volpone, Avery and Mc Kay, 2011). Therefore, the uniqueness of its characteristics suggests the importance of further exploration of the specific role of diversity climate on cynicism and affect towards work.

For those reasons the main aim of the present research is to study the role of the diversity climate on well-being (negative and positive work related affect) and behavior (cynicism and promotive behavior). Furthermore, it aimed to test whether a positive diversity climate (in terms of high perceptions of fairness and inclusion) can show a buffering effect on the relationship between psychological needs of competence and autonomy, cynicism and negative affect toward work. Our hypothesis is that a positive diversity climate can activate a form of proactive coping (Aspinwall and Taylor, 1997), so far that, when there is the possibility of performing a work where individuals can satisfy their basic needs and they are in a pro diversity environment, the development of cynicism and negative affect toward work is less likely.

The conservation of resources theory (COR; Hobfoll, 1989, 2002) can help understanding the role of DC in the relationship between basic needs and cynicism. COR theory states that silence behavior is used to acquire, protect, and retain resources and to deal with stressful situations as they arise. Specifically, both perceived and actual losses of resources can cause psychological stress (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002), therefore individuals under stress might use less voice and more cynicism to save resources. In this context cynicism is associated with a host of negative effects, such as apathy, resignation, alienation, hopelessness, distrust of others, suspicion, contempt, disillusionment, and scorn, as well as poor performance, interpersonal conflict, absenteeism, job turnover, and burnout (Abraham, 2000a; Andersson, 1996; Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Dean, Brandes and Dharwadkar, 1998). These reactions can be understood as attempts to become less involved, to escape from the situation, or to restore the balance in the exchange relationship with the employing organization by scaling down one's contribution. These reactions can also be seen as ways to avoid being taken advantage of by the organization, thereby maintaining a positive self-image (Naus et al., 2007) and saving resources. Moreover, workers experience stress when valued resources cannot be regained. As argued by Hobfoll (1989), building rewarding social relations is the most important way that people can (re)gain resources.

Considering this state of the art, we assume that the low level of perceived fairness and inclusiveness at the organizational level (which includes the lack of rewarding social relationships), together with a lack of satisfaction of individual's basic needs, may induce a resources loss. In such situations the employee will be less willing to spend even more personal resources to engage in positive voice behavior and may contribute to increase the cynicism. On the opposite side, when DC is high, individuals with low satisfaction of their basic needs might still engage in less cynic behaviors because DC might have a protective effect, by activating a form of proactive coping (Aspinwall and Taylor, 1997). It is assumed that employees in these circumstances can rely on a greater amount of resources; therefore, they will feel less need to retain and protect them. Moreover, engaging in positive behaviors and attitudes toward work, can have an added instrumental purpose for those individuals, as it might help them to gain even more resources to buffer stress (Ng & Feldman, 2011). The hypothesis settle assume that the diversity climate may interact in the relationship between basic needs and the individuals work-related affect and behaviors either buffering its negative impact (for high levels) or increasing its negative impacts (for lower climate levels). The model tested are presented in Figure 1.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

Participants were 425 employees of an international company focused on development, property management and leasing of shopping centers. Considering the whole sample, 38% were female, 87% were less than 50 years old, 12% had less than 13 years of school and 87% had a permanent contract; concerning the country of work, 52% worked in Portugal, 11% in Spain, 7% in Germany, 6% in Italy, 2% in Romania and 1% in Greece.

3.2 Survey

Data were collected using a questionnaire.

Basic Needs were assessed using a shorter version of the Basic Needs Satisfaction in General Scale (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagné, 2003); 9 items were used to assess the three needs: autonomy (e.g., “I am free to express my ideas and opinions on the job”); relatedness; competence (e.g., “I have been able to learn interesting new skills on my job”). Each item was answered on a 6-point Likert scale (from 1=“strongly disagree” to 6=“strongly agree”).

Diversity Climate was assessed using a shorter version of the Mor Barak’s et al. (1998) validated recently (Paolillo, Pasini, Silva & Magnano, 2016). Six items were used, in order to measure the organizational dimension of Diversity Climate, comprising two factors: fairness (e.g., “Managers here give feedback and evaluate employees fairly, regardless of the employees’ race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, or social background”) and inclusion (e.g., “The company spends enough money and time on diversity awareness and related training”). Each item was answered on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1=“strongly disagree” to 5=“strongly agree”).

Proactive voice was assessed using a reduced version of Liang et al (2012) scale, comprising 3 items to be answered on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1=“strongly disagree” to 5=“strongly agree”).

Cynicism was assessed using 2 items from the Naus et al. (2007) scale to be answered on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1=“strongly disagree” to 5=“strongly agree”).

Affect towards work was assessed using a shorter version of the Multi-Affect Indicator from Warr et al (2013), comprised of 8 adjectives to describe a person’s own feelings and affects towards work (e.g., “Nervous”, “Tense”, etc.). For each adjective participants had to indicate how often they have felt that condition on a scale from 1=“never” to 5=“almost always or always” .

All the scales presented good Cronbach Alphas ranging between .74 and .90.

3.3 Data analysis

The survey data were analyzed with SPSS 21.0. The moderation hypothesis were tested considering Aiken and West (1991) recommendations, centering the predictor variables and moderators before computing the interaction terms. Centered scores were entered in the regression analysis and after that we also followed the recommendations of Aiken and West (1991) and Cohen, Cohen, West & Aiken (2003), for testing the significant interactions considering the simple slopes.

4. Findings

Descriptives and correlations among the studied variables are presented in Table 1. Overall it can be highlighted that where the expected relations between the basic needs and the negative and positive affect as well as with the behaviors of voice or cynicism. The correlational results for the diversity climate are also similar, all significant and in the expected direction except for the relation between inclusion climate and promotive voice.

The Main effects and Moderation Effects are presented in Tables 2 and 3. Results showed different results for each specific model combining each diversity climate dimension and basic needs. Organizational fairness had a significant effect on promotive voice and cynicism and an interaction effect with competence, buffering the negative impact of lower competence on cynicism. Furthermore, organizational inclusion had a significant effect for predicting positive affect and cynicism, and moderated the relationship between need for autonomy and cynicism and need for autonomy and negative affect toward work. Although only three moderations were found significant the findings enforce the relevance of an organizational climate characterized by fairness and inclusion in dealing with the diversity of the workers.

Theoretical and practical implications will be discussed.

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FIGURE 1 – Representation of the Moderation Model

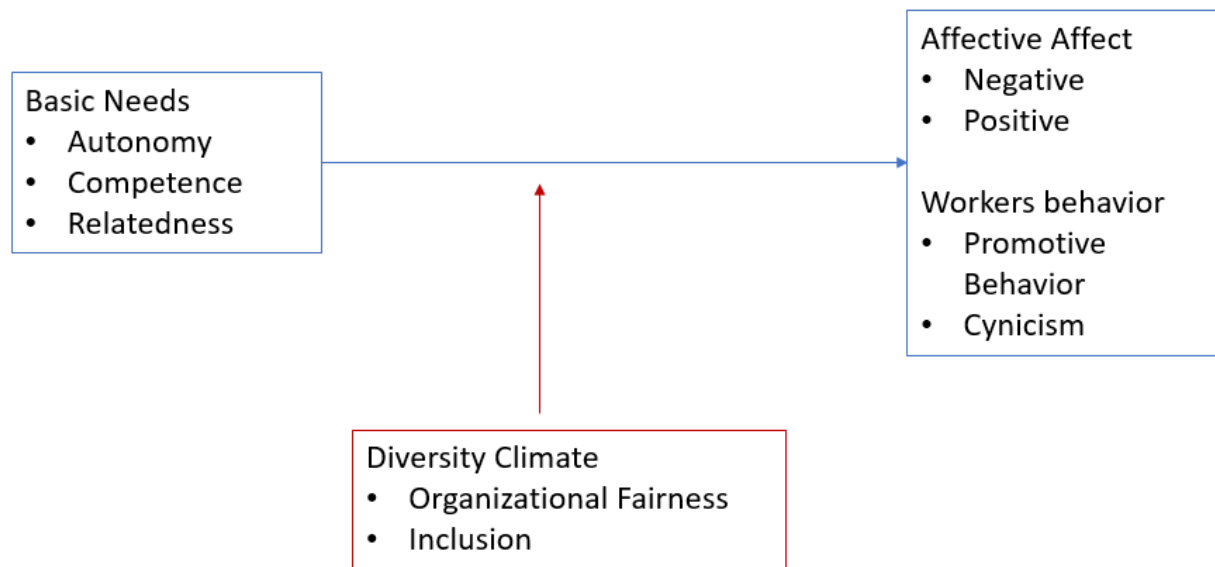


Table 1. Descriptive and correlations among the study variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. DC Organizational Fairness	3,81	0,81	1							
2. DC Organizational Inclusion	3,22	0,71	,29**	1						
3. Basic Need - Autonomy	3,73	0,63	,29**	,40**	1					
4. Basic Need - Competence	3,62	0,62	,21**	,32**	,62**	1				
5. Basic Need- relatedness	3,74	0,59	,15**	,22**	,59***	,56**	1			
6. Promotive Voice	3,85	0,61	,20**	-,02	,23**	,14*	,13*	1		
7. Cynicism	2,50	0,88	-,22**	-,14*	-,29**	-,18**	-,17**	,14**	1	
8. Positive Affect	2,86	0,86	,17**	,24**	,48**	,46**	,34**	,16**	-,25**	1
9. Negative Affect	2,02	0,78	-,14*	-,13*	-,33**	-,19**	-,15**	-,15*	,27**	,30**

*p<.05; **p>.01

Table 2. Regression Results for Diversity Climate – Organizational Fairness as a Moderator

	Positive Affect		Negative Affect		Promotive Voice		Cynicism	
	Beta	T	Beta	T	Beta	T	Beta	T
1. Basic Needs – Competence	,45***	8,45***	-,18	-3,09**	,11	1,90	-,13	-2,27*
2.DC Organizational Fairness	,08	1,48	-,10	-1,78	,18	2,99**	-,19	-3,27**
3. Interaction	-,00	-,05	,06	1,04	-,01	-,25	-,14	2,45*
Adjusted R ²	,21***		,05**		,04**		,08***	

*p<.05; **p>.01;***p<.001

	Positive Affect		Negative Affect		Promotive Voice		Cynicism	
	Beta	T	Beta	T	Beta	T	Beta	T
1. Basic Needs – Autonomy	,47	8,75***	-,33	-5,79***	,19	3,34**	-,25	-4,22**
2.DC Organizational Fairness	,04	,71	-,05	-,83	,14	2,29*	-,15	-2,58*
3. Interaction	-,03	-,65	,08	1,54	,11	1,96	,09	1,56
Adjusted R ²	,22***		,12***		,07***		,10***	

*p<.05; **p>.01;***p<.001

	Positive Affect		Negative Affect		Promotive Voice		Cynicism	
	Beta	T	Beta	T	Beta	T	Beta	T
1. Basic Needs – Relatedness	,32	5,88**	-,13	-2,31*	,11	1,82	-,13	-2,27*
2.DC Organizational Fairness	,12	2,24*	-,12	-2,06*	,18	3,13**	-,19	-3,41**
3. Interaction	,02	,32	,04	,75	,004	,07	,10	1,80
Adjusted R ²	12**		,03+		,04*		,07 ^{a*}	

*p<.05; **p>.01;***p<.001

Table 3. Regression Results for Diversity Climate - Inclusion as a Moderator

	Positive Affect		Negative Affect		Promotive Voice		Cynicism	
	Beta	T	Beta	T	Beta	T	Beta	T
1. Basic Needs – Competence	,43	7,94***	-,16	-2,66**	,17*	2,68	-,14	-2,30*
2.DC Organizational Inclusion	,09	1,81	-,08	-1,40	-,78	-1,27	-,10	-1,69
3. Interaction	,03	,59	,06	1,06	,03	,48	,07	1,21
Adjusted R ²	,21***		,04**		,02+		,04**	

*p<.05; **p>.01;***p<.001

	Positive Affect		Negative Affect		Promotive Voice		Cynicism	
	Beta	T	Beta	T	Beta	T	Beta	T
1. Basic Needs – Autonomy	,46	8,06***	-,29	-4,87***	,28	4,35** *	-,25	-3,93***
2.DC Organizational Inclusion	,06	,99	-,02	-,389	-,13	-2,12*	-,05	-,87
3. Interaction	,04	,68	,15	2,69**	-,01	-,12	,12	2,14*
Adjusted R ²	,22***		,12***		,06**		,09***	

*p<.05; **p>.01;***p<.001

	Positive Affect		Negative Affect		Promotive Voice		Cynicism	
	Beta	T	Beta	T	Beta	T	Beta	T
1. Basic Needs – Relatedness	,31	5,62***	-,11	-1,87	,14*	2,23*	-,12	-2,01*
2.DC Organizational Inclusion	,17	3,06**	-,11	-1,88	-,05	-,87	-,12	-2,00*
3. Interaction	,08	1,52	,09	1,67	-,05	-,83	,10	1,71
Adjusted R ²	,14***		,03*		,01		,04**	

*p<.05; **p>.01;***p<.001