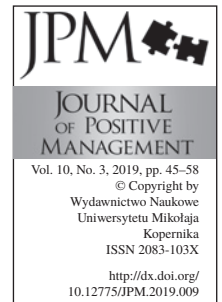# THE INFLUENCE OF PROJECT MANAGER'S TEMPORAL PERSPECTIVES ON EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE: A PRELIMINARY STUDY

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore the potential influence that the temporal perspectives of project managers have on their employees evaluation of the organizational climate. The researcher posits that employees will have a highly positive perception of their organizational climate when their managers demonstrate a time orientation toward the future rather than the present or the past.

Method: The research was conducted using two self-administered online questionnaires. Project managers were asked to complete the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI) while their project team members were asked to complete a Positive Organizational Climate survey. Data was collected from 79 project teams members and 17 project managers from two companies in the consulting sector in Poland.

Findings: Project teams with Future Time Orientated managers have significantly higher Positive Organizational Climate ratings than teams managed by either Present or Past Oriented project managers.

Implications/limitations either for further research, for practice, or for society: Though the study is limited both by the small number of participants and the very specific features of the selected sample of project managers it provides useful guidance to senior management in understanding how their choice of project managers may influence project member attitudes toward the organization.

Originality/value of the paper: This study is the first to examine the concept of the Individual Temporal Perspective's influence on employee perceptions of organizational climate, significantly contributing to the literature in organizational behavior studies.

Keywords: temporal perspective, time orientation, positive organizational climate, project managers

Paper Type: Research paper

1. Introduction

Human capital management remains a critical aspect of organizational functioning. Since it continues to be a source of competitive advantage, both scholars and practitioners continue to focus on this topic. One new research focus is in the area of positive psychology that initiated the development of a new trend in organizational analysis, called Positive Organizational Potential (POP) and explores positive factors such as Positive Organizational Culture and Positive Organizational Climate as a counterbalance to negative aspects of organizational functioning.

Research has shown that how employees perceive their workplace with its prevailing conditions and applicable rules may inhibit or promote specific behavioral patterns. Thus, a positive organizational climate enhances employees' motivation, productivity, organizational commitment, and morale (Goleman, 2000), while a negative organizational climate may result in procrastination (Lipińska-Grobelny and Michałowska, 2018), low morale and decreased performance.

Despite the numerous organizational climate studies, there is a need for more research focusing on new organizational and contextual factors that might moderate perceptions of organizational climate. This study is a modest step towards that aim as it contributes to the organizational literature by investigating one important psychological mechanism—the individual time orientation construct. More specifically, this research examines the Temporal Perspectives of managers and how those perspectives influence both how managers manage and how those practices may influence perceptions of a Positive Organizational Climate.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Developing the Positive Organizational Climate construct

The concept of organizational climate illustrates the organizational environment as rooted in the organization's value system, often portraying these social environments in relatively static terms. They are described as a fixed set of dimensions (Denison, 1996), including management style, flexibility, autonomy, communication, interpersonal relations, reward system, standards, organizational clarity, and involvement in the team.

The following prevailing features of organizational climate, noted by various authors (Howe, 1977; Schneider, 1975; Glick, 1985; Rousseau, 1988; Denison, 1996; Christopher et al., 2003), illustrate the more complexity of that construct, that can be described as:

- a "psychological atmosphere";
- reflecting individual – organizational interactions;

- affecting individuals' behavior in the workplace;
- an employees' perception of the organizational environment;
- perceptions varying greatly from person to person;
- based on shared experiences;
- may have either a subjective or objective focus;
- affecting people's motivation and productivity;
- providing a sense of the relationship between the organization and its employees;
- a set of properties that can be measured by climate surveys;
- related to the suitability of the work environment;
- the product of organization, not individuals;
- correlating with the support that employees feel they are granted by their organization;
- a mirror image of the level of employee motivation and job satisfaction.

From the above it follows, that organizational climate is reflected in peoples' thoughts, feelings and behaviors and, consequently, it is a temporary, subjective phenomenon and might be manipulated by those members of the organization who have power and influence, namely the organizational leaders.

In general, research has shown that people pay keen attention to negative information. Thus, looking for negative phenomena in organizational functioning is widespread as organizational actors routinely identify common ineffective and/ or harmful human resources practices and organizational system inadequacies. In consequence, most practitioners, as well as organizational researchers, usually discuss various organizational problems like interpersonal conflicts, turnover, lack of motivation, low morale, insufficient employee engagement, and change barriers, in hope that, if they are properly diagnosed, they can be overcome and the organization will inevitably thrive.

However, the problem-solving approach in organizational analysis has proven to be insufficient, causing organizational researchers to turn to an alternative way to investigate the state of organizations by identifying positive aspects of their functioning. This realization has led to apply positive psychology to organizational settings through developing the concept of Positive Organizational Potential (POP) with the combination of tangible and intangible factors, such as Positive Organizational Culture and Positive Organizational Climate.

Zbierowski and Bratnicki (2014) perceive Positive Organizational Culture as a coherent set of organizational norms and values focused around seven components: intraorganizational knowledge sharing, open intraorganizational communication, employees' social integration, courtesy and sense of humor in interpersonal relations, creativity of organizational members, ability to work under time pressure, pursue for self-improvement. When, accordingly to Glińska-Neweś (2010) Positive Organizational Climate is composed of the values such as:

cooperation, trust, respect, responsibility, commitment, proactivity, adaptability, creativity, perfection, openness, nobility, loyalty, rationality, honesty, reliability, respect for truth, justice, courage, and respect for the organization's traditions; and is shaped by the following six factors:

- organizational clarity: the feeling that everyone knows what is expected of them and understands how these expectations relate to the objectives of the organization;
- employee reward system: a belief that good work is recognized and rewarded;
- corporate standards: the employees' belief that their superiors attach great importance to their ultimate involvement in carrying out their tasks;
- flexibility: the individual perception of workplace restrictions as being very limited;
- responsibility: a sense that the scope of competences delegated to employees is wide enough;
- involvement in the team manifested by employee satisfaction and pride in belonging to the organization.

The detailed characteristics of the six dimensions of Positive Organizational Climate for this paper are as demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1.
Dimensions and their components of Positive Organizational Climate

Source: table developed by the author based on: Kalińska, 2010.

Dimension of organizational climate	Components of the dimension
organizational clarity	• organizational goals and objectives are clear • organizational culture is clear • organizational structure is transparent • tasks and expectations are well defined • criteria for employee evaluation are clear • procedures are explicit
reward system	• compensation is satisfactory • efforts and commitment gain recognition • good results gain recognition
corporate standards	• belief in the possibility of applying own interests at work and developing own talents • sense of self-realization, achieving progress in development • sense of the organization's support for striving for excellence • certainty of receiving feedback • sense that the work performed is interesting • sense of work-life balance • belief in the competence of superiors
flexibility	• freedom to create and implement innovations • lack of bureaucratic restrictions

Dimension of organizational climate	Components of the dimension
responsibility	• sense of independence • degree of autonomy • acceptance of justified risk in the organization
involvement in the team	• belief that the company is a source of pride • affection for colleagues • belief that you work with people with whom you can achieve a lot • team solidarity • integration in the team • belief in getting support from the company (in case of personal problems)

Table 1. Continued

These values and factors constitute work environment properties perceived and experienced by organizational members who function in this environment and that influence their motivation and behavior (Glińska-Neweś, 2010). Moreover, organizational climate and organizational behavior are interrelated. Organizational climate on the one hand affects well-being and in a consequence might have either a positive or negative influence on employee's behavior and on the other hand, behavior of organizational members, especially corporate leaders, shape the organizational climate (Józefowicz 2010a; Józefowicz 2010b; Glińska-Neweś, 2010).

Since, Deal and Kennedy (1982) indicated that the organizational climate is the important factor supporting company's success, this gives a powerful incentive to further explore this phenomenon in new contexts. There are many studies in the literature that recognize the impact of leadership and management practices on organizational climate (Watkins, 2000; Goleman, 2001; Stringer, 2002). In his research on emotional intelligence, Goleman (2001) has stated that 50–70 percent of employees' perception of work climate is linked to the characteristics of organizational leaders. The individual temporal perspective is one of these characteristics.

2.2. Individual Temporal Perspective of organizational leaders

The individual temporal perspective relates to how an individual thinks about time whether their perspective of the world is more biased either toward what was, what is or what can be. Time Orientation is an attribute of Individual Temporal Perspective, according to which people can be categorized as Future-Oriented, Past-Oriented or Present-Oriented (Zimbardo et al., 1997; Zimbardo and Boyd, 1999) and is manifested in the preferential direction in a subject's behavior. The most common leadership and management practices associated with these three contrasting categories of time frames may be summarized as in Table 2.

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Individual Temporal Perspective	Description of leadership and management practices
Past – oriented	• more sensitive to the value of people than reaching goals (is relation--oriented) • leadership style is administrative though affiliative • applies participation and teamwork as the main tools for motivating employees • values order • motivates followers through systematic rewards and punishment system; proposes reward system based on merits • provides their followers with plenty of feedback and builds the sense of belonging • executes discipline • tracking and control are emphasized relative to clearly stated goals • expects subordinates to comply with the corporate code and to participate in the rites and celebrations • loyal to their organizations and their members • has trust in their subordinates
Present – oriented	• prefers short-term planning • focuses on scheduling and monitoring the present results • leadership style is autocratic (authoritarian) • imposes the absolute control over subordinates • executes employee commitment through "checking up" on them and frequent meetings • prefers personal fulfilment to financial goals • enjoys being with people • is passionate about their work
Future – oriented	• focused on creating the future and long-term planning; • leadership style is charismatic • entrepreneurial, visionary, creative, flexible • change-tolerant, decisive and achievement oriented • tends to get ahead of his crew and doesn't give them time to catch up; • achieves objectives through personal sacrifices • achieves employee commitment through persistence

Table 2. Leadership and management practices related to individual temporal perspectives of managers

Source: table developed by the author based on: Paixão et al., 2013; Zimbardo and Boyd, 2014; Michalak, 2017; and own empirical study.

The studies indicate that time orientation has a profound effect on human behavior. So far, the influence of these time orientations on leadership style and managerial practices, though discussed in selected context, such as decision-making or motivation has largely been overlooked in organizational studies. Since corporate leaders shape the organizational climate (Józefowicz, 2010a) the following questions arise:

(1) *Is a positive organizational climate associated with managers of a specific temporal perspective?*

(2) *Do project managers with future time orientations contribute more to create a positive organizational climate than do project managers with either a present or past time orientation?*

In this research addressing the above questions I posit that project teams with managers who have a future time orientation will have significantly higher ratings of their positive organizational climate than teams managed by either present or past oriented project managers. More specifically, in terms of the means of team member ratings of organizational climate, the researcher argues that there is a difference in the mean ratings of three populations as reflected by the difference between the means (M_1) of sample of team members led by future oriented project managers, and the means (M_2) of samples of team members led by present oriented and (M_3) past oriented project team leaders.

3. A preliminary investigation into project managers' temporal perspectives influence on organizational climate

3.1. Research methodology

The research plan comprised three dependent variables and one independent variable. The dependent variables were identified as Group I, Group II and Group III. Group I comprised all those respondents who were part of project teams led by project managers identified through the Zimbardo Inventory questionnaire as having future temporal perspectives; Group II were those respondents who were part of project teams led by project managers tested as having present temporal perspectives; and Group III were those respondents who were part of project teams led by project managers who had tested as having past temporal perspectives.

The independent variables were the three temporal perspectives – Future, Present and Past – as manifested by the individual project managers leading Groups I, II and III.

The study was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, data was collected from October 20 to November 10, 2016. Respondents were chosen purposeful and included 17 project managers employed in the consulting sector. The study adopted a quantitative approach using data collected with the self-administered Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI) available on Zimbardo's official website [1]. This self-reported test comprises 56 items in the form of statements. For each question, the respondent chooses the most appropriate of the five available options for level of agreement. The test investigates orientation towards past-negative, past-positive, present-fatalistic, present-hedonistic and future time perspectives independently.

In the second stage of the study, conducted between October 20, 2016 and January 13, 2017, data was collected from the members of project teams, operating under 12 project managers selected in the first stage of the study. Questionnaires through Google form were distributed and a total of 83 questionnaires were received (response rate 91%). However, there were four returned questionnaires

excluded from the analysis due to incomplete responses, thus a total of 79 questionnaires were analyzed in this study.

The main aim in the second stage of the study was to elicit the employees' perception of the occurrence of the selected components of the Positive Organizational Climate in their work environment, comprising the project team members and the PM the respondents worked with. Organizational climate is a group-level construct, and refers to and is measured by individual perceptions of the work environment (Christopher et al., 2003). Measuring of organizational climate is subjective. It is perceived as positive if the particular factors affecting it are assessed by employees as consistent with their expectations. Consequently, we can discuss positive or negative organizational climate as a result of these reported perceptions.

The research method in this part of the study, was a self-administered questionnaire covering six dimensions of Positive Organizational Climate with reference to: a clear picture of the organization, corporate standards, a sense of flexibility, employee reward system, a sense of responsibility, and involvement in the team. The dichotomous scale (Yes/No) was applied to each statement, indicating agreement or disagreement of the respondent with the particular statement.

3.2. Overview of results

The ZTP Inventory revealed that the project managers represented three categories of individual time: Past-Positive, Present-Hedonistic and Future, respectively five, four and eight managers in each category. For the next stage of the study, four managers from each category were selected, with a minimum annual work period and one project completed with each project team. It gave a total of twelve PMs.

Next, data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics with reference to the three categories of PMs' individual time perspectives. The Table 4 shows the employees' assessment of the occurrence for each dimension of a Positive Organizational Climate in the project teams with those of the three temporal perspectives of each project manager. To evaluate the research hypothesis the accumulated data was evaluated using t-tests with a probability of $p = .05$ between each pair of groupings. If the means of these groups were shown to be statistically unrelated to one another the researcher could logically infer that it was the independent variable of temporal perspective that caused the difference among the groups.

First, the descriptive statistics shown in Table 4 reflect significant differences in perceptions of organizational climate in teams managed by future-oriented and past-oriented managers. All factors of the Positive Organizational Culture investigated in the study, except for *reward system*, were higher in the Group

Past-positive oriented PM	Present-oriented PM	Future-oriented PM
1. organizational clarity: *I know what my PM expects of me and I understand how these expectations relate to the objectives and tasks of the entire organization*		
70%	*43%*	*95%*
2. employee reward system: *My PM recognizes and rewards my good work*		
92%	*98%*	*73%*
3. corporate standards: *My PM attaches great importance to my ultimate involvement in carrying out my tasks in my team*		
89%	*95%*	*100%*
4. flexibility: *I perceive the restrictions in my team as being very limited*		
45%	*100%*	*97%*
5. responsibility: *The scope of competences delegated to me is wide enough for my expectations*		
58%	*100%*	*100%*
6. involvement in the team: *I am satisfied and proud of being a member of my team*		
78%	*91%*	*100%*

Table 4. Assessment of the occurrence of the six dimensions of the Positive Organizational Climate in the studied project teams

Source: table developed by the author based on the

I teams under future-oriented project managers (over 95% of *yes* responses) and much lower in Group III teams under past-oriented leaders.

The individual temporal perspective of managers with past orientation appear to discourage a positive organizational climate in this study, especially for two categories: *responsibility* with 58% and 45% in *flexibility* (see Table 4).

Lastly, all dimensions of the Positive Organizational Climate investigated in the study, except for *organizational clarity* (43%), were also highly rated (over 91%) for those teams under present-oriented project managers. Nevertheless, as shown in Table 5, there is still a statistically significant difference in the mean ratings between Groups I and II, indicating that the ratings of organizational climate reflect distinct populations. From these results, the researcher infers that while the responses in Table 4 are less pronounced between Groups I and II, those differences are still statistically significant with a $p = 0.00639$ (see Table 5).

Table 5. *T*-Test of Time-Orientation Sample Means

Source: Table developed by the author based on study results.

Time-Orientation Samples	*t*Values	*p*Values
Future: Present	3.03	0.00639
Future: Past	4.67	0.000432
Present: Past	1.04	0.161892

As seen in Table 5, the Group I participants (N=30) who were members of project teams led by managers with a future time orientation gave their organizational climate significantly higher positive ratings when compared to

Group III participants (N=25) led by project managers with past time orientations ($t(6) = 4.67$, $p = 0.000442$). Similarly, Group I project team members led by future oriented project managers gave their organizational climate significantly higher positive ratings when compared to Group II (N=24) participants led by project managers with present time orientations ($t(6) = 3.03$, $p = 0.00639$). However, Groups II and III cannot be described as statistically different since the calculated probability level ($p = 0.161892$) failed to meet the $p = 0.05$ threshold for accepting the research hypothesis.

In summary, there is evidence to support the prediction that project teams led by managers with future temporal perspectives will have a higher positive evaluation of the organization's climate than project team members whose managers have either a present temporal or a past temporal perspective.

3.3. Discussion

Temporal constructs have become an integral part of organizational analysis. One factor for this analysis is a time orientation that while unconscious is a fundamental cognitive process that provides a framework for organizing personal functioning. This framework reflects how one positions oneself in three chronological categories: the past, the present or the future. Features of the individual temporal perspective differentiate people among themselves (Zimbardo et al., 1997) and enables the explanation of coherent behavior patterns of project managers manifested in specific organizational practices, which affects relationships with participants of the project teams.

The results of this study show that, in the research sample, the organizational climate is perceived differently by the participants of the project teams depending on the individual temporal perspective of their superiors. Identified research areas reveal some interpretable patterns. In this analysis, I intend to pay attention to the leadership and management practices associated with particular temporal perspective providing or discouraging development of Positive Organizational Climate.

In this context, past-oriented managers promote the Positive Organizational Climate through maintaining the value of their organization. They favor stories about the "good old times" and build a strong sense of loyalty and pride in their organization's history, mission, and successes. When recognizing the individual accomplishments of their subordinates they know which of them work hard, favor individuals who make major contributions and reward their past achievements, and adjust current work schedules and rewards accordingly. Though past-oriented managers find it hard to focus on creating the future they are skilled at predicting it, as it requires accurate insights based on monitoring of the past (Thoms, 2003). Additionally, past-oriented managers apply a strict system of control over the work untaken by their team members in the current

and long term that make their subordinates uncomfortable, discouraging a Positive Organizational Climate.

In contrast, present-oriented managers, above all, are skillful at implementing plans. They precisely schedule tasks and track their progress, as they concentrate on day-to-day activities, like daily status reports. They favor novelty and undertake risky and innovative behaviors (Thoms, 2003) and consequently value and support creativity and entrepreneurship of those under their leadership, contributing to developing the Positive Organizational Climate. Simultaneously, when managers have a present-time focus they live for the moment and very often are prone to ignore the importance of past experience and accomplishments of their subordinates. Simultaneously, present-oriented leaders, due to their good understanding of people, as they are always in touch with them, are able to properly adjust impact tools, to create sufficient autonomy and supportive atmosphere at work, which affects the high assessment of the organizational climate. Though, at the same time, they tend to analyze in detail all the aspects of an on-going project that is recognized by their team members as "checking up" on people, undermining the Positive Organizational Climate.

The third time perspective category is based on the future. Due to the great care for planning and new challenges, future-oriented managers create an appealing organizational climate. Although, they focus on distant rewards, at the expense of present satisfaction, delaying gratification and avoiding time-wasting temptations, they are fair in their assessments and appreciate even more than their counterparts the effort and sacrifice of their subordinates, which also contribute to the Positive Organizational Climate. Simultaneously, future-oriented managers may not acknowledge the past achievements of their team members that make people feel uncomfortable. Moreover, as they deal well with ambiguity, they frequently get ahead of other team members making their subordinates feel lost and disappointed (Thoms, 2003). They put considerable effort into current activities and focus on achieving set goals (Thoms and Greenberger, 1995). They tend to be good at creating a vision and, therefore, are motivated by complex and positive cognitive images of the future of their organization. This vision drives their behavior and the behavior of members of their team and in this way enhance the Positive Organizational Climate. Furthermore, future-oriented managers are flexible and change-tolerant, and believe in the competence of subordinates. Hence, these behaviors all create a sense of freedom for their subordinates.

4. Limitations and future research
The study is affected by the inherent weaknesses associated with survey research which examines opinions and views. Individual Temporal Perspective (ITP) is assessed on a qualitative measure, which is subjective and prone to personal bias. In addition, ITP was assessed on a self-administered online questionnaires, which

in itself is subjective and may be prone to erroneous results, hence these managers could actually belong to different categories of individual time orientation.

Moreover, it should be noted that the predicted relationship between the Individual Temporal Perspective (ITP) and assessment of organizational climate are only applicable to study participants and not to the population as a whole. The study is limited both by the small number of participants and the very specific features of the selected sample of project managers whose working conditions are determined by the specificity of project activities. Therefore, further research in this neglected area should be pursued with representative samples from a variety of project teams in various industries.

5. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relation between Individual Temporal Perspectives of managers and dimensions of the Positive Organizational Climate. The study reveals that a positive relationship exists between the individual time perspective of project managers with future orientation and a positive organizational climate. This relationship does not statistically occur with either past or present oriented leaders.

Analysis of the results of this research, as depicted in Table 4, allows us to propose from an individual temporal perspective, the most important leadership and managerial practices that contribute to creating the Positive Organizational Climate. Those practices are as demonstrated in Table 6.

Table 6. Leadership and management practices contributing Positive Organizational Climate

Source: table developed by the author based on the results of the own empirical study.

Leadership practices	supporting, motivating and developing the people on their teams recognizing accomplishments and merits fostering positive relationships for teamwork and collaboration communicating openly and with respect focusing on creating attractive future and transmitting appealing and clear vision knowing and developing subordinates' ambitions, skills and interests setting challenges believing in subordinates and fostering confidence reinforcing creativity and flexibility setting a good role model for people on their teams strengthening group identity
Management practices	planning clearly and precisely work scheduling and monitoring outcomes encouraging group decision making giving feedback on personal development enforcing autonomy assessing performance

Notes

[1] http://www.thetimeparadox.com/zimbardo-time-perspective-inventory.

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