

***Linking Climate, Job Satisfaction  
and Contextual Performance  
to Customer Experience***

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### ABSTRACT

In this study, we examined a theoretical model that integrates organizational climate, job satisfaction, contextual performance behaviors, and customer satisfaction. Structural equation analyses showed that turnover intentions and the extent to which employees focused on helping one another, rather than customers, influenced customers' satisfaction with the organization's products and services.

### PRESS PARAGRAPH

This study brings together two important themes that are central to the literature on customer satisfaction: (a) the quality of an organization's climate; and, (b) the discretionary performance behavior of employees. A study conducted in a medium sized insurance and road services organization showed that the quality of the organization's climate influenced employees' job satisfaction which, in turn, influenced the extent to which they voluntarily engaged in performance related behaviors. The main finding showed that when these behaviors were directed toward helping other employees, rather than customers, customers were actually more satisfied with the company's products and services.

## **Linking Climate, Job Satisfaction and Contextual Performance to Customer Experience**

In recent years, there has been growing interest in the relationship between organizational behavior and the way it influences customers' experience with the organization's products and services. As a result of this interest, two important themes are beginning to emerge in the research literature. First, there is growing evidence to suggest that the quality of organizational climate determines, to some extent, the satisfaction and behavior of customers (e.g., Jimmieson & Griffin, 1998; Rucci, Kirn & Quinn, 1998; Schneider, White & Paul, 1998). Second, it is becoming more evident that contextual performance behaviors, such as those relating to helping colleagues and customers, play a role in determining the quality of a customer's experience (e.g., Baker & Braverman, 2001).

In this study, we propose a theoretical framework that integrates these two emerging themes, and provide an initial empirical test of the framework's core assumptions. Specifically, we argue that organizational climate influences contextual performance behaviors through employee attitudes, such as job satisfaction, and it is the contextual performance behaviors that ultimately influence customers' experience of an organization's products and services.

### **Organizational Climate**

Organizational climate refers to the perceptions that employees have about the way in which their organization functions (James & McIntyre, 1996). As noted by Griffin, Hart, and Wilson-Evered (2000), this means that organizational climate has two components. It involves the organizational structures and processes that are part of everyday organizational activity, as well as individual employees' perceptions of these activities. These perceptions may concern general organizational policies and practices in the work environment (e.g.,

Hart, Wearing, Conn, Carter, & Dingle, 2000; Schneider, 1990), or may be related to specific areas of work, such as the climate for customer service (Jimmieson & Griffin, 1998; Schneider, Wheeler, & Cox, 1992). Moreover, it has been demonstrated that employees can distinguish between different aspects of organizational climate, and often reach high levels of agreement about the way in which their organization functions (e.g., Burke, Borucki, & Hurley, 1992).

Several studies have established links between organizational climate and customer experience. Using a longitudinal methodology, Schneider et al. (1998) showed that an organization's service climate had a direct affect on customer perceptions of service quality. Jimmieson and Griffin (1998) found that role conflict, a particular aspect of climate, to be a significant predictor of client satisfaction. Kulesa, Lopez and Liakhovitski (2001) found that 'working relationships' was an important aspect of climate that influenced customers' perceptions of an organization's employees. Although these studies demonstrate that organizational climate is an important determinant of customers' experience, it is still necessary to establish the mechanism or process through which organizational climate actually influences customers' experience.

Schmit and Allscheid (1995) have provided some insight by demonstrating that the relationship between climate and customer satisfaction was mediated by employees' emotional response and behavioral intentions. This potential mechanism for linking organizational climate and customer experience is consistent with several studies that have linked organizational climate to job satisfaction (Griffin et al., 2000; James & Tetrick, 1986), and job satisfaction to contextual performance behaviors (Organ & Ryan, 1995). These findings suggest that organizational climate will influence the way employees think or feel about their jobs, and that this, in turn, will encourage the types of behaviors that influence customer experience.

## Contextual Performance

Contextual performance describes a variety of work behaviors that are important for organizational success, but that are not typically part of an individual's core task responsibilities (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). Contextual performance behaviors include activities that support the overall success of the organization, such as volunteering to carry out tasks, cooperating with coworkers, exerting effort, and promoting the organization to others. These behaviors can be linked to a range of constructs including prosocial organizational behavior (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986), extra-role behavior (Katz & Kahn, 1966), and organizational citizenship behavior (Bateman & Organ, 1983). Moreover, the interest in contextual performance has grown, because it describes a distinct dimension of work performance that is clearly influenced by individual motivational processes.

In a recent study that examined the relation between contextual performance behaviors and customer experience, Baker and Braverman (2001) found that when employees engaged in discretionary behaviors of an interpersonal nature, customers reported more favorable perceptions of customer service. This is consistent with the notion that a strong customer or service climate is important to organizational success in service related industries (Schneider et al., 1998). Although interpersonal contextual performance behaviors can be directed toward colleagues or customers (Organ & Ryan, 1995), it is still not known whether this distinction is important in determining customer experience. For example, conventional wisdom would suggest that when employees pay particular attention to assisting or helping their customers, it is likely that the customers will appreciate this service and report greater levels of satisfaction. However, the quality of an organization's services may be enhanced by employees helping and supporting one another in the delivery of the service. Accordingly, it is important to distinguish between the discretionary behaviors that are oriented toward employees' colleagues from those that are oriented toward customers.

The prosocial nature of these interpersonal contextual performance behaviors also raises the possibility that other related behaviors are important in determining the experience of customers. For example, Puffer (1987) has noted that the noncompliant behavior can be considered the flip side of prosocial contextual performance. This may be particularly important when the noncompliant behavior is strongly related to a lack of engagement or motivation on the part of employees. It is reasonable to argue that this situation may occur when employees have disengaged from the organization, because they have decided to quit their jobs. When people intend to leave their jobs, it is possible that they will be less helpful and no longer motivated to promote the organization's products and services when dealing with external customers.

Another form of prosocial behavior, that is important for the success of an organization, is innovation. Innovation occurs when employees make changes to their work practices, products and services by introducing new ideas and flexibility. It has long been viewed as a core component of contextual performance behavior (Katz, 1964; Smith, Organ & Near, 1983), and has the potential to influence customers' experience through changes made to the delivery of an organization's products and services.

### The Present Study

In the present study, we examined the relations between organizational climate, job satisfaction, contextual performance behaviors, and customer experience. Based on the preceding discussion, it was hypothesized that organizational climate would influence job satisfaction, which in turn, would influence contextual performance behaviors. It was also hypothesized that contextual performance behavior would wholly mediate the relation between organizational climate and job satisfaction on the one hand, and customer experience on the other. Finally, it was also hypothesized that the job satisfaction would wholly mediate

the relation between organizational climate and contextual performance behaviors, except in those cases where the contextual performance behaviors were focused on the behavior of the work team, rather than the behavior of individual employees. These hypotheses are shown diagrammatically in Figure 1.

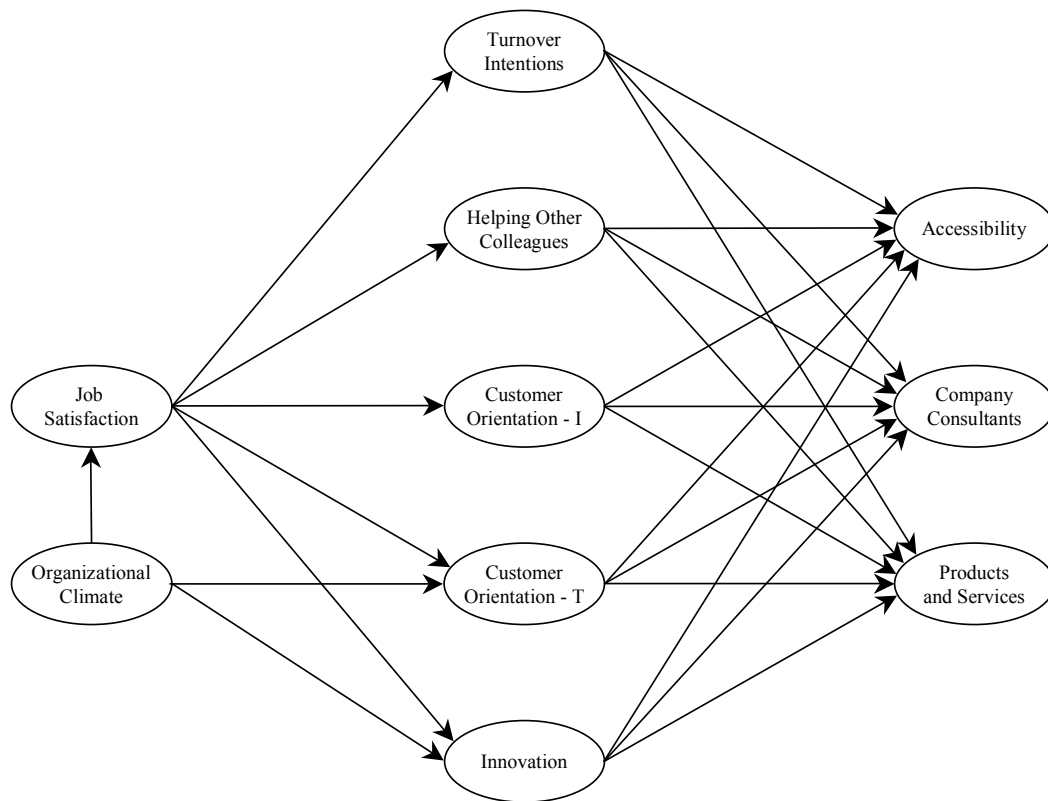


Figure 1. Theoretical model showing the hypothesized relations among organizational climate, job satisfaction, contextual performance, and customer experience.

## Method

### Participants

Data were obtained from the employees and customers of an Australian insurance and road services organization. During the last quarter of 2000, all 2,186 employees were invited to participate in an organization-wide employee opinion survey. The organization is structured into 175 discrete work units that perform a wide variety of functions. Of these,

there were 24 retail outlet and 28 call centre teams that had direct contact with customers. A random sample of these customers was invited to participate in a customer experience survey as part of the organization's ongoing monitoring of its customers' views about the quality of its products and services.

Employee Data. Of the 806 employees who worked in the 24 retail outlet and 28 call centre teams, 558 agreed to participate in the employee opinion survey (response rate: 69.23%). Each employee received an individually addressed questionnaire booklet that they were asked to complete during scheduled staff meetings or during the course of their normal work activities. Completed questionnaires were returned directly to the first author in a self-addressed envelope marked 'confidential.' The number of employees who responded from each of the retail outlet and call centre teams varied from 2 to 30 ( $\underline{M} = 10.73$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 4.43$ ). Their lengths of service ranged from less than 1 year to 29 years ( $\underline{M} = 3.28$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 4.48$ ), and their ages ranged from 18 years to 57 years ( $\underline{M} = 31.11$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 9.37$ ). Female employees accounted for 73% of the sample.

Customer Data. A simple random sample of customers, stratified by retail outlet and call center team, was drawn, on a weekly basis, from a list of all customers who had contact with each of the 24 retail outlet and 28 call center teams. The sample of customers was invited to participate in a telephone interview that was used to administer a questionnaire about the quality of the organization's products and services. This procedure ensured that customers were asked about their experience within one week of their contact with the organization. A total of 1,777 customers provided data during the last quarter of 2000. The number of customers who responded from each of the retail outlet and call centre teams varied from 24 to 34 ( $\underline{M} = 32.50$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.66$ ).



## Measures

Organizational Climate. Employees' perceptions about seven different aspects of their work environment (appraisal and recognition, goal congruency, role clarity, supportive leadership, participative decision-making, professional growth, and professional interaction) were assessed using 35 items from Hart, Griffin, Wearing & Cooper's (1996) Organizational Climate Scale. This scale is based on the components of the School Organizational Health Questionnaire (Hart et al., 2000) that were designed to assess the organizational factors that are common to most organizations. Employees were asked to rate the extent to which each item (e.g., "My work objectives are always well defined") described their work team on a 5-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Confirmatory factor analyses showed that the seven separate dimensions could be aggregated at a second-order level to provide an overall index of organizational climate (coefficient alpha = .95).

Job Satisfaction. Employees were asked to rate three items that assessed their overall levels of job satisfaction. These items were, "Overall, how satisfied are you with your job?," "Overall, how satisfied are you with the work that you do?," and "Overall, how satisfied are you with this company as an organization to work for." Employees were asked to rate each item on a 7-point scale that ranged from "extremely dissatisfied" to "extremely satisfied." Previous research has shown that this 3-item scale correlated .72 ( $N = 1,064$ ,  $p < .001$ ) with the global job satisfaction score obtained from the 20-item version of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Ostrogay, 2001). Moreover, the internal consistency of the 3-item scale was supported by a confirmatory factor analysis<sup>1</sup> of the data collected during this study (coefficient alpha = .80).

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<sup>1</sup> The results of the confirmatory factor analyses conducted on the measures used in the study are available from the authors upon request.

Contextual Performance. Five separate dimensions of contextual performance were assessed. Three of these dimensions focused on the behavior of individual employees and two were concerned with employees' views about the behavior of their work teams. A series of confirmatory factor analyses supported the discriminant validity of the five dimensions, with the true score correlations among the five factors ranging from .08 to .77 ( $M = .32$ ,  $SD = .20$ ), in absolute value.

The individually focused dimensions were Helping Work Colleagues (two items, coefficient alpha = .77), Customer Orientation – Individual (5 items, coefficient alpha = .84), and Turnover Intentions (3 items, coefficient alpha = .88). Helping Work Colleagues and Customer Orientation – Individual were assessed on a 7-point scale that asked employees to rate the extent to which they engaged in particular behaviors over the past month, ranging from “rarely or never” to “all of the time.” Turnover Intentions was assessed with a 5-point scale that asked employees to rate the extent to which they had seriously considered changing or leaving their jobs over the past month, ranging from “rarely or never” to “very often.”

The team focused dimensions were Customer Orientation – Team (4 items, coefficient alpha = .82) and Innovation (4 items, coefficient alpha = .80). For each of these dimensions, employees were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed that each statement (i.e., item) applied to their particular work team on a 7-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”

Customer Experience. Three dimensions of customer experience were assessed with 34 items from a larger customer experience questionnaire. These dimensions were identified through a series of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses that were conducted to test and refine the a priori theoretical model that was believed to underpin the customer experience questionnaire. The results of these analyses demonstrated that the 34 items

assessed 6 first-order factors. Moreover, the results showed that five of these factors were best represented by two second-order factors.

The three dimensions of customer experience were Accessibility (2 items, coefficient alpha = .81), Company Consultants (18 items, coefficient alpha = .98), and Products and Services (5 items, coefficient alpha = .80). Accessibility refers to customers' views about the ease with which they were able to access the products and services of the company (e.g., "Thinking about the accessibility of the company's consultants, how satisfied are you with the ease with which you were able to contact the company?"), whereas Company Consultants refers to the extent that customers believed that the company's consultants were helpful, efficient, attentive and provided appropriate information (e.g., "How satisfied are you that the company consultant displayed a willingness to help you?"). Products and Services refers to customers' overall satisfaction with the products and services provided by the company (e.g., "How would you rate the company's products and service as being worth what is paid from them?"). Customers were asked to rate each of the 25 items on an 11-point scale that ranged from (0) "extremely dissatisfied" to (10) "extremely satisfied."

## Results

The Linear Structural Relations (LISREL VIII) Program (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1993) was used to examine the hypotheses about the relations among the 10 study variables. All of the structural equation models reported in this paper were based on variance-covariance matrices, and employed the maximum likelihood method of estimation. The maximum likelihood method of estimation has been shown to be robust against moderate departures from the skewness and kurtosis of the normal distribution (Cuttance, 1987). The skewness and kurtosis was less than 1.2 in absolute value for all of the observed variables used in the reported models.

For the purpose of the models examined in this study, the unit of analysis was the 24 retail outlet and 28 call centre teams. This meant that the effective sample size for the structural equation analyses was 52 work teams. The average scores obtained by each of the work teams on the 10 observed variables were used during the analyses. Due to the relatively small sample size, it was not appropriate to use multiple indicators to estimate the latent constructs in the structural equation analyses (Hart, 1999). Accordingly, the work team's average scores on the observed measures were used as single indicators of the latent constructs. In all models, measurement error was not taken into account.

There are a number of debatable methodological issues that come into play when estimating the reliability of aggregate measures and, therefore, we decided to adopt a more conservative approach and assume that there was no measurement error. This approach had the practical advantage of minimizing the number of parameters that had to be estimated in each of the structural equation models. In effect, this meant that the number of parameters estimated was similar to that estimated in a standard multiple regression analysis. However, the limitation was that the strength of the relations in the models was likely to be under-estimated due to attenuation resulting from measurement error. Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for the observed variables that were used in the structural equation analyses.

Two structural equation models were estimated. In the first model, Accessibility, Company Consultants and Products and Services were regressed onto the five contextual performance variables which, in turn, were regressed onto Job Satisfaction. Consistent with the theoretical model shown in Figure 1, Customer Orientation – Team, Innovation, and Job Satisfaction were all regressed onto Organizational Climate. The correlations between the residual variances for Accessibility, Company Consultants and Products and Services were

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations and Intercorrelations for the Work Team Average Scores on the Observed Variables.

Variable	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Organizational Climate	445.83	39.93									
2. Job Satisfaction	61.45	8.72	.62**								
3. Turnover Intentions	35.68	11.63	-.56**	-.69**							
4. Helping Work Colleagues	77.31	7.98	.11	.28*	-.02						
5. Customer Orientation - Individual	89.10	2.99	-.12	.03	-.24*	.31*					
6. Customer Orientation - Team	73.22	6.45	.59**	.58**	-.43**	.44**	.26*				
7. Innovation	60.52	8.20	.65**	.59**	-.49**	.35*	.11	.72**			
8. Accessibility	15.84	1.30	.03	.28*	-.28*	.50**	.10	.38**	.38**		
9. Company Consultants	159.20	7.35	.12	.31*	-.26*	.49**	.05	.29*	.26*	.58**	
10. Products and Services	41.68	1.94	.08	.13	-.27*	.32**	.01	.27*	.17	.61**	.54**

Note. N = 52. \*\*  $p < .01$  level (one-tailed), \*  $p < .05$  level (one-tailed).

estimated, as were the correlations between the residual variances for the five contextual performance variables.

The goodness-of-fit statistics showed that there was an excellent fit between the observed variance-covariance matrix and the tested model ( $\chi^2 = 13.87$ ,  $df = 9$ ,  $p > .10$ , relative noncentrality index = .097, standardized root-mean-square-residual = .05). Examination of the beta coefficients showed that a number of the hypothesized relations failed to reach significance at the .05 level. Accordingly, we estimated a second model in which the non-significant relations were removed from the model. The only exception was the relations between Turnover Intentions and the three customer experience variables. Although these relations failed to reach significance at the .05 level, the standardized beta coefficients were all greater than .20, in absolute value, with the relation between Turnover Intentions and Company Consultants being significant at the .10 level. Given the limited statistical power that was available for these analyses, it was possible that these relations would reach significance once the other non-significant relations had been removed from the model. The standardized beta coefficients for the second model are shown in Figure 2, and the standardized parameter coefficients for the correlations that were estimated among the residuals are shown in Table 2.

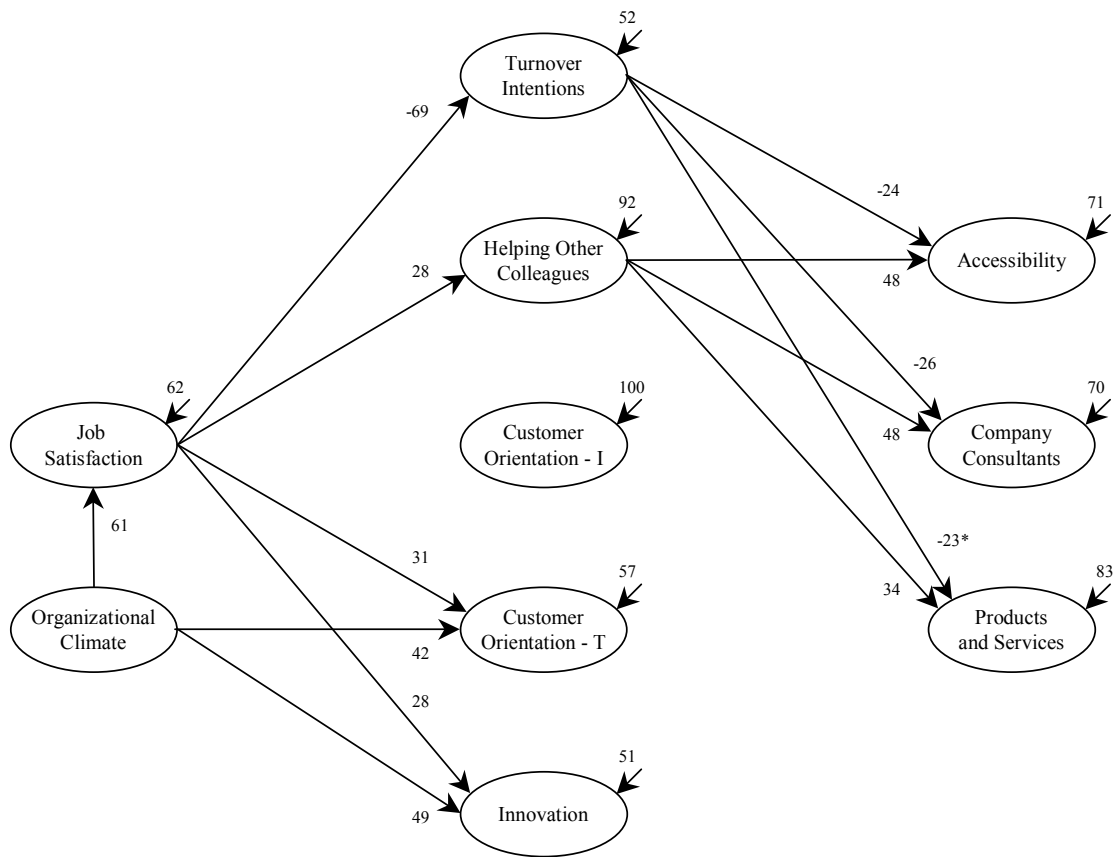


Figure 2. Standardized Maximum Likelihood Parameter Estimates, Showing the Relations Between Organizational Climate, Job Satisfaction, Contextual Performance, and Customer Experience. [All parameter estimates significant at the .05 level, except those indicated by an \* which indicates significance at the .10 level. Decimal points have been omitted.]

Table 2

Standardized Maximum Likelihood Parameter Estimates For the Correlations that were Estimated Among the Residual Variances for the Model Shown in Figure 2.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Turnover Intentions							
2. Helping Work Colleagues	.18						
3. Customer Orientation - Individual	.26**	.30**					
4. Customer Orientation - Team	.02	.30**	.29**				
5. Innovation	-.01	.22**	.15	.26**			
6. Accessibility							
7. Company Consultants						.24**	
7. Products and Services						.35**	.31**

Note.  $N = 52$ . \*\*  $p < .01$  level (one-tailed), \*  $p < .05$  level (one-tailed). Blank cells below the diagonal were not estimated.

The goodness-of-fit statistics showed that there was an excellent fit between the observed variance-covariance matrix and revised model ( $\chi^2 = 16.45$ ,  $df = 19$ ,  $p > .10$ , relative noncentrality index = .1.00, standardized root-mean-square-residual = .05). As shown in Figure 2, Helping Other Colleagues was significantly related to Accessibility ( $\beta = .48$ ,  $p < .001$ ), Company Consultants ( $\beta = .48$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and Products and Services ( $\beta = .34$ ,  $p < .01$ ). It was also found that Turnover Intentions was significantly related to Accessibility ( $\beta = -.24$ ,  $p < .05$ )



and Company Consultants ( $\beta = -.26, p < .05$ ). The relation between Turnover Intentions and Products and Services was significant at the .10 level ( $\beta = -.23, p < .10$ ).

The results also showed that Job Satisfaction was significantly related to Turnover Intentions ( $\beta = -.69, p < .001$ ), Customer Orientation – Team ( $\beta = .31, p < .01$ ), Helping Other Colleagues ( $\beta = .28, p < .05$ ), and Innovation ( $\beta = .28, p < .05$ ). Consistent with our hypotheses, Organizational Climate was significantly related to Job Satisfaction ( $\beta = .61, p < .001$ ), Innovation ( $\beta = .49, p < .001$ ), and Customer Orientation – Team ( $\beta = .42, p < .001$ ).<sup>22</sup>

Contrary to expectations, the results of both models showed that Organizational Climate and Job Satisfaction were not significantly related to Customer Orientation – Individual. More importantly, the results of the two models demonstrated that Customer Orientation – Individual, Customer Orientation – Team, and Innovation were not significantly related to Accessibility, Company Consultants, or Product and Services. These findings were evidenced by the non-significant beta coefficients in the first model and the absence of significant modification indices in the second model.

## Discussion

The main aim of this study was to investigate the relations between organizational climate, job satisfaction, contextual performance, and customer experience. The results of

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<sup>2</sup> The comparative models that were estimated to test the hypothesis that the relation between organizational climate and job satisfaction on the one hand, and customer experience on the other hand, was wholly mediated by contextual performance behaviors have not been reported in the interests of brevity. However, this hypothesis was supported by the model shown in Figure 2, in as much as the tested model was an excellent fit to the data, and there were no significant modification indices to support a significant path linking Organizational Climate and Job Satisfaction directly to Accessibility, Company Consultants and Products and Services. The results of the comparative models support this conclusion, and the results for these models are available from the authors on request.

structural equation analyses provided empirical support for the notion that organizational climate contributed to job satisfaction, which in turn, contributed to different aspects of contextual performance behavior. It was also found that organizational climate contributed directly to the customer orientation and innovation behaviors of the work teams. This is consistent with our hypothesis that organizational climate would have a direct and indirect effect on contextual performance variables that assessed team oriented behaviors.

Consistent with the findings of Baker and Breverman (2001), the results of this study demonstrate that contextual performance behaviors of an interpersonal nature are important in determining customers' experience of an organization's products and services. More importantly, however, the results showed that it was employees' focus on helping one another, rather than a focus on helping their customers, that influenced customers' perceptions about the quality of the organization's products and services. Interestingly, it was also found that the turnover intentions of employees tended to detract from the quality of customers' experience. It is possible that once employees have decided to leave their organization, customers are able to sense a degree of disengagement.

There are two limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. First, this study was based on information obtained in a single organizational setting, and second, the sample of work teams was relatively small. Nevertheless, this study has provided strong empirical evidence to demonstrate that the organizational context is important in influencing how employees help and support one another, and that this behavior is a strong predictor of customers' satisfaction with an organization's products and services.

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