

# The Relationship between Shared Vision and Organizational Climate in Learning Organizations: A Study in the Banking Sector

**Adnan CELIK**

Professor, Management and Organization, Selcuk University, Konya, Turkey

E-mail: [adnancelik@selcuk.edu.tr](mailto:adnancelik@selcuk.edu.tr)

**Turgut Emre AKYAZI**

Lecturer, School of Foreign Languages, Aksaray University, Aksaray, Turkey

E-mail: [teakyazi@gmail.com](mailto:teakyazi@gmail.com)

**Tahir AKGEMCI**

Professor, Management and Organization, Selcuk University, Konya, Turkey

E-mail: [takgemci@selcuk.edu.tr](mailto:takgemci@selcuk.edu.tr)

DOI: 10.6007/IJARBSS/v6-i2/2024 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v6-i2/2024>

## **Abstract**

Organizational learning can be regarded as the process of gaining new information and understanding (Ozdevecioglu & Bickes, 2012). Shared vision, which is one of the elements of organizational learning, is a process formed and shaped by team members. Creating shared vision is considered to be one of the most important mission of 21st century leaders (Pearce & Ensley, 2004). Organizational climate is defined the perceptions of the employees regarding the workplace environment (Cekmecelioglu, 2006). The aim of this study is to determine the relationship between shared vision and organizational climate. The data were collected via questionnaire method. The organizational learning scale developed by Subas (2010) was used in order to measure shared vision and the organizational climate scale used in Erdogan's (2013) study was used in order to find out the level of organizational climate. The study was performed on 80 employees of 8 banks (3 state and 5 private) in Aksaray. The findings of the study revealed a positive and meaningful relationship between shared vision and organizational climate. Besides, it was found out that the perception of organizational climate is meaningfully different in state banks and private banks.

**Keywords:** Learning organizations, organizational learning, shared vision, organizational climate

**JEL Classification:** D23

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Today firms face certain challenges such as rapid change in environment, increased competition and environmental uncertainties. To cope with these difficulties, organizations endeavour to follow strategies that will enable them to handle uncertainties and meet demands in a timely and appropriate manner and they redesign their organizational structure to make continuous development possible. This process requires the firms to possess qualified and competent employees. Thus, one of the strategies that have been suggested to firms for nearly twenty years is organizational learning (Ugurlu & Kizildag, 2014). The industrial society has emphasized continuous development and change with the “Total Quality Management” approach, and radical change and development with “Rearrangement of Work Processes” approach. The knowledge society has focused on the “Learning Organization” in its effort to bring continuous change and development. As the characteristic of knowledge and communication era is the collection and sharing of information and experiences in a fast and effective way, to become a “learning organization” has become an indispensable factor (Yumusak & Yildiz, 2011). It can be observed in the learning organization literature and practice that generally private sector institutions are handled. There are efforts to adapt learning organization approach to public institutions, however those who make these efforts presuppose that formulas designed for private institutions will be effective for public institutions as well (Bayraktaroglu & Kutanis, 2002). Organizational climate, on the other hand, is a concept that has been studied since the late 1930s and the studies regarding this concept are considered to be based on Lewin’s “Force Field Theory” and social psychology approach. Majority of research on climate is experimental, rather than theoretical (Aydogan, 2004).

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1. Learning Organization**

Learning means to be on the road. The learning organization is the organization on the road. This is a departure for an endless journey. This journey is the journey of learning more and more every day and becoming a master (Balay, 2012). Organizational learning can be considered as obtaining new information and new perspective (Ozdevecioglu & Bickes, 2012). Learning organizations are those which can learn from their own rights and wrongs, adapt their actions to the changing environmental conditions in a systematic way and transform and develop itself continually. Organizations with the capacity of learning fast can adapt to new conditions more quickly and possess significant strategic advantages in the competitive environment (Basim et al., 2009). Learning happens inside a structure deliberately created for that purpose, however, it is especially informal workplace learning that has recently received a

lot of attention. Informal workplace learning is less prestructured, more in control of the learner, embedded in daily working activities of the employee and therefore often a by-product of some other activity, and may happen unconsciously or incidentally (Froechlich et al., 2014).

Senge (1990), who put forward the term “learning organization”, suggests that the whole global business world learns to learn together and has become a learning community. According to Senge, the most obvious reason for establishing learning organizations is that we have only recently started to understand the skills required to become such an organization (1990). The most basic distinction between learning organization and classical authoritarian organizations is that learning organization possesses certain fundamental disciplines (Senge, 1990). The five disciplines required to become a learning organization are *systems thinking*, *personal mastery*, *shared vision*, *mental models* and *team learning* (Senge, 1990):

- *Systems Thinking*: Systems thinking is a theoretical framework, a sum of knowledge that has been developed in the last fifty years. Actions affect each other in a cause-effect chain. Things can be understood by considering the system as a whole, not the pieces of the pattern separately.
- *Personal Mastery*: It is the discipline of clarifying our personal horizons, focusing our energies, developing our patience and seeing reality objectively
- *Shared Vision*: Purposes, values and feelings of duty that are deeply shared in the organization.
- *Mental Models*: Beliefs, values, assumptions and mind-sets that are deep-seated in our minds.
- *Team Learning*: The basic learning unit in the modern organizations is not individuals, but teams. Individuals cannot learn unless the teams learn.

The basic characteristics of a learning organization is due to its emphasis on a continuous learning strategy and culture, flexible rewards and structures, participation in decision making, and open communication (Akella & Akella, 2012). Learning organizations have a relatively flexible management structure. Cooperation and teamwork is quite important to achieve success in these organizations. Information is shared with all individuals and units for continuous and permanent learning. Learning organizations have strong cultures that increase learning, clarity, creativity and efficiency and effective leaders (Balay, 2012). In the learning organizations, the employees focus on the learning processes carried out cooperatively by all employees rather than their own performances (Basim et al., 2009). The approach of the learning organizations towards change is quite different. While other organizations adapt to

change within the existing values and structures, learning organizations aim to change themselves and learn something from the change. To continue the competition in the market, it is essential to adapt to the changes in a quick way. However, there is a phenomenon that is different from change because learning organizations not only try to adapt to changing conditions but learn from these changes as well. In other words, they adopt a proactive learning style, not a reactive one (Bayraktaroglu & Kutanis, 2002).

## **2.2. Shared Vision**

Shared vision can be defined simply as the answer to the question “What do we want to create?” Just as personal visions are the pictures and representations people carry in their minds, shared vision is likewise the representations employees carry in their minds. These images create a feeling of commonality (Senge, 1990). Shared vision is a process that is formed and shaped by the team members. Shared vision is regarded to be the most important mission of the twentieth century leaders. Pearce and Ensley define shared vision as “a common mental model of the future state of the team or its tasks that provides the basis for action within a team” (2004). Another definition suggests that shared vision is the ideas, language, culture and norms that is common among the group members and organizational units and governs the actions, decisions and behaviors of the members (Colakoglu, 2012).

Shared vision is based on the idea that an organization has a unique aim and destiny. A vision statement articulates that purpose and provides a beacon of clarity for strategic action. However, a shared vision is frequently built on top of unexplored, unarticulated assumptions about the present and the future. If members of an organization can't agree on current reality, they cannot move towards a desired future (Sales & Savage, 2010). Preston and Karahanna mentions six mechanisms that are essential to create shared vision. Those are *shared business language, visioning network hierarchy, educational leadership, commonalities, strategic knowledge and relational capital* (2009).

According to Paroby et al., shared vision can be established only if the environment is understood accurately and the individual perceives his own awareness and other people's awareness correctly (2010). It is harder to create shared vision in public institutions than in private institutions. The reasons for this are factors such as the difficulty of predicting the aims of the governments, the differences among the governments in terms of obtaining using political power and the conflict among political parties (Bayraktaroglu & Kutanis, 2002).

### **2.3. Organizational Climate**

Organizational climate can be defined as the perceptions of the employees regarding the workplace environment of the organization (Cekmecelioglu, 2006). Organizational climate is also considered as the elements of the social environment that are perceived consciously. Studies on organizational climate focus on the effect of the environment on individuals and groups. Organizational climate represents the common perceptions of the employees related to formal and informal policies, practices, events and procedures within the organization (Boh & Wong, 2013).

Just as “climate” is the environmental conditions of a certain region in a certain time period, “organizational climate” refers to the perceived atmosphere of an organization (Randhawa & Kaur, 2014). According to another definition, organizational climate is a characteristic of the organization itself and the explanations of employees regarding the organizational functioning (Lin & Liu, 2012).

Litwin and Stringer defined organizational climate as “a set of measurable properties of the work environment, perceived directly or indirectly by people who live and work in this environment and assumed to influence their motivation and behavior”. Studies on organizational climate have revealed that the term has a relationship with organizational phenomena such as commitment, leadership behaviors, job performance, job satisfaction, productivity, motivation and the quality of work group interaction (Mesarra & El-Kassar, 2013). Organizational climate is both theoretically and practically a significant organizational factor as it is a medium between interpersonal and working behavior immanent to organizational efficacy. Organizational climate affects organizational and psychological processes in communication, decision making, conflict solving, motivation, job satisfaction, organizational welfare, thus organizational efficiency and productivity. There are several benefits resulting from an effective organizational climate. They can be systematically identified as (Bogdanovic, 2011):

- **Direct benefits:** Better use of organizational capacities, improved productivity, reduced absenteeism, reduced number of injuries and professional diseases
- **Indirect benefits:** Reduced costs of healthcare and social care, longer fitness for work
- **Emotional-motivational benefits:** Increased job satisfaction, improved working atmosphere and feeling of common welfare, improved communication among individuals and groups, improved stress managing skills, improved motivation.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Aim**

The aim of this study is to find out the relationship between shared vision and organizational climate. The basic purpose of the study is to determine the relationship between shared vision and organizational climate in the public banks and private banks in the province of Aksaray.

#### **3.2. Sampling Process**

In the study, banks, which are considered as learning organizations (Froehlich et al., 2014) were thought to be an appropriate sample for this study. The study was carried out on 80 bank employees working in 8 banks (3 public, 5 private) in the province of Aksaray, Turkey. The bank employees to whom questionnaires were given are all employees working in personal loan units. They were deliberately chosen for study as other bank employees working in the teller units are too busy to fill in the questionnaires of the study.

#### **3.3. Hypotheses**

In accordance with the aim of the study, the hypotheses were formed based on this purpose and analyses were performed on whether shared vision and organizational climate perceptions vary according to demographical features of the participants. Therefore, the research hypotheses were formed as follows:

*H1. There is a positive and meaningful relationship between shared vision and organizational climate.*

*H2. Shared vision perception varies according to the educational status of the employees.*

*H3. Organizational climate perception varies according to the educational status of the employees.*

*H4. Shared vision perception varies according to which sector the employees work in.*

*H5. Organizational climate perception varies according to which sector the employees work in.*

### **3.4. Data Collection**

In the study, questionnaire method was preferred due to two reasons. The first reason is that the return rate is faster in the questionnaire method. The second reason is that the questionnaire is one of the methods to measure the perceptions of the employees towards shared vision and organizational climate.

3 public banks and 5 private banks in the province of Aksaray have been included in the study sample. 80 employees working in the mentioned banks were given questionnaires. After questionnaires were filled in by the employees in one bank, another bank was visited. The whole data were collected in 3 days. 80 bank employees participated in the study. 8 among all the questionnaires were excluded from the study as they were not filled appropriately, therefore 72 questionnaires were considered appropriate for analysis. The return rate was calculated as 90%.

### **3.5. Scales Used in the Study**

**Shared Vision Scale:** The “Learning Organization Scale” developed by Subas (2010) and used in Karadurmus’s (2012) Master of Arts thesis (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0,90$ ) was preferred for the study. The items 12,13,14,15,16,17,18 were included in the shared vision dimension, thus shared vision perception was measured by these 7 items in this study.

**Organizational Climate Scale:** The 8 items included in the organizational climate scale (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0,834$ ) used in the Master of Arts thesis of Erdogan (2013) under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Serif Simsek were used in this study to measure bank employees’ perceptions of organizational climate.

### **3.6. Data Analysis and Findings**

The data obtained from the participants were analyzed via SPSS 20 software. First, KMO and Bartlett’s measure of sampling adequacy was used in order to test whether the sample of the study was adequate enough for analysis. The KMO values of shared vision and organizational climate were 0,812, and 0,825 respectively. Next, Cronbach’s Alpha values regarding the reliability of the scales were calculated. After that, frequencies and percentages regarding the demographic data of the participants were analyzed. After this analysis, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed to reveal the distribution of the dataset. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov distribution test revealed that the data was not normally distributed; thus Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis tests were carried out to find out whether the variables vary according to demographical features and the relationship among the variables were

measured via Spearman's correlation analysis. The normal distribution test results are demonstrated in Table 1.

**Table 1. Distribution of Sample Data**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Shared Vision	,171	72	,000
Organizational Climate	,115	72	,019

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Test results demonstrate that neither the shared vision scale (sig.= ,000) nor the organizational climate scale (sig= 0,019) were distributed normally.

### 3.6.1. Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha was used in order to determine the reliability levels of the scales. Table 2 demonstrates the reliability scores of the scales.

**Table 2. Reliability Scores of the Scales**

n	Scale	Type	Item Number	Cronbach's $\alpha$
72	Shared Vision	Likert-5	7	,847
72	Organizational Climate	Likert-5	8	,867

According to Table 2, both scales had Alpha values higher than 0,70 which is the accepted reliability value in the literature.

### 3.6.2. Demographical Data

Demographical data regarding the sample is given in Table 3. Frequencies and percentages related to age, gender, educational status, sector and working time are demonstrated in the table.



**Table 3. Frequencies and Percentages Related to Demographical Characteristics**

<b>Demographical Characteristics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Participant's age</b>		
• 20-30	40	55,6
• 31-40	21	29,2
• 41 and older	11	15,3
<b>Participant's gender</b>		
• Female	34	47,2
• Male	38	52,8
<b>Participant's educational status</b>		
• University	64	88,9
• Postgraduate	8	11,1
<b>Participant's sector</b>		
• Public bank	38	52,8
• Private bank	34	47,2
<b>Participant's working time</b>		
• 0-5 years	40	55,6
• 6-10 years	18	25,0
• 11 years and longer	14	19,4
<b>Total:</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100</b>

It can be seen from Table 3 that the majority of the participants are younger than 40 (84,8%). It was also found out that 52,8% (38) of the participants were male and 47,2% (34) were female. 64 (88,9%) of the participants graduated from university whereas only 8 (11,1%) had a postgraduate level education. 38 (52,8%) of the participants work in public banks whereas 34 (47,2%) work in private banks.

### **3.6.3. The Relationship between Shared Vision and Organizational Climate**

In order to determine whether there is a relationship between shared vision and organizational climate, the Spearman correlation test was performed. The results of the correlation analysis are given in Table 4.

**Table 4. Correlation Analysis Results**

	Shared Vision	Org. Climate
<b>Spearman Correlation</b>	1,000	,385**
<b>Shared Vision Sig. (2-tailed)</b>		,001
<b>N</b>	72	72

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The test results demonstrated that there is a positive and meaningful relationship between shared vision and organizational climate ( $r = ,385$ ). Therefore, “*H1: There is a positive and meaningful relationship between shared vision and organizational climate.*” was accepted.

### 3.6.4. Variables and Demographical Features

In the study, Mann-Whitney U test was used to test whether the shared vision and organizational climate perceptions of the participants vary according to their educational status and sectors. The purpose of the first Mann-Whitney U test was to test the H2 and H3 hypotheses. The test results which demonstrate the findings regarding variables and educational status are demonstrated in Table 5.

**Table 5. Average Scores and Mann-Whitney U Test Results Regarding Shared Vision and Organizational Climate and Participants’ Educational Status**

Shared Vision	N	Avr.	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max	Media n	Test	Sig.
University	6	3,6	14,766	1,55	4,70	3,70		<b>0,07</b>
	4	1					<b>Z=</b>	<b>9</b>
Postgraduate	8	3,1	6,621	3,70	4,85	4,00	-	
	0						<b>1,754</b>	
Org. Climate		Avr.	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max	Media n	Test	Sig.
University	6	3,3	16,649	1,15	4,65	3,40		<b>0,12</b>
	4	7						<b>5</b>
Postgraduate	8	3,8	19,300	2,25	4,75	4,07	<b>Z=</b>	
	1						<b>-1,534</b>	

According to the table, the average score of shared vision is 3,61 for university graduates whereas it is 3,10 for postgraduate bank employees. The Mann-Whitney U test results revealed that shared vision does not vary according to participants’ educational status ( $p = ,079$ ). Therefore, “*H2: Shared vision perception varies according to the educational status of the employees.*” was rejected. As for organizational climate, the average score of climate was

3,37 for university graduates whereas it is 3,81 for postgraduate bank employees. The Mann-Whitney U test results revealed that shared vision does not vary according to participants' educational status ( $p = ,125$ ). Therefore, "H3: Organizational climate perception varies according to the educational status of the employees." was rejected.

In order to analyse whether shared vision and organizational climate perception of the bank employees vary according to which sector they work in, a second Mann-Whitney U test was performed. H4 and H5 hypotheses were tested via the analysis results given in Table 6.

**Table 6. Average Scores and Mann-Whitney U Test Results Regarding Shared Vision and Organizational Climate and Participants' Sectors**

Shared Vision	N	Avr.	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max	Median	Test	Sig.
Public bank	38	3,60	13,882	1,85	4,55	3,70	Z=	
Private bank	34	3,73	15,052	1,55	4,85	3,85	-	<b>0,368</b>
							<b>0,900</b>	<b>8</b>
Org. Climate		Avr.	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max	Median	Test	Sig.
Public bank	38	3,07	13,622	1,75	4,40	3,15		
Private bank	34	3,80	17,332	1,15	4,75	4,00	Z=	<b>0,000</b>
							<b>-4,145</b>	<b>0</b>

It was revealed that shared vision does not vary according to which sector the employees work in ( $sig. = 0,368$ ). Thus, "H4: Shared vision perception varies according to which sector the employees work in." was rejected. On the other hand, it was found out that organizational climate varies according to the sector ( $sig.= 0,000$ ). Thus, "H5: Organizational climate perception varies according to which sector the employees work in." was accepted. At this point, it was also found out that the employees working in private banks had a high perception of organizational climate ( $x= 3,80$ ) than those working in public banks ( $x= 3,07$ ). In order to determine the "effect size" of this variation, the formula suggested by Field (2009) was used. This formula suggests that effect size is calculated as  $z$  ( $z$  value in Mann-Whitney U test) /  $n^2$  (square root of the sample number). Therefore, the effect size was calculated as  $z / n = 4,145 / 8,485281 = 0,48$ . Field (2009:57) suggested that:

- $r = 0,10$  (small effect)
- $r = 0,30$  (middle effect)
- $r = 0,50$  (large effect)

Thus, the effect size in this study (0,48) has been interpreted to be almost large effect.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In this study, the data were obtained from 80 bank employees working in the personal loan units of 8 banks in the province of Aksaray with the aim of determining whether there is a relationship between shared vision and organizational climate. The findings suggested that there was a positive ( $r= 0,385$ ) and meaningful ( $p= 0,001$ ) relationship between shared vision and organizational learning. This finding confirmed the hypothesis *"H1: There is a positive and meaningful relationship between shared vision and organizational climate."* On the other hand, it was revealed that neither shared vision nor organizational climate vary according to the educational status of the bank employees. Therefore, *"H2: Shared vision perception varies according to the educational status of the employees."* and *"H3: Organizational climate perception varies according to the educational status of the employees."* were rejected. As for the perceptions of the bank employees according to their sectors, the shared vision average was a little higher ( $x= 3,73$ ) in private banks when compared to public banks ( $x=3,60$ ), however, the test results demonstrated that shared vision does not vary according to which sector the employees work in. This result was interpreted as *"H4: Shared vision perception varies according to which sector the employees work in."* was rejected. These findings were in line with the studies of Balay (2012) and Yumuşak and Yıldız (2011). When considered from the organizational climate perspective, it was found out that employees working in private banks think that the organizational climate in their bank is quite positive ( $x= 3,80$ ) whereas employees working in the public banks think they have a moderate climate in the workplace ( $x= 3,07$ ). The Mann-Whitney U test results revealed that organizational climate varies according to sector ( $p= 0,000$ ,  $Z= -4,145$ ). Consequently, *"H5: Organizational climate perception varies according to which sector the employees work in."* was confirmed.

The fact that this study handled only the banking sector could be considered as one of the limitations of the study. In future studies, different sectors could be studied and comparisons between different sectors could be done. Besides, in this study, the perceptions of the bank employees were measured, however, the perceptions of the managers were ignored. In the future, research should be performed on the shared vision and organizational climate perceptions of the bank managers and certain suggestions could be developed for bank managers.

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