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An exploratory examination into cultural differences on climates for creativity and innovation: Viewing culture through the lens of language.

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Abstract

This exploratory study aims to explore potential differences in individuals` organizational climate perception from the perspective of culture. Potential differences according to gender is also explored. In order to achieve the goal of the study, nine climate dimensions were examined by self- administered questionnaires that were conducted and obtained from six different languages including Norwegian, English, French, Dutch, German and Chinese. Usable answers were obtained from 19 229 individuals. To make the comparison fair, a random 100 persons were collected from each language using random probability sampling. A total of 600 participants were analyzed. The data that was collected through the questionnaire was analyzed by using SPSS 26 and the relationship between climate perception on nine dimensions and cultural/gender differences was analyzed. The findings indicate that there are significant differences in climate perception both culturally and when comparing the two genders. The results found significant differences in five of the climate dimensions cross culturally and four dimensions when comparing gender.

*Keywords**:** Organizational climate, perception, culture, gender*

1.0 Introduction

In the 22st century there is a growing significance placed on the understanding of employees and their behavior. Modern organizations are constantly needed to evaluate their environment and seek to improve their performance in order to stay competitive. This has produced a great deal of interest in investigating employees' perceptions of the working climate. Organizational climate is known as ´´the feeling in the air´´ in walking around an organization. Recent literature suggests that a positive organizational climate has a direct link to high levels of employee commitment, creativity, and better overall productivity in the organization. Organizations today that can create environments that employees see as positive and which they can accomplish maximum capacity are viewed as a key source of competitive advantage (Brown, 1996). Organization climate research has much to offer in terms of its ability to explain the behavior of people in a particular workplace or culture.

Demographic characteristics of employees are one of the factors which play an important role in employees` organizational climate perception (Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv & Sanders, 1990; Helms & Stern, 2001). The demographic factors examined by this study are that of nationality and gender. Although national culture is societal in level, it translates into companies through influencing the core values and beliefs that constitutes their organizational cultures. (Hofstede, et al.,1990) The culture manifest itself more concretely through the company policies and practices. Employee reaction to these policies and practices form the basis for their perception of the organizational climate. With this understanding we look at organizational climate as a societal construct. In this way, this exploratory and descriptive paper examines the interaction between individual characteristics and contextual climate factors.

While cross-cultural research on working climate highlights a promising direction for investigation. There have been very few studies to explore and determine the climate in public organizations and comparing it at a cross cultural level (Jung & Lee, 2016). This exploratory study seeks to look at culture through the lens of language and adopts a multilevel approach to examine individual` perception of their working climate to compare it cross culturally. Thus, we compare feedback from six different languages. Five within Europe that includes; Norwegian, English, Dutch, German, and French. These can be an exemplar of a European – American

culture. The other language is from China. A country that has been described as a vertical and hierarchal, culture (Chen & Li 2005; House et Al, 1999, Schwartz, 1999)

1.1 Reason for choosing this theme

During the autumn of 2019 I had a class regarding organizational culture and climate. I found this topic to be extremely interesting and I immediately started thinking that this is the theme of my upcoming thesis. Being interested in psychology and work environment, this topic struck home with me. I started doing a fair bit of research and had the pleasure to meet professor Scott Isaksen who gave me the opportunity to use the database for this study.

1.2 Scope of this paper

This paper conducts an exploratory and descriptive research design by using a validated psychometric tool to take a closer look into the relationship between demographic characteristics such as culture and gender, and perceived organizational climate based on nine well established dimensions. This leads us to our research question: *Are there any differences in individuals` perception of organizational climate from the demographic characteristics of culture and gender?"*

1.3 Significance of the study

There are presently a number of gaps in organizational climate research. Most of the research pertaining to organizational climate focuses on deep and thorough analysis of climate in large sized enterprise in relation with in-company training. (Anusuiya Subramaniam, 2009) This study is a pioneering and unique attempt in the field of organizational behavior wherein attempts are made to explore in detail organizational climate and demographic characteristics. This will contribute to research and literature in multiple ways. Firstly, a new avenue of research is explored where broader contextual organizational climate variables are examined and compared cross culture and gender. Thus far, this has not been empirically investigated, and will contribute to moving the study of perceived organizational climate to a higher level in the organizational context. Further, knowledge on organizational climate perception for factors such as creativity, innovation and change and demographic characteristics is extended within the context of a demanding and ever-changing external environment.

2.0 Literature review

Organizational climate and culture are two widely studied topics that conceptualize the way people experience and would describe their work environment. These constructs represent a subset of research in organizational psychology and behavior that gained a lot of interest during the human relation period where the focus shifted from Taylorism to a more complex understanding of human psyche and employee welfare.

2.1 Organizational climate

Climate was developed in the late 1930s by the social scientists Lewin, Lippit and White (1939). They also established early on the linkage between climate and factors such as productivity, motivation playfulness, aggression and sharing (Isaksen, Lauer, Murdock, Dorval, and Puccio, 1995) Organization climate gained acceptance as describing the perceived social environment in surrounding an individual. Climate has become a major research scheme in organizational psychology. Although there have been numerous studies since the 1960s on this topic, a general definition is elusive. Rather, the researcher perspectives can orient us towards a definition. Moran and Volkwein (1992) defined organizational climate as "*a dynamic process that involves the group and member interactions and the impact of the environment."* Altmann (2000) similarly, described climate as the *"employee's perception of their working environment".* The Swedish researcher Göran Ekvall (1983) explained climate as "*an attribute of the organization composed of behaviors, attitudes and feelings which are characteristic of the organization."* With these perspectives from the leading experts in the field, we can define organizational climate as the perceptions of members about their working environment, that is greatly influenced by the culture, leaders, and other members within the organization.

2.2 Organizational climate analysis background

Social scientists and consultants with an interest in psychology, sociology, and organization change inspired a lot of the early climate analysis. Climate analysis derives from analysis in the 1930s of the quality of various social groups ranging from a nation down to a group. Climate analysis was used to discuss the rise of fascism in Germany before world war II. A few years later, during the 1960s climate surveys was conducted to ask organization members about their

surroundings and how they experienced their working environment. The types of organization improvements considered when climate surveys were first used were to promote employee well-being and employee participation in decision making processes. This process began during the well-known “human relation” period. The responses were used to paint an overall picture of the organization. The managers could use this to evaluate the overall well-being in the organization. The climate surveys at this time included topics like employee motivation, group dynamics and leadership. Most of these topics have become part of individual research and literatures and only loosely informed by climate research.

Most of the climate surveys use now a Likert-type scale questions that asks the responders to rate their perceptions and work attitude. It includes verbal anchors ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” and “very often” to “rare or never” During the psychological and sociological research in the 1930s, climate surveys were one application to organizations of the questionnaire methods. The climate surveys depended largely on data analysis during the early post war years. The analysis became more complex as advancements in computer technology took shape in the 1970s. These advancements made it more practical to analyze data that was based on thousands of responders.

The development of focused climates was a major accomplishment of organizational climate research. Earlier research might the characterized as having little focus on anything other than climate for well-being and a strong focus on the leadership aspect and supervisory style (Schneider, et.al., 2011) Organizational psychologist later developed measures of climate with six to ten dimensions. These dimensions seemed to cover a variety of territory inside the organization. Coming from a variety of researchers. The development of the focused approach has resulted in the climate tool being more available to practitioners because it focuses on important organizational topics and processes that can enhance performance in important areas.

In the 1960s, organizational climate surveys became the norm when organizations wanted to identify how they needed to change and providing feedback to promote change. Organizational climate is now a routine part of organization assessment by human resource managers and management consultants. These surveys are also used to assess the effects of change in the

working environment such as competitiveness or the internal processes initiated by the management. More recent use of climate surveys has focused more on identifying factors that an organization in going towards. A particular goal such as innovation, creativity or trust. Climate surveys remain one of the best ways to involve all members in diagnosing important topics such as involvement and motivation.

2.3 Organizational culture

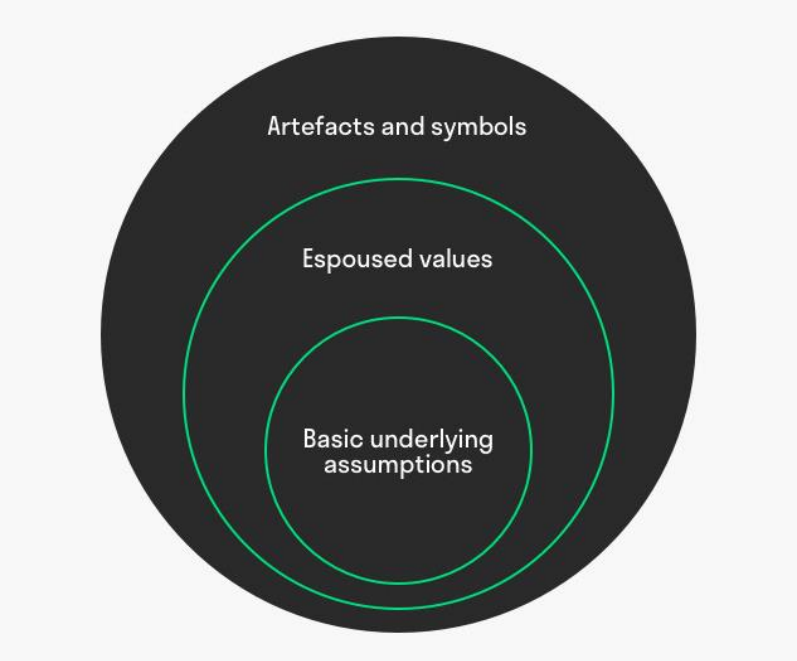
For a deeper understanding of organizational climate, it can be useful to compare it with a similar, yet different construct in organizational culture. Edgar Schein (1996) describes organizational culture as " *The basic tacit assumptions about how the world is and ought to be that a that a group of people share, and that determines* their *perceptions, thoughts feelings and their overt behavior"* Gert Hofstede (1991) describes organizational culture as "a *collective thinking program which makes different the members of an organizations from others"* Understanding the organizational culture and its dynamics, makes meaningless and unusual human behavior faced in the organization meaningful, and allow us to understand how the organization works in reality. (Schein, 1992) Culture can give us an understanding of why the climate is the way it is. In numerous studies the two constructs are used interchangeably. Organizational culture generally focus on deeper dimensions than climate and at a more abstract level, whereas climate research focus on more surface-level manifestations (Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009; Schneider et al., 2013) The term culture itself has a long history in anthropology, and has been used in earlier writings on organizations (Alvesson & Berg, 1992). Pettigrew (1979) introduced the topic to organizational studies and showed that the concepts of language, ritual, beliefs, ideology could be applied to a study of organizations (Alvesson & Berg 1992).

Numerous researchers have proposed that organizational culture possesses several layers. (Hofstede 1990; Rosseau 1990; Schein, 1992). Edgar Schein concludes that there are three fundamental layers of organizational culture: these are basic underlying assumptions, espoused values, and artefacts and symbols.

1. Basic assumptions. Deep rooted in the organizational culture. They are the beliefs, traditions and values that are deeply embedded in an organization. These are self - evident and unconscious behavior.

2. Espoused values. Illustrates norms and values. Builds on the basic assumptions. Standards and rules of behavior. Expressed in vision, mission and goals.

3. Artefacts and symbols. Marks the surface of an organization. These can be seen, heard and felt. Visible elements within an organization such as clothing, communication both internally and externally and other processes such as office layout and attitude.



Edgar Schein: organizational culture model

2.4 Differences between organizational culture and climate

Although organizational culture and climate are two constructs that seem alike, it is important to distinguish between the two. There have been several researchers that have attempted to compare these two constructs and explore possible commonalities and differences. The Swedish researcher Göran Ekvall (1983) suggested that organizational culture was made of the beliefs, traditions and values of the people within an organization. In contrast, climate refers to the attitude, feelings and recurring behavior pattern which are characterized daily life within the organization. Atman (2000) suggested that organizational climate refers to individual perception of their working environment. According to Gilson and James (2002) organizational culture refers to norms and expectations regarding how things are done in the organization and how people behave. On the other hand, climate reflects workers perception of and emotional responses to their work environment. Culture represent an evolved context embedded in systems (Dennison,1996; Schein, 1999) is more stable than climate and has strong roots in history. Climate is more immediate than culture. Upon entering and organization individuals can sense the climate through physical appearance and attitudes shown by the members. In contrast culture is a deeper construct, that reflects underlying ideologies and assumptions. Climate develops from the deeper core of culture.

According to Schein (1985) climate research is usually nomothetic and comparative and is measured by using quantitative techniques. On the other hand, culture research tends to be idiographic and contextualized and is usually measured by qualitative methods. Furthermore, Denison (1996) differentiated the climate and culture studies. "*If researchers carried computer printouts and questionnaire and presented quantitative analysis to support their ideas, they were studying climate. If the researchers carried fields of notes, quotes or stories and presented qualitative data to support their ideas, they were studying culture." (p. 621)*

The interest in the two topics have varied over the last decades. Organizational climate dominated the early research on the human organizational behavior in the 1960s and 1970s. It later moved to the background as interest in organization culture began to explode in the 1980s (following Pettigrew's introduction of it in 1979). Climate faded in the background as it seemed to struggle with the levels of analysis. The shift in interest at this time seems to be because culture seemed to capture the richness and complexity of the organizational environment in ways that climate

research was not able to at the time. However, a third transition took place in the 1990s where interest in climate appears to have come to the horizon again and seem to have eclipsed the focus on organizational culture in the recent years. (Schneider, Enhart, Macey, 2011)

A few perspectives have been taken in the climate literature to sharpen its distinction from organizational culture. Firstly, climate has been conceptualized as an individual representation of the working environment. Individuals are expected to respond in a manner that is psychologically meaningful to them. The second perspective focuses on shared perspectives of the climate that can be used to describe the organization or the work team. If individuals agree with each other about certain factors, these can be a useful tool to describe the organization. Finally, climate has been used to focus on a specific subject. “climate for change” “climate for innovation” This perspective has revived the interest in climate research and provided a new perspective for studying climate with a strong specific focus.

2.5 National culture impact on organizational culture and climate

The primarily theoretical interest, when it comes to national culture, is the extent to which it shapes the cultures of the organizations within the larger context. Since the influential work of Hofstede (1980) there has been a lot of interest in this research. National cultures nurture similarities in within national organizational cultures because of the boundness of culture (Hofstede 1980). The results show that when national culture is correlated with the organizational cultures within them, a significant main effect is found (Gefland, et. al., 2007) For example, Hofstede, et.al. (1990), who claim that the shared perceptions of daily practices are the core of organizational culture, declare that the values of employees change depending on the nationality, age and education level.

A research done by the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (House, et. al., 2004) collected data on societal culture, organizational culture and leadership from over 17.000 participants representing 62 societal cultures and 951 organizations showed that culture explained between 21% - 47% of the variance. With an average of (32,7%) They found out that societal culture had a strong effect on organizational culture. Much stronger than the industry interaction. The point that should be made in light of this finding is that national culture has a big

impact on organizational culture. This again can have an effect on the climate within the organization.

The national culture determines most of the important patterns and standards of human interaction in a chosen country. With this understanding, national culture will impact the organizational culture to the point that the values of organizations in a country will vary little from those of the average citizen of that country (House, et. al., 2004) Cultures are dynamic and shared mindsets that in organizational settings, are believed to be nationality based. The national culture of a country is highly dominant and shapes the culture of organizations. (Lindholm, 2000). According to the Dutch researcher Gert Hofstede (2001), national culture is seen as the collective mental programming of the mind in a countrywide context. National cultures may vary from each other on many dimensions. Gert Hofstede (1991) analyzed the work values of 116.000 sales and service employees in 50 countries identified basic dimensions of national culture that underlie organizational behavior. These are as follows:

Power distance illustrates the power distance in the culture. In cultures where the power distance is high, there is more inequality.

Individualism/collectivism is about the individual versus the group interests. Some cultures focus more on individual gain and are more difficult to collaborate with. Collectivistic cultures focus more on group cohesion and loyalty.

Masculinity/femininity is about what values are considered more important in a society. The masculine cultures are often result centered and feminine culture more modesty. "tough versus tende*r"* The feminine cultures are more caring for others and for their quality of life.

Uncertainty avoidance the degree to which the members feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity.

Long term orientation refers to the extent to which people show a pragmatic future oriented view rather than a normative short-term point of view.

Indulgence stands for a society that allows human drives related to enjoying life and having fun. On the other hand, restrained cultures suppress these needs because of strict social norms

2.6 Linking language and culture

"Language is cardinal in rearing human young, in organizing human communities, in handing down the culture from generation to generation" (Carroll, 1956, p. vi).

The linking of language with thinking has a long philosophical tradition (Ogden & Richards, 1927: Hayakawa, 1939). Within the field of linguistics, for example, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis asserts that there is a strong relationship between the language a person speaks and how that person understands and behaves in the world (Kay & Kempton, 1984). It has been well-established that language and culture are closely related (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). For example, Boas (1942; 178) stated: *"The question of interrelation between language and culture has been much discussed and the opinion is still widely held that language is an important determinant of culture."*

When you are interacting with a language it also means you are interacting with the culture. Some say that language is the mirror of culture in the sense that people can see the culture through language. In the words of Hofstede, *"Language is both the vehicle of most of cross-cultural research and part of its object. Language is the most clearly recognizable part of culture and the part that has lent itself most readily to systematic study and theory building"* (Hofstede 2001). Language is the vehicle of culture and it is an obstinate vehicle (Hofstede 1990). Language and culture are related and depended on each other. In a broader sense, language is a symbolic representation of the people, since it comprises their historical and cultural backgrounds, as well as their approaches to life and their ways of thinking and living (Wenying Jiang, 2000).

Brown (1994: 165) describes the two as follows: *"A language is a part of a culture and culture is a part of language; the two are inextricably interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture. In a word, culture and language are inseparable"*. Elaine Chaika (1982) states, "*Language and society are so intertwined that it is impossible to understand one without the other*" Furthermore, Hantrais (1989) puts forth the idea

that culture is the beliefs and practices governing the life of a society for which a particular language is the vehicle of expression. Language has a big influence in the culture and again in how people see the world. Research done by Lera Boroditsky at the Stanford University (6.11.09) learned that people who speak different languages do indeed think differently.[1]

This study focuses on the language people chose to complete a measure of their work environment, as a lens through which to examine potential cultural differences. With the understanding of how language is a representation of the culture, we are giving an accurate description of each culture.

[1] https://www.edge.org/conversation/lera_boroditsky-how-does-our-language-shape-the-way-we-think

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research purpose

The purpose of this research was to find out potential differences in climate perception in six different countries based on nine climate dimensions that are illustrated in the table below. It will also be essential to identify potential differences in another demographic characteristic such as gender. There has been little research on this subject, therefore an inductive approach was taken. "An inductive approach is concerned with the generation of new theory emerging from the data" (Gabriel, 2013)

3.2 Research design and approach

A descriptive research approach was chosen for this study. "*Descriptive research aims to accurately and systematically describe a population, situation, or phenomenon*" (Shona McCombes, 2019). A quantitative questionnaire was used. The questionnaire is designed to gather individual information about the working environment. When looking at different cultures, this makes it possible to find demographic differences in working climate. The use of a quantitative method for data collection and analysis makes generalization possible with this style of approach. Interactions with one group can be generalized and the interpretations of research findings will not be seen as a mere coincidence (Williams & May,1998, p. 1-21). This approach give room for control and study different groups. (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 34) Furthermore "*Measurement in quantitative research allows us to delineate the differences between people in terms of the characteristic in question and can also provide more precise estimates of the degree of relationship between concepts"* (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 164). This type of approach makes it possible to measure climate variables and compare them across our targets.

3.3 Questionnaire

The primary source of data collection is a quantitative questionnaire, which directly address the purpose of the research. The Situational Outlook Questionnaire was the selected measure to examine the work environment. The SOQ is a multi-dimensional assessment tool that measures organizational climate by measuring individual perception of their working environment for

creativity, innovation and change through nine climate dimensions. The questionnaire aims at identifying elements within the working environment that help, hinder or need action for improvement. The dimensions in the SOQ are able to explain effects on productivity, job satisfaction, profit, and overall well-being which in turn would impact on the organizational performance (Ekvall, 1996).

The questionnaire is based on more than fifty years of research and development and has its roots from the original theoretical work done by Göran Ekvall in the 1950s. Ekvall conceived climate as an objectivistic phenomenon. Individuals in organizations are regarded as the observers of the climate. This approach to climate influences the design of the measure. The items in the quantitative section of the sow treat the responders as observers of the patterns of behavior within the organization. The development of the climate dimensions that are assessed by the SOQ is derived from early organizational research into the success of a number of personnel practices and improvement efforts. Ekvall observed that the key factors to the success or failure of the diffusion and the effects of this initiatives was the climate within the target area of the organization. These observations led to the development of an assessment of the climate. (Ekvall, 1983; Ekvall, Arvonen, & Waldenstrom-Lindblad, 1983). This Swedish measure was later translated into English, and an inquiry was conducted regarding the reliability, validity and psychometric properties (Isaksen, *et* al., 1995; Isaksen, Lauer, & Ekvall, 1999).

3.4 Translation

Following extensive efforts to confirm the reliability and validity of the initial translation of Ekvall's CCQ to the SOQ (Isaksen & Ekvall, 2015a & b), numerous translations of the English SOQ were created. Every effort was taken to follow the best-practices for translation of assessments (APA, 2003; APA, 2014; Hambleton, 2001; Hambleton, Merenda, & Spielberger, 2005; Lowman, 2006; Muñiz, & Bartram, 2007). All translations followed the same general procedure. First, forward translations were created by those who were bi-lingual and knowledgeable about the SOQ into the target language (Behr & Shishido, 2016). Then someone who is also bilingual, but not knowledgeable about the SOQ, creates a back translation in the English original. The back translation is examined for equivalence of language, phrases, and readability level to ensure similar meaning (Brislin & Freimanis, 2001). This research edition of

the translation is then subjected to reliability testing and item analysis. Once the translation demonstrated acceptable levels of psychometric performance, factor analysis is performed to examine its validity (Korabik, & van Rhijn, 2018). Along the way, items were often reworded and modified to ensure acceptable levels of psychometric performance. Iterative review of the wording and performance of the items and scales followed a collaborative translation approach (Désilets & van der Meer, 2013; O'Brien, 2011) throughout the entire translation process.

3.5 Reliability and validity

The dimensions have been shown to be stable and consistent over time. There are numerous studies conducted to illustrate the validity of the questionnaire as well as its ability to distinguish creative organizations from non-creative. The dimensions in the questionnaire have been used to distinguish organizations that have been more creative and successful at innovation and change (Ekvall, 1996). The SOQ has been examined numerous times to examine both the validity and reliability of previous versions. Some studies looked at the relationship between climate as an interpersonal variable and cognitive/problem solving style as an intrapersonal construct. And the relation to its reliability in discriminating levels of creativity in teamwork, as well as perceived support for creativity within an organization. The questionnaire has also been applied to help organizational leaders with their transformational and change effect. There has been done numerous studies to examine the reliability and validity of the earlier versions of the questionnaire (Talbot, Cooper, & Barrow, 1992; Lauer, 1994; Turnipseed, 1994; Cabra, 1996). Other studies looked to estimate the relationship between climate and an interpersonal variable and cognitive or problem-solving style as an intrapersonal construct.

The current version, the seventh in the series, was developed in 2008. This development was following an examination of the item distribution, scale reliability, and factor structure. More specifically, the Risk-Taking and Trust/Openness dimensions were the key targets for improvement, since their Cronbach alpha was below .70 which is the minimum target. Some of the items within the dimensions did not load on their appropriate theoretical factors. Some of the items were carefully edited, and new items were added to each of these dimensions based on the Cronbach alpha if some items were removed. These items were selected for editing. Since the questionnaire has been used as a part of an overall assessment and action researched program. It

is important to constantly review its psychometric adequacy continuously and use the results to guide improvements of both the measure and the approach to organizational improvement.

The nine dimensions of the questionnaire is defined below, with a sample item included. The number of items for each dimension is mentioned below. These items are designed to help the individuals to make easier observations about the behaviors and interactions among themselves within the organization. The 4-point scale include 0 for not at all applicable. 1 for somewhat applicable, 2 for fairly applicable, and 3 for applicable to a high degree. The score for each dimension is calculated by taking the average of the respondents scores for each of the dimensions and multiplying this by 100. This way allows for easier comparison across the dimensions. There are also open-ended narrative questions.

3.6 The dimensions of the SOQ

The questionnaire includes 53 closed-ended questions quantitively asses the nine dimensions of climate. The dimensions are illustrated in the table below.
The questionnaire also includes three open ended questions to allow for other more cohesive aspects of the work environment come forward by sharing their answers to three questions:

1. What aspect of your working environment is most helpful in supporting your creativity, innovation and change?
2. What aspect of your working environment most hinders your creativity, innovation and change?
3. What are the most important actions you would take to improve the climate for creativity, innovation and change in your working environment?

Studies have shown that these questions can provide valuable added insight that can help better explain the quantitative results. These questions can give us a deeper understanding of the organizational dynamics. The narrative results were not used for this study.

Table 1: The nine dimensions that are assessed by the SOQ

These nine dimensions form the basis of the quantitative measurement of the questionnaire.

Climate dimensions	Definition
Challenge and Involvement	The degree to which people are involved in daily operations, long term goals and visions. High score indicates high intrinsic motivation and commitment to making decisions to the best of the organization. People find joy and meaning in their work and daily tasks and therefore invest much energy. In the opposite direction, people are not engaged and are feeling alienated. Lack of interest in work and their interactions are mostly dull. "Most people strive to do a good job" is a sample question for this dimension. There are seven items to this dimension.
Freedom	The degree to which the individual feels independence from the people in the organization. High score indicates more perceived autonomy and ability for individual discretion in their daily activities. In the opposite direction, people work with strict guidelines and roles. "people here make choices about their own work" is a sample question for this dimension. There are six items in this dimension.
Trust and Openness	The degree to which people feel emotional safety in relationships within the organization. High score indicates that people can be genuinely open and honest with each other. People have respect for each other and count on each other for personal support. Low score here indicates missing trust. People are more suspicious of each other and guard themselves and their ideas. People find it difficult to communicate openly with each other. "People here do not steal each other's ideas" is a sample question in this dimension. There are five items to this dimension.
Idea-Time	The amount of time people can use for elaborating new ideas. High score indicates possibilities to discuss and test new ideas and fresh suggestions which are not necessarily included in the task assignment. There is opportunity to take the time to explore and potentially develop new ideas. In the opposite direction, every minute is booked and specified. Time pressure makes the thinking outside the box impossible. "One has the opportunity to stop work here in order to test new ideas" is a sample question for this dimension. There are six items in this dimension.
Playfulness and Humor	This dimension addresses the spontaneity and ease displayed in the in the workplace environment. A high score indicates a relaxed atmosphere with good-natured jokes and regular occurrence of laughter. The atmosphere will be seen as easy going and light-hearted. People can be seen having fun at work. The opposite way, the atmosphere is stiff and cumbrous. Jokes and laughter might be regarded as unprofessional and intolerable. "People here exhibit a

	sense of humor" is a sample question for this dimension. There are six items for this dimension.
Conflict	The presence of personal and emotional tensions within the organization. When the conflict dimension is high, individuals or groups may engage in gossip, slander and even try to sabotage each other's work. "There is a great deal of tension here" is a sample question for this dimension. There are six items in this dimension.
Idea-Support	The way in which new ideas are reacted and treated upon. High level in this dimension suggest that people receive ideas and suggestion in an attentive matter. People listen to each other and encourage new initiatives. Possibilities to try new ideas are created. Low score indicates a more rigid and refusing atmosphere. The answer "no" is prevailing. A lot of suggestions are immediately refused or laughed upon. "people here receive support and encouragement when presenting new ideas" is a sample question in this dimension. There are five items included in this dimension.
Debate	The occurrence of discussions and disagreements between ideas, experiences and knowledge. High score indicates that many voices are heard, and many people are willing to put their ideas forward. People often discuss opposing opinions and shares their perspectives. Low score means that people follow the authority without questioning. "Many different points of view are shared here during discussion" is a sample question for the debate dimension. There are six items for this dimension.
Risk-Taking	The tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty in the workplace. High score indicates that bold and new initiatives can be taken even though the outcome is unknown. People feel they can "take a gamble" and go ahead with an idea that has very high risk. People on the other side of this spectrum will be cautious and have a more hesitant mentality. People will try to be on the "safe" side of things. They may be taking a long time before deciding upon a decision. "People here feel as they can take bold action even if the outcome is unclear" is a sample question in this dimension. There are dive items included in this dimension.

SOQ dimensions derived from: *Development of the Situational Outlook Questionnaire: A technical resource.* (Isaksen & Ekvall, 2015-B)

The following table presents some normative information about the dimensions illustrating the average scores for numerous organizations that were independently identified as innovation, average, and stagnated.

Table 2: Innovative, average and stagnated organizations

SOQ dimensions	Innovative organizations	Average organizations	Stagnated organizations
Challenge & Involvement	238	190	163
Freedom	210	174	153
Trust & Openness	178	160	128
Idea-Time	148	111	97
Playfulness & Humor	230	169	140
Conflict	78	88	140
Idea-Support	183	164	108
Debate	158	128	105
Risk-Taking	195	112	53

Table derived from: *Development of the Situational Outlook Questionnaire: A technical resource.* (Isaksen & Ekvall, 2015-B)

This table is a valuable asset when we are going to interpret the means for each language because it illustrates the directionality of the results for each dimension.

3.7 Sampling and data collection

The current sample was chosen by the languages that had the most respondents for analysis. This would make a representation of each language as accurate as possible. The present sample consists of 19 229 people and was conducted from individuals from various programs and services provided by The Creative Solving Group that maintains the database. For this sample, data were collected from 2008 to 2019. In total there are 247 organizations included with samples ranging from individuals in leadership positions in large corporations in the united states to Chinese manufacturing workers. The table under illustrates the individuals from each language with their average age and gender. All the participants took the questionnaire in their respective languages. The large majority of the participants were from English speaking countries. To make the comparison fair, 100 people was randomly chosen for each language. In total we included 600 participants for this study. The following table (table 3) provides a bit more detail regarding the sample for this study.

Table 3: An overview of the total sample

Languages	Individuals	Organizations	Avg,Age	Males	Females
Norwegian	110	7	39.33	51	16
English	17.134	165	42.74	7116	4542
German	303	8	39.34	136	80
French	716	31	43.06	424	166
Dutch	544	18	32.36	227	158
Chinese	418	19	43.87	303	64
Total	19.225	248	40.11	8.257	5.026

The languages in the Situational Outlook Questionnaire that had the highest number of participants were chosen for this study. The English language had a very high number of participants compared to the other languages; therefore, a random 100 participants were chosen using random probability sampling in SPSS.

Table 4: An overview of the 600 participants randomly chosen for this study

Languages	Individuals	Organizations	Avg,Age	Males	Females
Norwegian	100	4	39.08	46	14
English	100	44	43.22	50	27
German	100	7	40.42	55	18
French	100	24	42.34	48	18
Dutch	100	16	32.51	38	32
Chinese	100	15	42.34	75	14
Total	600	110	39.98	312	123

The table shows an overview of all the participants randomly chosen by SPSS for this study. This would give us a more accurate representation of each language and make the comparison fair.

3.8 Data analysis

The data collected by the SOQ was on Microsoft excel. SPSS was used to analyze the data. Paired sample t- test was used to test the hypothesizes of demographic differences. Cronbach´s alpha was used to check the reliability of each dimension, r_{wg} was used to check the inter-rater reliability. A test of inter-rater reliability was conducted based on the formula of James, Demaree and Wolf (1993) in order to examine the level of agreement among the respondents. The term inter-rater reliability is used to refer to the degree to which judges agree on a set of judgments (Schrout & Fleiss, 1979) This examining allows for the improved validity of aggregated climate scores. (Joyce & Solcum) It has been accepted that r_{wg} is a measure of agreement (Kozlowski & Hattrup, 1992). A r_{wg} at or above .70 represents an acceptable convergence (George, 1990; Judge & de Bono, 2000) James, et. al. (1993) stated that it is helpful to have an index of inter-rater reliability when scores on a variable consists of means taken over factors that indicates the same construct.

4.0 Results

Section 1: Climate results across the languages. Each language will have its own table. The means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha and r_{wg} values for each language are presented in the first section.

The following table describes the descriptive results for the Norwegian language of the SOQ.

Table 5: Descriptive results Norwegian language

Norwegian

SOQ dimensions	Range	Mean	St. Deviation	Cronbach´s alpha	r_{wg}
Challenge & Involvement	0-300	215.30	50.393	.783	.934
Freedom	0-300	171.22	49.344	.785	.895
Trust & Openness	0-300	193.80	55.246	.797	.849
Idea-Time	0-300	149.00	53.790	.782	.895
Playfulness & Humor	0-300	218.84	54.538	.783	.903
Conflict	0-300	80.34	59.192	.876	.852
Idea-Support	0-300	182.80	59.968	.755	.877
Debate	0-300	197.81	54.372	.781	.903
Risk-Taking	0-300	142.00	62.507	.772	.793

The results for the Norwegian language show that Playfulness/Humor and Challenge/ Involvement are the most important items in their working environment. The Norwegian language have the highest score in the Playfulness/Humor dimension. The lowest score in the Risk-Taking dimension. The reliability scale is good (a = .787) High level of internal reliability and aggregability.

The following table describes the results for the English language.

Table 6: Descriptive results English language

English

SOQ dimensions	Range	Mean	St. Deviation	Cronbach´s alpha	r_{wg}
Challenge & Involvement	0-300	212.40	58.597	.773	.877
Freedom	0-300	179.82	58.161	.784	.860
Trust & Openness	0-300	175.80	61.647	.787	.794
Idea-Time	0-300	145.33	64.405	.773	.818
Playfulness & Humor	0-300	171.15	62.571	.777	.838
Conflict	0-300	96.16	71.278	.902	.719
Idea-Support	0-300	184.40	65.848	.757	.833
Debate	0-300	190.99	56.841	.773	.872
Risk-Taking	0-300	148.60	60.919	.765	.807

The results for the English language show that the Challenge/Involvement mean is the highest of the dimensions. Interestingly, the English language scores the lowest in the Trust/Openness dimension. The reliability scale (A = .787) and the internal reliability is good.

The following table describes the results for the German language

Table 7: Descriptive results German language

German

SOQ dimensions	Range	Mean	St. Deviation	Cronbach´s alpha	r_{wg}
Challenge & Involvement	0-300	208.23	52.656	.701	.910
Freedom	0-300	182.49	46.152	.719	.896
Trust & Openness	0-300	187.40	51.769	.741	.850
Idea-Time	0-300	115.69	59.602	.725	.874
Playfulness & Humor	0-300	191.87	57.309	.721	.883
Conflict	0-300	103.98	55.206	.864	.824
Idea-support	0-300	186.80	52.741	.698	.898
Debate	0-300	192.45	48.645	.717	.921
Risk-Taking	0-300	147.60	47.378	.712	.889

The results for the German language demonstrate the second highest score on the Playfulness/Humor dimension. Interestingly, the German language scores the highest in the

Conflict dimension and the lowest in the Idea-Time dimension. The internal consistency (a = .733) and aggregability level is acceptable.

The following table describes the results for the French language.

Table 8: Descriptive results French language

French

SOQ dimensions	Range	Mean	St. Deviation	Cronbach´s alpha	r_{wg}
Challenge & Involvement	0-300	225.09	52.855	.737	.913
Freedom	0-300	162.65	51.819	.754	.875
Trust & Openness	0-300	184.80	57.638	.751	.792
Idea-time	0-300	151.77	52.839	.738	.891
Playfulness & Humor	0-300	185.67	58.926	.737	.867
Conflict	0-300	73.82	54.819	.877	.855
Idea-Support	0-300	195.20	58.057	.713	.879
Debate	0-300	194.97	53.731	.736	.895
Risk-Taking	0-300	150.40	55.740	.730	.826

The French language scored the lowest in the Freedom dimension. Again Challenge/Involvement is an important dimension. The French scored the highest on Idea-Support and second highest in the Debate dimension. Acceptable level of reliability (a = .752) and internal reliability were found.

The following table describes the results for the Dutch language.

Table 9: Descriptive results Dutch language

Dutch

SOQ dimensions	Range	Mean	St. Deviation	Cronbach´s alpha	r_{wg}
Challenge & Involvement	0-300	229.56	43.291	.669	.933
Freedom	0-300	194.88	51.424	.697	.882
Trust & Openness	0-300	180.40	54.084	.678	.802
Idea-Time	0-300	162.20	58.759	.660	.869
Playfulness & Humor	0-300	184.65	63.706	.672	.826
Conflict	0-300	81.51	68.124	.853	.810
Idea-Support	0-300	192.80	56.819	.647	.890
Debate	0-300	183.65	44.879	.677	.912
Risk-Taking	0-300	164.80	42.175	.672	.887

The Dutch language scores the highest in the Challenge/Involvement, Freedom and Risk-Taking dimensions and scores the second highest in the Idea-Time dimension. These dimensions are the highest-scoring dimensions for their working environment. The Dutch version have the weakest reliability, but it is still adequate. (a = .691)

The following table describes the results for the Chinese language.

Table 10: Descriptive results Chinese language

Chinese

SOQ dimensions	Range	Mean	St. Deviation	Cronbach´s alpha	r_{wg}
Challenge& Involvement	0-300	210.42	55.806	.862	.908
Freedom	0-300	165.82	54.008	.865	.894
Trust & Openness	0-300	188.80	61.714	.871	.845
Idea-Time	0-300	171.32	57.787	.856	.888
Playfulness & Humor	0-300	168.34	51.249	.862	.899
Conflict	0-300	73.67	62.518	.935	.839
Idea-Support	0-300	188.00	59.696	.853	.870
Debate	0-300	186.18	56.023	.856	.895
Risk-Taking	0-300	153.00	56.595	.860	.872

The Chinese language scores the lowest on the Conflict dimension, and second lowest in the Debate and Freedom dimensions. The Chinese language scores the highest in the Idea-Time dimension and second highest in the Trust/Openness dimension. IT demonstrates a good level of reliability (a = .868) and internal reliability.

Table 11: Mean comparisons across languages

Hypothesis 1: Individual climate perception will vary cross culturally.

Before addressing the ANOVA, we conducted a MANOVA to reduce the likelihood of a type 1 error when examining the differences in the means.

For this sample there was a significant interaction.

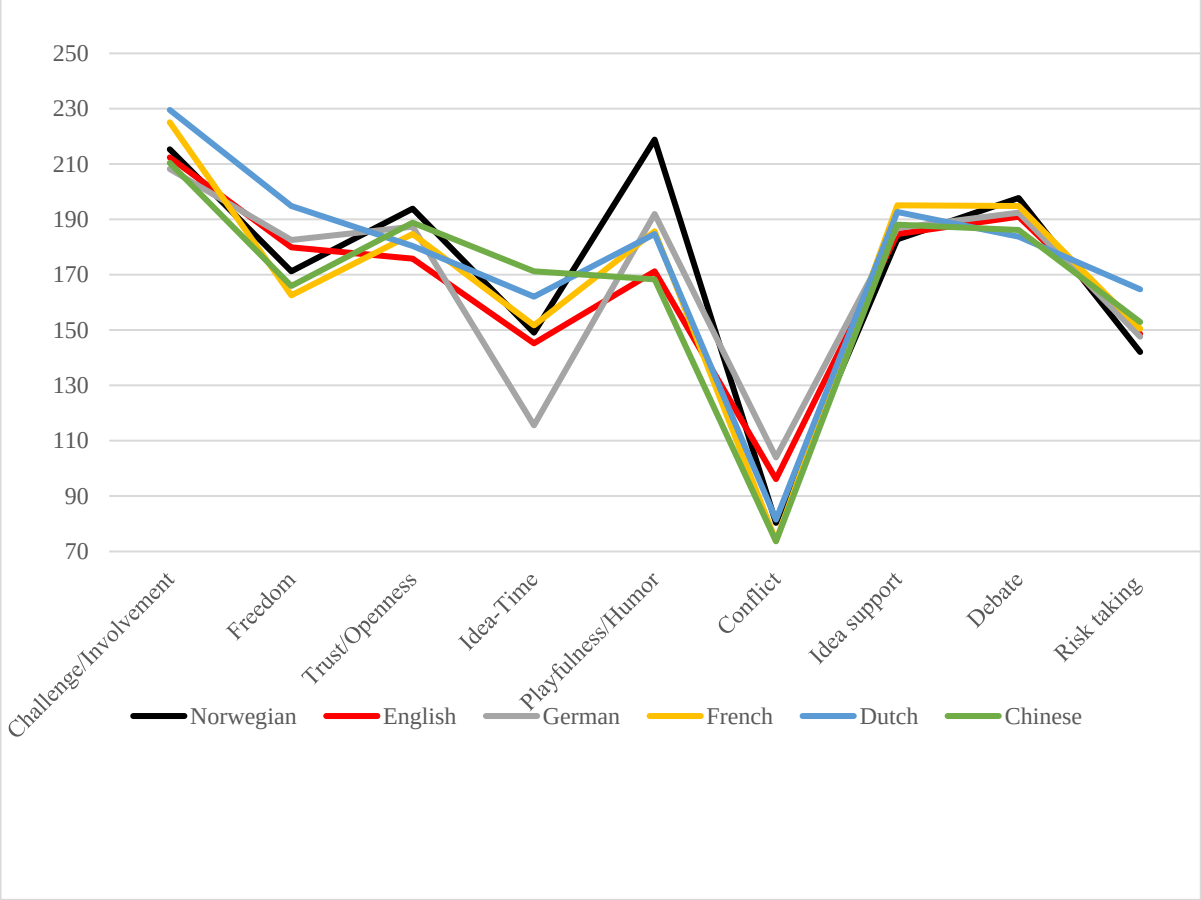
Effect	F	Sig.
Wilk´s Lambda	4.366	.000

ANOVA table

SOQ dimensions	Norwegian	English	German	French	Dutch	Chinese	Df	F value	Sig.
Challenge & Involvement	215.30	212.40	208.23	225.09	229.56	210.42	594	2.667	.021
Freedom	171.22	179.82	182.49	162.65	194.88	165.82	594	5.319	.000
Trust & Openness	193.80	175.80	187.40	184.80	180.40	188.80	594	1.246	.286
Idea-Time	149.00	145.33	115.69	151.77	162.20	171.32	594	10.722	.000
Playfulness & Humor	218.84	171.15	191.87	185.67	184.65	168.34	594	9.702	.000
Conflict	80.34	96.16	103.98	73.82	81.51	73.67	594	3.995	.001
Idea-Support	182.80	184.40	186.80	195.20	192.80	188.00	594	.665	.650
Debate	197.81	190.99	192.45	194.97	183.65	186.18	594	1.023	.403
Risk-Taking	142.00	148.60	147.60	150.40	164.80	153.00	594	1.959	.083

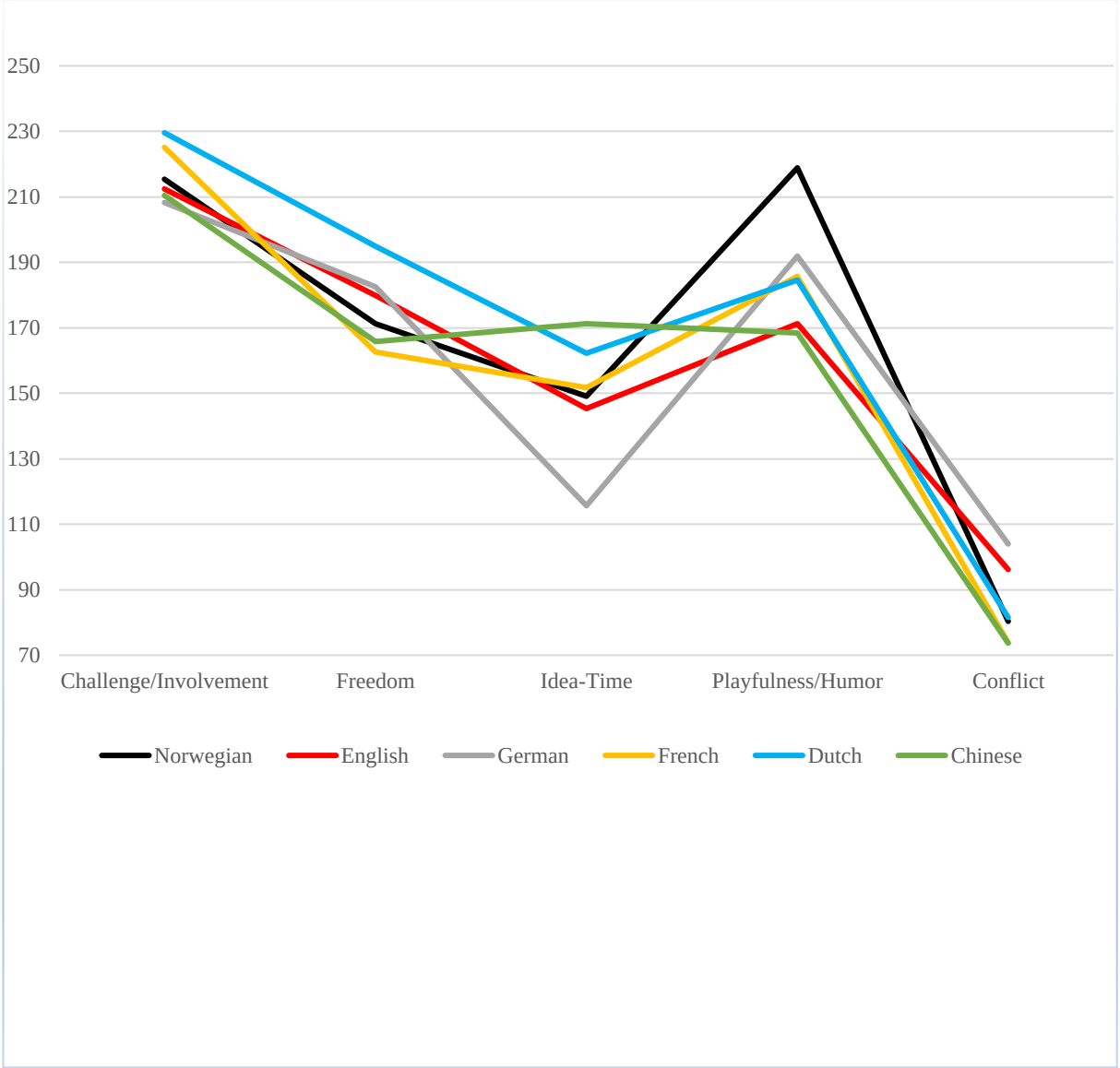
The ANOVA table confirms our hypothesis. Significant differences in climate perception is found in five of the dimensions.

Graph 1: Cross cultural mean comparison graph with all dimensions



Graph 1 illustrates the climate results for each language. We see a general trend on some dimensions such as Idea-Support, Debate and Risk-Taking.

Graph 2: Dimensions that shows significant differences



The second graph illustrates the dimensions that showed significant differences in our ANOVA table. We clearly see the languages that stand out in the dimensions that showed significant differences.

Table 12: Mean comparison cross gender

Hypothesis 2: Employee perception of climate may vary according to gender.

Before addressing the ANOVA, we conducted a MANOVA to reduce the likelihood of a type 1 error when examining the differences in the means.

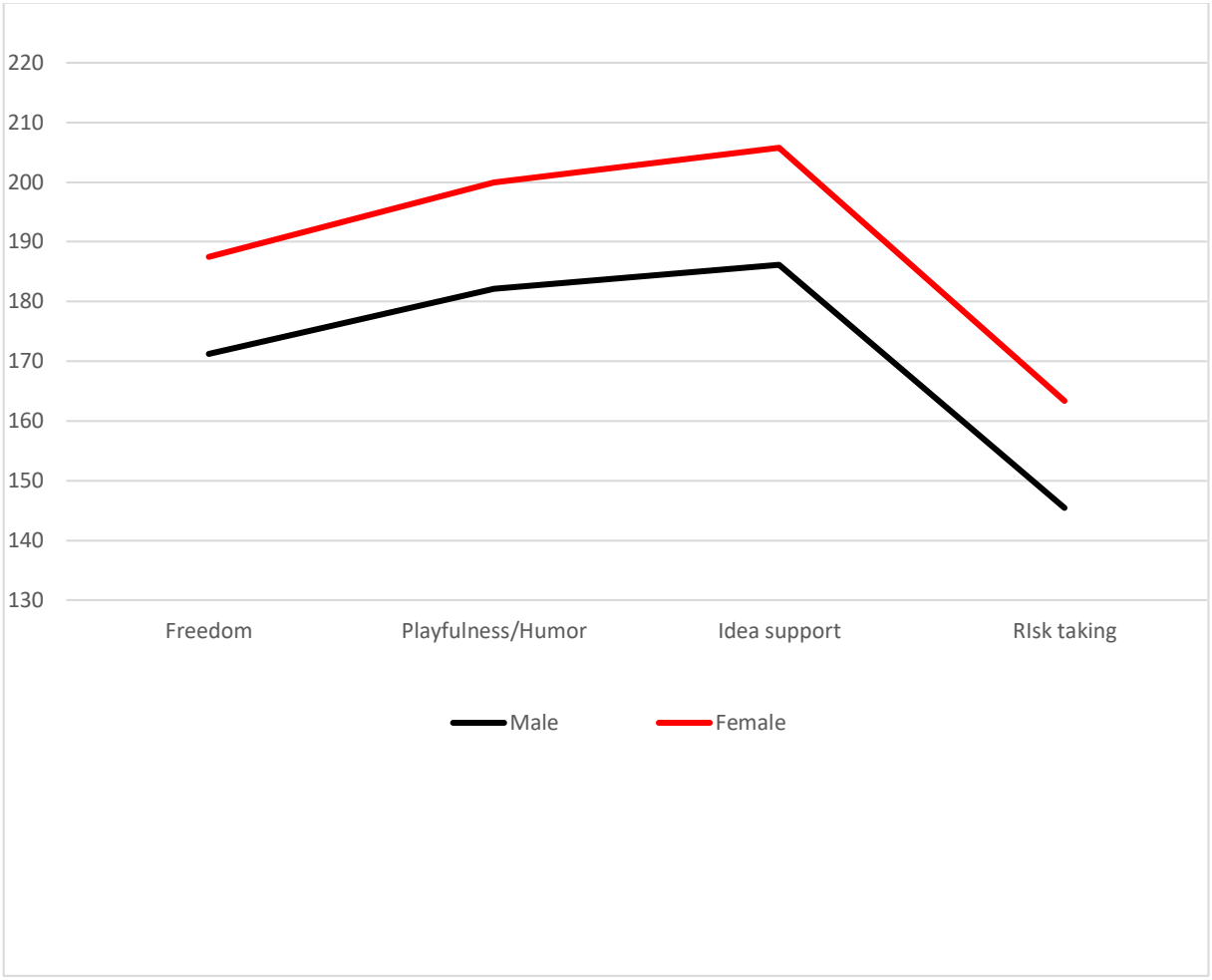
For this sample there was a significant interaction.

Effect	F	Sig.
Wilk´s Lambda	2.403	.011

ANOVA table

Dimensions	Male			Female			Df	F	Sig.
	Mean	Std.D		Mean	Std.D				
Challenge & Involvement	219.43	51.587		225.94	52.304		454	1.434	.232
Freedom	171.25	52.877		187.47	52.323		454	8.585	.004
Trust & Openness	188.88	55.767		190.08	56.832		454	.041	.839
Idea-Time	146.98	56.120		158.13	62.731		454	3.355	.068
Playfulness & Humor	182.13	59.765		200.00	55.773		454	8.412	.004
Conflict	80.51	60.072		82.02	60.535		454	.058	.810
Idea-Support	186.16	56.209		205.76	60.950		454	10.524	.001
Debate	189.52	50.470		199.70	52.617		454	3.609	.058
Risk-Taking	145.44	53.728		163.36	56.439		454	9.818	.002

Graph 3: Significant differences between gender



The third graph illustrates the dimensions where significant differences was found between the genders. We clearly see that females experience more of the positive dimensions.

5.0 Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to explore the relationship between organizational climate perception and potential cultural differences. The obtained data was analyzed in the light of the objectives and hypothesis proposed in the study. For this purpose, ANOVA was carried out so that a comparison could be done. The findings confirmed our hypothesis that there are significant differences in climate perception both cross culturally and between the two genders. In this section we will look closer to the results and try to figure out why these differences occur. The Gert Hofstede Model and GLOBE study (2004) are two highly valuable research studies that can provide useful information about the cultures we compare and can give us a better understanding of the differences we found. We will first have a closer look into the commonalities in climate cross culturally.

5.1 Commonalities and small differences in climate perceptions cross culturally

No significant difference was found in the Idea-Support dimension cross culturally. As mentioned previously this dimension refers to the way which ideas are treated in a constructive and positive way. It is interesting that this dimension seems to be universally very similarly interpreted. Both in the high-power distance American–European countries and the low-power distance culture of the Chinese. The dimension Trust and Openness is another positive foundational dimension. A high score indicates that people are honest, open and frank to each other. It is interesting that something as fundamental as Trust and Openness seem to be universally very similarly interpreted. It is very stable across the cultures examined by this paper. We do however get one significant difference in this dimension. The English language scored the lowest in this dimension. (M = 175.80 SD = 61.647) and one significant difference was found when comparing to the Norwegian language (M = 193.80 SD = 55.246) that scored the highest in this dimension. $t(198) = 2.174$, $p < .031$

It is perhaps not a surprise that the English language scores the lowest in the Trust and Openness dimension. The American culture is known as a very result driven, status oriented, individualistic and masculine culture. The shared values are often “the winner takes it all” and the culture is very competitive. Being a leader in the united states is often viewed as a “status symbol” and this glorification increases the distinguish between workers and the leader. On the other hand, the

Norwegian culture is a feminine culture with a low power distance. According to Hofstede Insights the Norwegian culture is the second most feminine culture in the world only behind their neighbors Sweden.[2] As a result, there is little hierarchy, mostly flat structures and the level of trust is high in the society. This notion is further manifested at the organization level in the notion that a leader should serve as a coach rather than a commander. [3] The value of equality is considered highly important and is visible in many aspects of the Norwegian work life such as tax system and salaries. Bragging or behaving in an offensive manner that cause an individual to stand out are looked bad upon.

This is also illustrated in the Debate dimension. Although this dimension is very stable across the languages it is worth noting that the Norwegian language (M = 197.81 SD = 54.372) scored the highest in this dimension. Further underlying our observations of the collectivism in the Norwegian culture. In a collectivistic culture, organizations depend more on input from all the participants in the workplace. Employees are viewed as a member of a group and therefore are encouraged to voice their opinions.

Lastly, the Risk-Taking dimension also seem universally very stable but one interesting finding was found. The Dutch language (M = 164. 80 SD = 42.175) scored the highest in the Risk-Taking dimension. Significant differences were found when comparing with the Norwegian, English and French language. The Dutch culture is known for being a fairly “laid back” feminine culture with a flat hierarchy in the workplace. With a high score in the Risk-Taking dimension we can be sure that there are many people in the organization involved in the decision-making process. The Dutch culture scores 53 in the uncertainty avoidance in Hofstede insights[4] which shows a slight preference for avoiding uncertainty. However, the Dutch culture receives a high score in the long-term orientation dimension. This shows the ability to easily adapt to changed conditions. All these four dimensions for each language are above average and around the innovative side of the

2 https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/norway/

3 https://www.nored.no/NR-dokumentasjon/Rapporter-og-veiledere/Redaktoerhaandboken/Ledelse/Kapittel-4-Lederen-som-coach

4 https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/the-netherlands/

spectrum, if we compare with table 2 which illustrates mean scores for innovative and creative organizations.

5.2 Significant differences in climate dimensions cross culturally

Our hypothesis that climate perception will vary cross culturally is confirmed by the findings. Our ANOVA table showed significant differences in five dimensions. We will take a closer look into each of the dimensions starting with the first; Challenge/Involvement.

Challenge/Involvement

The participants in the Dutch language (M = 229.56 SD = 43.291) scored the highest in this dimension. The Chinese language scored the lowest (M = 210.42 SD = 55.806) this comparison demonstrated a significant difference $t(198) = 2.710$, $p < .007$

For a more complex understanding of this finding we need to look closer to the respective cultures. As mentioned previously hierarchies at the workplace in the Netherlands are often flat. The Dutch culture is that of a low power distance and a feminine society. As well as an Egalitarian and open society. This could mean higher level of involvement from all the employees. "*The Dutch enjoy expressing their opinion, and the attitude is that each individual may hold information that is valuable for the company. As a result, meetings can involve staff members of various levels of seniority"*[5] It is common for Dutch employees, no matter their title from a company to have a chance to voice their opinions or ideas. Employees are encouraged to use their imitative and can work independently on well-presented projects or ideas"[6].

The Chinese score in this dimension is consistent with the high level of power distance which characterize most east Asian societies. There are plenty of factors that contributes to the wide social distance separating leaders from subordinates in these cultures such as patrimonial family structures and social features as filial piety[7]. With a masculine high-power distance culture most goals and decisions are decided by the leaders. There is little involvement from the subordinates

5 https://www.hollandalumni.nl/dutch-business-culture/

6 https://www.abroad-experience.com/blog/dutch-business-culture-expect/

7 https://www.thoughtco.com/filial-piety-in-chinese-688386

and little expectation that this will occur. In this culture, the power and authority of the leader is accepted as the right and proper way. Hierarchies are viewed as natural.

Freedom

The participants in the Dutch language once again demonstrated the highest score, this time in the Freedom dimension. (M = 194.88 SD = 51.424) Here again the Dutch seem to have a high Freedom score because of the previously mentioned feministic, low power distance and "laid back" culture. Interestingly the French language (M = 162.65 SD = 51.819) scored the lowest in the Freedom dimension. Slightly lower than the Chinese culture (M = 165.82 SD = 54.008) This demonstrates a significant difference in Freedom score, $t(198) = 4.415$, $p < .000$ between the Dutch and the French.

The French culture is high in power distance and is a very individualistic culture. This finding is rather unique.[8] The same combination is only found in Belgium and to some degree Spain and Italy[9] In terms of the feminine or masculine perspective the French culture has another unique characteristic. The upper-class scores feminine while the working-class scores masculine. This characteristic has not been found in any other country.[10] In France, business life is characterized by a strong hierarchical structure[11]. These findings could explain the lack of Freedom in the French organizational culture. Furthermore, the need to make a clear distinction between work and private life is strong in France. Even stronger than the US. "This is a reflection of the fact that employees more quickly feel under pressure than in the US because of their emotional dependence on that the boss says or does" [12]

[8] https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country/france/

[9] https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country/france/

[10] https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country/france/

[11] https://www.expatica.com/fr/working/employment-basics/french-business-culture-102491/

[12] https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country/france/

Ekvall (1996) explained that a certain level of Freedom has to exist to provide innovation. However, high levels of Freedom point to a situation in which subordinates are able to work independently without supervision. It is assumed that management controls the working environment which leads to lack of Freedom in the workplace. This description is consistent with the higher levels of power distance cultures like the French and Chinese. The possible explanation of these findings is that because of strictly following the hierarchy, employees in the Chinese and French culture rarely venture voluntary opinions and they feel less Freedom in their workplace. When permission has been granted by the leaders higher in the hierarchy there is a tendency to play it safe. The idea of fear to contribute to new ideas seem to stem from the perception that the potential penalty for voicing a controversial opinion or making a mistake is too high. It appears that leaving a more positive impression to the leaders is more important than producing ideas and results.

Idea -Time

Interestingly, the Chinese language (M = 171.32 SD = 57.787) scored the highest in the Idea-Time dimension. The German language (M = 115.69 SD = 59.602) had the lowest score. This demonstrated a significant difference $t(198) = 6.791$, P <.000 The concept of time in the Chinese culture differ than that of the western cultures. They use a lot of time in exploring ideas, changing plans and are not so strict in time appointment. The Chinese culture values lifelong learning and see this as advantageous for the organization. Using time to learn, reflect upon previous mistakes and carefully plan for the future in common in the Chinese culture. "*Asians do not see time as racing away unutilized in a linear future but coming around again in a circle where the same opportunities, risks and dangers will re-represent themselves*."[13] The Chinese culture expect a liberal amount of time to be allocated for repeated considerations of the ideas and details around a decision.[14]

Western cultures are more sensitive about time. Countries such as Germany have a linear vision of time and action. They suspect that time is being wasted without decisions being made or

13 https://www.businessinsider.com/how-different-cultures-understand-time-2014-5?r=US&IR=T

14 https://www.businessinsider.com/how-different-cultures-understand-time-2014-5?r=US&IR=T

actions being performed. [15]As seen in the dimension scores the western countries scored significantly lower than the Chinese. The German scores the lowest meaning time is rigid. German is considered a masculine culture. Performance is highly valued. In a profit-centered society, time is precious. “time is money” is a well-known phrase that can be able to describe the masculine culture.

Playfulness/Humor

The Norwegian language (M = 218.84 SD = 54.538) scored the highest in the Playfulness and Humor dimension. Not surprisingly the Chinese language (M = 168.34 SD 51.249) scored the lowest. This demonstrated a significant difference $t(198) = 6.748$, $p < .000$ As mentioned previously, Norway is the second most feminine culture (right behind their neighbor Sweden) this means that softer aspects of the society are valued. “*A feminine society is one where quality of life is the sign of success”*[16] In feminine societies it is important to keep the life/work balance. With a flat hierarchy, high level of involvement and informal communication the Norwegian culture seem to display an easy-going and fun work environment. This is a strong contrast to the Chinese culture which is more masculine and hierarchical. The Norwegian languages also scores higher in the indulgence section in Hofstede`s insights. Which is another dimension that shows the importance of life quality.

The English language (M = 171.15 SD = 62.571) scored the second lowest in the Playfulness/Humour dimension. The English language demonstrated a significant difference with the Norwegian language. $t(198) = 5.746$, $p < .000$ As mentioned previously in the Trust/Openness dimension the English culture is very competitive and result oriented. The notion of Playfulness and Humor does not seem important for the competitive nature of the English language.

15 https://www.businessinsider.com/how-different-cultures-understand-time-2014-5?r=US&IR=T

16 https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/denmark/

Conflict

Lastly, the Conflict dimension showed some interesting results. The German language (M = 103.98 SD = 55.206) scored the highest in this dimension. The English language (M = 96.16 SD = 71.278) scored the second highest. As perhaps expected, the Chinese language (M = 73.67 SD = 62.518) scored the lowest in the Conflict dimension and demonstrated a significant difference with both the German $t(198) = 3.634$, $p < .000$, and the English language $t(198) = 2.372$, $p < .019$.

This dimension sums up the points that are made previously in discussing the dimensions. Both the German and American culture are masculine, individualistic cultures that are results driven. These cultures are not afraid of "*stepping on people's toes*" in order to achieve their goal. The assertive and aggressive nature of these cultures manifest itself in the communication process. If we take a closer look into the Germans specifically, they are very direct and explicit in their communication. They formulate important statements directly and openly without "window dressing" Thus, they can appear rude and threatening.[17]

This is completely unheard of in the collective Chinese culture. In countries that focus more on collectivism, such as China, organizational members value group cohesion, teamwork and organizational goals over individual goals (Hofstede, et. al., 2010) Central value is harmony and keeping peace in interactions. This is making the Chinese more sensitive towards conflict and friction. The Chinese notion of `guanxi` is widely recognized as an important construct in the Chinese culture. This refers to having personal trust and strong relationship with someone. "T*he Chinese are reluctant to hurt or undermine their guanxi with others and destroy the harmonious atmosphere"* (Leung, et al., 2002) Guanxi reduces the overall conflict within business relationships. (Zhang & Zhang, 2013) Generally speaking Asian cultures prioritize non-confrontational relationships. The Western cultures prefer more of a confrontational relationship in organizations.

17 https://www.expatica.com/de/working/employment-basics/german-business-culture-100983/

5.3 Gender differences in climate perception

Our second hypothesis looked at the potential differences in climate perception between gender. Our results suggest that there are some significant differences on how an employee perceives their organizational climate based on their gender. Our second hypothesis was supported. Based on our findings; men and women see the climate for Freedom, Playfulness/Humor, Idea-Support and Risk-Taking differently. These findings indicate that females generally perceive a more positive climate than men. We have previously mentioned the positive relationship between organization climate and work engagement. The results indicate that women appear to be more engaged, experience more Freedom, and their ideas are more often supported.

It is well established that cultures and societies influence gender roles. The dimensions of Hofstede (2001) was used to explain the cultural differences in our study. When studying gender differences, masculinity/femininity and power-distance are two dimensions that can potentially explain the differences. According to Hofstede, a masculine society is one that stresses different expectations for men and women.[18] In a masculine culture, men are expected to be assertive, competitive and focused on material success. Women on the other hand, are expected to be nurturing and focused on people and life quality. In contrast, a feminine society is one where gender roles are more fluid.[19] In feminine cultures gender roles overlap. The belief in gender equality is more prevalent. Furthermore, a cross cultural gender study done by Best and Williams (1994) found that gender differences were more notable in countries that scored high in the power-distance dimension. Based on our findings, this topic deserves further attention in additional research.

[18] https://study.com/academy/lesson/masculine-vs-feminine-cultures-distinctions-communication-styles.html

[19] https://study.com/academy/lesson/masculine-vs-feminine-cultures-distinctions-communication-styles.html

6.0 Conclusion

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine potential differences in climate perception cross-culturally by using language as a proxy for culture, and carefully translated assessments of the climate dimensions. Based on this sample, significant differences were found across cultures. The findings from this study were consistent with most of the empirical research reviewed about the cultures from Hofstede (2010) and GLOBE (2004). Our findings suggest that organization climate perceptions indeed vary both culturally and between genders.

The notion that national culture reflects itself in the organization culture is supported by these findings. The Western – European cultures generally experience more of the positive climate dimensions that further enhance their innovation and creativity compared to the Chinese. Based on our findings It can also be said that the level of autonomy and humor in the work environment is higher in the feminine Western European cultures such as the Dutch and Norwegian.

Based on these exploratory findings; those who use the SOQ in their practice should be mindful about cultural differences. This study focused on the quantitative aspects of climate. Practitioners should carefully examine the open-ended narrative comments from those who complete the questionnaire and pay particular attention to cultural and other potentially salient differences within the work environment.

7.0 Limitations and future research

In the context of research, all studies are not without their limitations. Even though this study contributed to the body of organizational research there are a number of limitations associated with this paper that should be addressed.

Given the exploratory nature of this study, it is not appropriate to draw concrete conclusions yet. Despite the limit for generalizability for this study, it does point out the potential value for deeper exploration into the role culture plays on climate.

Another limitation to this study would be the linkage between language and national culture. Although research has indicated a close relationship between language and culture, Hofstede argues that they are not so closely linked. “Language and culture are not so closely linked that sharing a language implies sharing a culture; nor should a difference in language always impose a difference in cultural values” (Hofstede, G. 1997. p. 214). To obtain a deeper understanding of culture relationship with climate we have to look beyond language by for example doing more open-ended inquiry. In addition to practitioners being sensitive to potential cultural variation in these climate dimensions, researchers need to go further. Researchers can be using multiple multi-method measures. Not only quantitative methods but also the qualitative approaches may provide deeper insights. There is a lot more that could be done on the qualitative aspect to get a deeper understanding of this topic.

Furthermore, organizational unit sample from the languages differ. As well as the type of industry the organizations belong to. This reduces the comparability of the organizations. It would be preferable to compare same types of industries and same unit size of organizations. More significant differences between organizational climate and type of organization could be found. Sub-variables such as age, education and time in organization is also one limitation to this study as these would give us a deeper understanding.

Drawing on the findings and limitations, there are several possibilities for future research that would further enhance the understanding of organization climate and culture. Firstly, a much deeper inquiry will be needed on the gender findings in this study. Since I already had the database, I ran some preliminary analysis on gender. This would be one of the many topics to take forward and do a deeper level of analysis on.

Future research needs to explore the sub-variables such as job ranks, age group, and education. It would be interesting to see if members who have been in the in a position longer experience more of the positive climate dimensions. Buchanan (1974) argued that members perception of their organization experiences varies with the length of time they have been employed. A new employee is likely to have different views than that of the organizational codes. Pant (2010) stated that the length of service is correlated with Challenge, Freedom, Playfulness/Humor and Idea-Time.

Another recommendation would be to modify the existing framework by incorporating leadership style (e.g., transformational leadership) as an additional variable. Looking closer at the leadership styles it can be said that transformational leadership has a very positive influence on factors such as innovation and creativity (Aragon-Correa et al.., 2007). On the other hand, transactional leadership has negative influence on business performance (Howell & Avolio, 1993). Including this variable could help further explain potential differences.

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