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EVOLUTION OF METHODOLOGY FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CREATIVITY: AN APPLICATION IN SERBIA

Maja Strugar Jelača, PhD*

Radmila Bjekić, MSc•

Bojan Leković, PhD♦

Abstract: *This article describes the measurement scale for analyzing creative organizational climate. The main aim of the article is validation and application of the measurement scale in the context of the Republic of Serbia. This measurement instrument was developed combining two methodologies by authors Amabile and Ekvall from 1996. For the aim of this research, we conducted reliability analysis using Cronbach alpha, as well as exploratory factor analysis to identify crucial organizational factors which encourage employees' creativity. The measurement instrument was applied to a sample of 145 employees from different organizations at the territory of the Republic of Serbia. The results indicated six crucial factors of importance for development of creative organizational climate like: experimental culture, flexible management system, variability and diversity, motivation for higher achievements, free resources and proactive business atmosphere.*

Keywords: *creativity, creative climate, Amabile, Ekvall, EFA*

1. Introduction

Today, innovative organizations have the potential for further growth and development, if they employ creative employees who generate new ideas for products or process innovation. Thus, creativity's contribution to organizational survival and success is increasingly recognized (Shalley et al., 2004). One of the key drivers of employees' creative

* University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Economics Subotica, Serbia;

✉ m.strugar.jelaca@ef.uns.ac.rs

• University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Economics Subotica, Serbia;

✉ rstojanovic@ef.uns.ac.rs

♦ University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Economics Subotica, Serbia;

✉ bojan.lekovic@ef.uns.ac.rs

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behavior is the organizational climate. Therefore, analysis of human resources in the organization is highlighted through the discovery of their creative potential, understanding and development of their innovative behavior, in order to identify key organizational drivers and work environment for employees' creativity. It is also the subject of our research, limiting itself to human capital in organizations in the territory of the Republic of Serbia. However, surprisingly, there are still relatively few empirical studies that explicitly explore aspects of creativity in organizations in our region. There is a gap in research and a lack of knowledge about the role of creativity in Serbian organizations.

Fundamental research on creativity dates back to the 1960s (Weiner, 2015), while the beginnings of the analysis in this area relate to 1988 when Theresa Amabile was the first author to propose a component model of creativity and innovation in organizations (Amabile, 1988). Since then, this topic had been gaining more and more importance, which is indicated by the citation of the component model of creativity in more than 4000 quotations (Amabile & Pratt, 2016), thus concluding that this topic occupies a key position in the field of organizational theory and innovation management. However, in spite of this, it was not in the focus of attention by most managers (Amabile & Khairi, 2008) for the reason of giving immediate effects, as is the case in our country. The result of this is the goal of our research, which is an analysis of the possibility of applying the methodology of the authors Amabile and Ekvalla to the business context of the Republic of Serbia. In this way, a valid methodology will be devised to indicate the constructs that can measure the creativity of the organizational climate and that way encourage the growth of creativity and innovation.

In order to analyze organizational factors of importance for employees' creativity in organizations in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, the research involved 145 employees from different organizations, both in size and legal form. A research framework was drawn up pointing to the key factors that encourage creative organizational climate. The results of the empirical research can be applied to the degree of creativity of work environment in all organizations in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, which strive for the growth of business performance and innovation itself at the organization level. This conclusion results from the recent empirical research that shows how the creativity of employees reflects on overall business performance (Gong et al., 2009).

2. Building a creative organizational climate

It is very important to point out that the whole concept of creativity is important for building a competitive advantage in an organization. (McAdam & McClelland, 2002). Thus, organizations put a lot of focus on creating innovative results on one hand, while on the other hand they are less aware of the random environment that encourages creativity (Weiner, 2015). On the basis of this, it is necessary to analyze the components that enable creation of a creative organizational climate that promotes innovative activities (Moghimi & Subramaniam, 2013). Therefore, the goal of all organizations should be to develop a creative internal environment which is the basic task of management. Under organizational climate we list attitudes, behavior and feelings among the employees together with the organizational routine and the procedure, and, depending on this combination, it affects achieving business success (Ekvall, 1996). According to Greenhalgh and Donaldson (2005), organizational climate gives guidance to employees on how to behave when experimenting with the new ideas.

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There is no single framework and set of factors influencing the formation of creative organizational climate. Different authors emphasize different success factors, such as: management practice, organizational motivation and providing sufficient resources for creative activities (Amabile et al., 1996); encouragement, autonomy, resources, pressures, organizational impediments (Amabile & Mueller, 2008). Author Andriopolous (2001) points out that for creative and innovative organization, besides creative organizational climate, it is necessary to have a creative organizational structure, organizational culture, adequate leadership style, available resources and employees' skills. Some authors analyzed the role of individual activities and factors that encourage employees' creative behavior, such as: communication through type of communication, process of producing innovative outcome, working style in communication process and the level of autonomy during development solutions (Sonnenburg, 2004); team development and collaboration (Rickards & Moger, 2000; Taggar, 2002); leadership style that challenges existing ways of business in new ways, as well as leadership behavior that influences the perception of employees of the creative climate (Sternberg et al., 2004; Isaksen et al., 2000-2001).

Amabile's Organizational Creativity model (1996, 1997) is a part of the component theory of creativity. This theory was defined in 1983 and designed to be useful both for psychological and organizational research of creativity. This is one of the most widely used models in this field, that has been used in a large number of surveys (Tseng & Liu, 2011; Stuhlfaut & Windels, 2012; Perry-Smith, 2014). The model looks at creativity from three angles: the individual, the team and the wider work environment angle. From the aspect of individual and team creativity, they analyzed expertise, motivation and creative skills (Amabile, 1997), while within the work environment they analyzed organizational motivation, available resources and management practice. As a part of our research, we have put the emphasis on the work environment and the three components mentioned. The work environment represents an external component of the impact on the individual creativity of employees in the organization. Incentive factors from work environment that positively affect creativity of the employees are: challenge at work, collaboration among employees, multifunctional teams of different qualifications, job freelance, supervisors that encourage development of new ideas, top management that supports innovation (Amabile, 2012). The factors from the work environment that adversely affect the creativity of employees are norms, sharp criticism of new ideas, political problems within the organization, emphasis on the status quo, conservative and low-risk attitude among top management and excessive time pressure (Amabile, 2012).

The first component within the work environment being analyzed is the organizational motivation that is very important, because if it does not exist, then it leads to employee's discouragement, which causes suppression of individual creativity (ElMelegy et al., 2016). This component consists of two elements, which are: organizational encouragement and the lack of organizational impediments (ElMelegy et al., 2016). Organizational encouragement refers to organizational culture and set business strategy that should simultaneously support realization of creative results and innovations (Amabile et al., 1996). In order to establish such an organizational culture, it is necessary to have a management role that needs to be innovatively oriented, and thus encourage employees to give as many ideas as possible, to accept the risk, to realistically assess the identified ideas while avoiding punishment, but encouraging rewards. Many authors point out that the rewards are the key for encouraging employees' creative behavior (Hunter et al., 2007). In their research, these authors point out that organizational encouragement leads to

employees' creative behavior and organizational creative results. The next element in organizational motivation is the lack of organizational impediments, which includes omission of business rules, regulations and procedures that stifle research and realization of creative results. One of the most common obstacles is a rigid business policy that entails strictly defined business tasks and results that need to be achieved with the failure to leave routine procedures and overcome the status quo situation. The second component is available resources within an organization, such as human capital, machines, equipment, technology, materials, and patents that are indispensable at doing business (Isaksen et al., 2000-2001, p. 174). Availability of resources and their availability to occupants greatly influence behavior and contribution of employees to creative results of organization (Galende & de la Fuente, 2003). Of all the resources, author Andriopoulos (2001) points out that available time is one of the key factors for encouraging creativity. However, it is indispensable to consider that people and their skills are, together with available information, one of the key resources within creative organizations. The last component in this model is management practice that includes communication through management functions. Within the planning function, it is necessary to encourage a flexible strategic and situational, as well as scenario planning, which implies non-existence of rigid plans, but adapting newly emerging trends. From the perspective of the organization, it should be set in such a way to ensure the formulation of a creative organizational structure that implies putting the right people to the right places with the possibility of forming multifunctional teams and encouraging collaboration among all the employees while avoiding the silos effect. The style of leadership should be application of transformation style of leadership that balances between routine tasks and experimentation.

Ekvall's model of creative organization (1996) is less comprehensive and consists of ten factors. This model is a result of the long-lasting work of author Ekvall in prominent organizations throughout Sweden, where he observed the work environment and its incentive to presenting new ideas and proposals (Isaksen et al., 2000-2001). Based on this model, Creative Climate Questionnaire (CCQ) was set up. The new combined version of questionnaire was published by Moultrie and Young (2009) and divided into two parts: (1) 'atmosphere for work' and (2) 'attitude to work'. Within the atmosphere for work, five factors of creativity were analyzed: challenge, freedom, idea support, risk taking and idea time. On the other hand, within the attitude to work, five remaining factors are classified: trust / openness, dynamism / liveliness, playfulness / humor, debates and conflicts.

Factor Challenge implies motivation of employees that leads to their satisfaction with the work they do, thus affecting their greater commitment and contribution (Lauer, 1994). This type of motivation promotes participation of all employees in the course of daily duties at work and setting long-term goals. Therefore, this factor can often be found under the name Involvement (Isaksen et al., 2000-2001). The next factor is Freedom or Independence of employees, i.e. possibility of obtaining greater autonomy (Isaksen et al., 2000-2001). This situation leads to the takeover of the initiative by the employees when they notice new business opportunity. It also encourages employees to engage in reengineering process and use new creative techniques and methods to solve the problems (Isaksen & Akkermans, 2007). The third factor relates to the previous one and represents the Idea support which implies the possibility of presenting its ideas to the superiors that will take them into consideration. Such a culture leads to formation of constructive and positive climate (Lauer, 1994), but with a realistic assessment of the use and the costs of each idea. Employees and their superiors in such organizations must not have risk aversion,

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because every innovation is uncertain and therefore risky, with the impossibility of high probability of anticipating its effects. Furthermore, it is necessary to mention the factor called Idea time, which allows the ideas to be formulated and the initial contextual framework to be set. In more detail, this implies the ability of employees to have time available for research and analysis of new ideas that are outside of planned work activities. Dynamism and liveliness imply a proactive organizational climate that is not in the status quo situation and in which new things are constantly and rapidly happening. This is the basic characteristic of highly creative and innovative organizations aimed at achieving a sustainable competitive advantage in a turbulent business environment. Humor is one of the factors that describe a spontaneous and relaxed atmosphere with frequent jokes and laughter during task performance (Lauer, 1994). However, this was a factor presented in the first version of Euclidean methodology, while in later iterations it was thrown out. The ninth factor involves debates in the organization that are indispensable, because so far in previous factors it has been pointed to the acceptance of new ideas, while this factor enables both different opinions and contradictions on the same issue. This factor implies "an open, well-meaning and honest discussion that leads to realization that someone else has a better idea" (Isaksen & Isaksen, 2010p. 12). If there is no debate, any idea given by superiors would be accepted by an authoritative template without further consideration (Isaksen et al., 2000-2001, p. 175). The last factor relates to the previous one, and this is a conflict that can arise from different opinions, but of course, in the end, a constructive solution should be reached to make this conflict a positive one. However, there is also the other side of the conflict that has a negative impact on the business situation in the organization if, due to unresolved differences among employees, there is a mutual competition, setting up business traps, highlighting lies, etc. (Isaksen et al., 2000-2001). If conflicts are reduced, increased acceptance of risk and prolongation of the idea, there is a greater probability of accepting challenging, highly innovative projects (Isaksen & Isaksen, 2010). All of the aforementioned factors, apart from the last factor, conflicts, have a positive impact on creativity (ElMelegy et al., 2016).

The two models of creative climate have a central role in organizational approach to the study of this topic (Argona, 2001). Also, "it is evident that there are overlaps and similarities between Amabile's elements of organizational creativity and the ten factors of Ekvall's creative climate" (Moultrie & Young, 2009, p. 300). The mentioned authors highlight coincidences within certain issues, such as questions that indicate: time needed for new ideas, acceptance of risk and uncertainty, lack of conflict among employees, recognition of creative work results, commitment of the employee to the job that is challenging, constructive debate about different viewpoints, autonomy during realization of business tasks, good and open communication in receiving information.

3. Methodology

The organizational climate can be easily analyzed because it includes recurrent patterns of behavior, feelings and attitudes among the employees. For that purpose, a questionnaire based on both Amabile's 'Organizational Creativity' model (1996) and Ekvall's 'Creative Climate' model (1996) was completed in organizations throughout the Republic of Serbia. Within the Amabile's 'Organizational Creativity' model, a short version of 17 questions was used, while in Ekvall's 'Creative Climate' model we used a version of 30 questions (Moultrie & Young, 2009). Within both models, there were questions about

current performance and perceived importance that were scored using a five-point Likert-type scale. Respondents could answer either with 0 (not applicable at all), 1 (applicable to some extent), 2 (fairly applicable), 3 (applicable), 4 (fully applicable). However, since there is no particular evidence on the validation of the constructs within the CCQ questionnaire of the Ekvall model of the creative climate (Isaksen et al., 2000-2001), the paper analyzes its validity on a sample of Serbian organizations.

Employees' surveys have been conducted from September 2017 until January 2018. The interviewees are employed by various organizations from the territory of the Republic of Serbia. Among the respondents, there were 69 men and 76 women, out of which 37 respondents were younger than 30, while 73 were between 30 and 50 years old, and a small number of 35 respondents was more than 50. According to the size of the total sample, the lowest number of employees was from small organizations - 8,3%, from medium-sized organizations there were 37,9% of them, while the largest number of employees was from large organizations - they covered 53,8% of the sample. Regarding the legal structure of the organizations, the smallest number were public organizations which comprise 23.4%, then those that are organized as joint stock organizations in the amount of 28.3%, while the majority of the respondents came from those that are organized as limited liability ones and they make 45.5 % of the sample, while 2.8% of the respondents did not specify the legal form of the organization.

Chronbach Alpha coefficient and EFA were used to analyze the questionnaire reliability and to identify the key constructs.

4. Empirical results and discussion

The reliability of the survey was analyzed using the Chronbach alpha coefficient, whose value for the new set of 27 questions is 0.958. We can conclude that the value of the new type of questionnaire has a good reliability of the scale, as well as a very good internal consensus of the statements in the questionnaire.

In addition, in order to analyze the dimension of the Amabile and Ekvall model of creative climate, we use exploratory factor analysis to see if the questions asked will group themselves in the same way and single out the same factors as in the original model of the above authors. As a data extraction method, we used Maximal similarity analysis and Varimax rotation method. We used Bartlett's sphericity test and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), as well as the Goodness of Fit Test. The KMO value of the variables was 0.895, while the value obtained by Bartlett's sphericity test for χ^2 (406) was 2682.090, which was highly significant at $p < 0.000$ level. Furthermore, Goodness of Fit Test should be significant.

The factor analysis eliminated some questions whose coefficients were less than 0.50 and reduced the original questionnaire at 27 independent variables to the six underlying factors. We named those factors in the following way: experimenting culture, flexible management system, acceptance of differences, motivation for higher achievements, freedom and availability of resources and proactive business atmosphere. These six underlying factors account for 60.615% of total variance, leaving 39.385% of the total variance unexplained.

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Table 1. The underlying factors of creative climate in Serbian organizations

Factor	Description	Eigenvalue	% of variance	Cumulative % of variance
1	Experimenting culture	4,495	15,501	15,501
2	Flexible management system	4,210	14,517	30,019
3	Acceptance of differences	3,295	11,362	41,381
4	Motivation for higher achievements	2,212	7,627	49,007
5	Freedom and availability of resources	1,792	6,179	55,186
6	Proactive business atmosphere	1,575	5,430	60,615

Source: Authors

The following table shows the rotated factors, where the original questions from the questionnaires that had factor loading below 0.50 were ruled out and factor analysis was restarted.

Table 2. The underlying factors of creative climate in Serbian organizations

Culture of experimentation	Freedom to test new impulses	Time for elaborating ideas	“High Idea-Time” environment	Tolerance of uncertainty	Independence in employee’s behavior	Staff put forward their ideas	Ideas are received in an attentive
,753	,729	,653	,642	,620	,600	,540	,511
The importance of time for innovation	The importance of staff training	The importance of access to information	The importance of flexible management system	The importance of project autonomy	The importance of team selection	The importance of free access to funds	The importance of dynamic atmosphere
,732	,712	,711	,686	,665	,627	,579	,566
Life in organization is eventful	Many voices are heard	Methods is alter	The environment is dynamic	Regular clashes between ideas			
,765	,665	,657	,622	,506			
Enthusiastic about the abilities of its members	Proud of its employees	Project goals are clearly defined					
,760	,667	,547					
Freely unlimited funds resource	Free access to information	Material resources are available					
,754	,581	,555					
Constructive, positive atmosphere	Encourage initiative thinking						
,690	,581						

Source: Authors calculating according to modified questionnaire methodology from Amabile et al. (1996), Ekvall (1996) and Moultrie and Young (2009)

The first isolated factor, F1 is called the experimental culture and it consists of eight questions taken from Ekvall's and Moultrie and Young methodology, whose questions describe Ekvall factors such as freedom, idea support, risk taking, time available for debate ideas. With all the aforementioned Ekvall factors, according to the authors of Moultrie and Young (2009), all apart from the debate factors represent the category of Atmosphere for work, while the debate factor is in the Attitude to work category. On that basis, the name is given to our newly formed factor, which also indicates the atmosphere in an organization based on all the conditions necessary for experimentation and the development of new ideas. The next factor, i.e. F2, called the flexible management system, refers to eight questions that point to the perception of flexibility and creativity of the control system in an organization in which the respondents are working. Within this factor, the dimensions of the authors Amabile et al. (1996) related to the available and free resources for carrying out creative activities, such as time training, information and funds, as well as the dimensions describing management practice and management system, the degree of autonomy, and personality of an employee. The last question in F2 describes the part of Ekvall's creative climate, or dynamism in the organization. Within the third factor or diversity, five issues are covered within the framework of the Ekvall's methodology, such as dynamism and debate. The fourth factor is the motivation of employees for higher achievements because it includes dimensions from the Amabile's methodology (1996) that refer to enthusiasm of employees, pride and the defined goals. The fifth factor involves the freedom to use resources, and it shares the dimension of authors Amabile et al. (1996). The last factor involves only two questions from the methodology of the author Ekvall (1996) describing Support for the ideas factor.

5. Conclusion

In the paper we conducted an exploratory study to investigate the creative environment of Serbian organizations. This analysis is based on established theoretical models that were tested by previous studies. The aim of our research was to explore the applicability of Amabile's and Ekvall's models in Serbian organizations and to present a methodological framework that can be validly used in our business context. In this way, they will enable the management to increase understanding of what encourages employees to be more creative and thus more innovative in achieving their work tasks, which will directly affect the level of innovation within the organization.

The empirical results indicate that both models of organizational creativity are complementary, although not necessarily separately applied in our business environment, but in combination. In a separate analysis of the validity and reliability of individual models, we did not receive rotated factors, indicating the inability to individually use the abridged Amabile and Ekvall model of creative organization. The authors Moultrie and Young (2009) came to such results, emphasizing that "the combination of both models provided the best representation of organizational creativity" (p. 309).

As a part of our research, a new combination of questions from both models emerged, representing newly formed factors that have an impact on creativity of the organization, highlighting the hierarchy of factors, which points out that not all of them are of the same importance and they do not equally contribute to creativity's growth. Among the most important factors is the flexible organizational practice that is necessary because it allows the acceptance of risky projects, the desire for experimentation and research, as well as freedom in making final decisions (DiLiello & Houghton, 2008).

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The set up research framework and data criteria for the assessment of creative organizational climate can be a guideline for further application of this methodology in all organizations in our territory. The above mentioned is also the contribution to practice.

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EVOLUCIJA METODOLOGIJE ZA OCENU ORGANIZACIONE KREATIVNOSTI: PRIMENA U SRBIJI

Rezime: U radu je prikazana merna skala za analizu kreativne organizacione klime. Glavni cilj rada je validacija i primena merne skale u poslovnom ambijentu Republike Srbije. Ovaj merni instrument je razvijen kombinovanjem dve metodologije, od autorke Amabile i autora Ekvall iz 1996. godine. U svrhu ovog istraživanja sprovedena je analiza pouzdanosti pomenute skale koristeći Cronbach Alpha kao i EFA za identifikaciju ključnih organizacionih faktora koji podstiču kreativnost zaposlenih. Merni instrument primenjen je na uzorku od 145 zaposlenih iz različitih preduzeća na teritoriji Republike Srbije. Rezultati EFA su izdvojili šest ključnih faktora od značaja za razvoj kreativne organizacione klime, kao što su: kultura eksperimentisanja, fleksibilni sistem upravljanja, promenljivost i različitost, motivacija za viša dostignuća, slobodni resursi i proaktivna poslovna atmosfera.

Ključne reči: kreativnost, kreativna klima, Amabile, Ekvall, EFA