

## The Effect on Job Satisfaction and Stress of the Perceptions of Violence Climate in the Workplace

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**Abstract:** The concept of violence climate is closely related to safety climate according to the employees' perceptions of organisational policies, practices and procedures directed towards controlling and preventing all kinds of violence in the workplace. This study aimed to determine the effects of the violence prevention climate on employees' job satisfaction and stress by determining how they perceive the dimensions of the violence climate. The study was conducted on 118 health workers in a public hospital in Turkey. The study used the 18 item Violence Prevention Climate scale developed by Kessler et al (2008) translated into Turkish. The measurements consist of the 3 dimensions of policies and procedures, practices and responses and pressure for unsafe practices. According to the results obtained from the research, while a positive significant relationship was determined between all the subdimensions of violence prevention climate and job satisfaction, no significant relationship was found between the violence prevention climate and the employees' stress and anxiety levels. Moreover, a significant negative correlation was determined between depression and the violence prevention climate subdimensions of policies and procedures and practices and responses.

**Keywords:** Safety climate, violence prevention climate, job satisfaction, work related stress

### 1. Introduction

Workplace violence, in terms of occupational health and safety, is one of the most important problems of working life. There are several definitions of workplace violence available in literature. Richards (2003) defined as "Incidents where staff are abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances related to their work, including commuting to and from work, involving an explicit or implicit challenge to their safety, well-being or health". Workplace violence includes not only physical but also non-physical violence. For example; workplace violence includes physical assault, homicide, robbery, verbal abuse, bullying/mobbing, swearing, shouting, sexual and racial harassment, name calling, threats, interfering with work tools and equipment (Essenberg, 2003, Chappell & Di Martino, 1999).

Fletcher, Cavanaugh, & Brakel (2000) defined as a "work or workplace-related problem negatively affecting the production force or safety of the employees". Research has shown that violent behaviour in the workplace causes employees to experience stress, anxiety, burnout and depression. In addition, workplace violence is a reason for reduced job satisfaction, and a lower level of job involvement and organizational commitment (Kaukiainen et al., 2001; Dierendonck & Mevissen, 2002; Hepworth & Towler, 2004; Hogh, Henriksson, & Burr, 2005; Bedi & Schat, 2007; Herschovis & Barling, 2009; Merez, Drabek, & Moscicka, 2009).

Workplace violence negatively affects not only the direct victims of such behavior, but also those who witness such violence. To witness violence of any sort in the workplace may cause concern to workers that they themselves may face this type of violence in the future. Studies have shown that the fear of violence creates a negative relationship between emotional wellbeing and somatic health (LeBlanc & Kelloway, 2002; Schat & Kelloway, 2003).

## 2. Organizational Climate, Safety Climate and Violence Climate

Despite many years of research on organizational climate, there is still no consensus on a common definition. Reichers & Scheneider (1990) says "Organizational Climate is widely defined as the shared perception of organizational policies, practices, and procedures, both formal and informal". Zohar (1980 as cited in Williamson Williamson, Feyer, Cairns, & Biancotti, 1997) safety climate is defined as "a summary of the beliefs and perceptions of employees about safety in the workplace". Neal & Griffin (2002) stated that "*Safety climate* refers to perceptions of policies, procedures, and practices relating to safety in the workplace".

Several studies have examined key factors influencing the safety safety climate in a particular industry, for example, manufacturing (Cheyne, Oliver, Tomas, & Cox, 2002; Cooper & Phillips, 2004; Clarke, 2006), construction (Siu, Phillips, & Leung, 2004), road and bridge construction (Glendon & Litherland, 2001), health sector (Neal, Griffin, & Hart, 2000; Flin, 2007), offshore (Mearns, Flin, Gordon, & Fleming, 2003), grain (Seo, Torabi, Blair, & Ellis, 2004), nuclear (Lee & Harrison) and chemical (Vinodkumar & Bhasi, 2009).

Perceived violence climate is a manifestation of the idea of a safety climate. A positive violence climate will be perceived by employees when management emphasizes the control and elimination of violence by using of safety policies and procedures (Spector, Coulter, Stockwell, & Matz, 2007). Kessler, Spector, Chang, & Parr (2008) says "A positive perceived violence climate may also focus employee attention on recognizing precursors to violence, making them more likely to anticipate escalating situations so that actions can be taken to avoid them. In short, it makes employees more knowledgeable about situations that can lead to violence and how to handle them". In the absence of clear and sufficiently organized policies, procedures and practices against workplace violence (eg, what kind of behaviour constitutes violence and what disciplinary measures will be taken in cases of such behaviour), there are perceptions that the organisation tolerates such behaviour. These perceptions lay the ground for the continuation of existing violence and allow new violent incidents to arise. There is a relationship between the workplace violence prevention climate and the violence created. The only direct test of violence climate was conducted by Spector et al. (2007). Using a 7- item true-false violence climate scale, they found that violence climate predicted physical violence and verbal aggression among nurses. Additionally, violence climate predicted physical strain, psychological strain (anxiety and depression), and perceived workplace safety. Results from the Spector et al. (2007) study supported that violence climate has important implications for employee exposure to violence. In addition, a supportive working environment against workplace violence both reduces possible negative outcomes by exposing the violence and also plays a preventative role against new violence or the threat of such. A study by Emmerik, Euwema, & Bakker (2007) determined a direct relationship between an unsafe working climate and the threat of violence and a reverse relationship between social support and the threat of violence. Cole, Grubb, Sauter, Swanson, & Lawless (1997) determined a negative correlation between the threat of workplace violence and harassment and support from colleagues. On the other hand, several studies have shown the important role played by institutional support in reducing the negative effects arising from violence (Whittington & Wykes, 1989; Schat & Kelloway, 2003; Gillespie, Gates, Margaret, & Howard, 2010). As can be seen from these studies, for the prevention of, or removing negative outcomes of violent incidents in the workplace the presence of a violence prevention climate is an important factor.

The research hypotheses can be predicted as follows.

*Hypothesis 1:* Violence prevention climate will be positively related to job satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 2:* Violence prevention climate will be negatively related to depression.

*Hypothesis 3:* Violence prevention climate will be negatively related to anxiety.

*Hypothesis 4:* Violence prevention climate will be negatively related to stress.

*Hypothesis 5:* Policies and procedures in place to prevent workplace violence increase employee job satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 6:* Training and practices to prevent workplace violence decrease depression stress and anxiety levels in employees.

*Hypothesis 7.* Lack of pressure to enforce safe practices to prevent workplace violence increase levels of stress, depression and anxiety for employees.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Participants

The participants in this study were 118 health workers from a single hospital in Turkey. Questionnaires, with free return envelopes, were distributed to hospital staff by random sampling. Anonymity was guaranteed, and information about the study was provided by the hospital management. 175 questionnaires (74%) were returned and respondents with missing values on the research variables were excluded, leaving a total of 118 participants (18.6% male, 81.4% female, mean age  $33.5 \pm 9.58$  years and mean working years  $9.6 \pm 7.82$  years).

#### 3.2. Measures

- **Personal information form:** 7 questions regarding employee age, gender, marital status, education level and years of work.

- **Violence prevention climate scale:** The violence climate scale is an 18-item measure that assesses three dimensions of climate. This was developed by Kessler et al. (2008) and adapted by us for use in Turkey. Questions 1-6 measure the first dimension of policies and procedures. For example, a statement such as "Management encourages employees to report physical violence" in this section measures the policies and procedures observed in the organisation against violent incidents. Cronbach's alpha for policies and procedures = .88.

Questions 7-12 measure the second dimension of practices and response. For example, statements such as "In my unit, employees are informed about potential violence hazards" evaluate the information and training given by the organisation on the subject of workplace violence prevention and how these practices are perceived by the employees. Violence prevention climate scales internal consistency reliabilities (coefficient alpha) were found for practices and response = .89.

Questions 13-18 measure the final dimension of pressure for unsafe practices. Statements such as "In my unit, in order to get the work done, one must ignore some violence prevention policies" measure the priority given by the organisation to workplace violence prevention. Cronbach's alpha of this scale was .85. In this scale, questions 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 were reverse coded questions. The higher points obtained indicate a climate oriented to decreasing violence and aggression. This scale was 1 = completely agree to 6 = completely disagree.

As this was the first time a violence prevention climate measurement had been translated and applied in Turkey, factor analysis was performed (Table 2). To measure the adequacy of the sample size to be used, the factor analysis was calculated as Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin sample adequacy statistic 0.802. This value showed a suitable level for factor analysis. The Barlett Test was used to establish whether there was a unit matrix in the correlation matrix obtained in the analysis and a value of  $p < 0.05$  was observed.

Using data from the study, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted using the common factor model. An inspection of the scree plot suggested three factors that were subject to varimax rotation. Combined, the three factors accounted for 64.9% of the total variance among the items, with the first three factors accounting for Factor 1 (eigenvalue = 5.63, representing 31.2% shared variance) consists of the six policies and procedures items. Factor 2 (eigenvalue = 3.62, representing 20.1% shared variance) consists of the six practices and response items. Factor 3 (eigenvalue = 2.42, representing 13.4 % shared variance consists of the six pressure for unsafe practices items.

In this study, the result of Factor Analysis on the joint items of the violence prevention climate scales resulted in the expected three dimensions (see Table 2) as in the Kessler et al. (2008) studies.

The studies of Kessler et al. (2008) have three subscales: Subscale 1, Policies and Procedures (alpha=.95); Subscale 2, Practices and Response (coefficient alpha=.90); and Subscale 3, Pressure for Unsafe Practices (coefficient alpha=.90).

- **Job satisfaction scale:** Job satisfaction was assessed with the 5-item scale developed by Brayfield & Rothe (1951). A five-point agree scale was used with choices ranging from "1 = Completely Disagree" to "5 = Completely Agree." High scores represent high satisfaction. The coefficient alpha was .77.

- **DASS (Depression-Anxiety-Stress) scale,** The Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) is a promising 42-item self-reporting measure of depression, anxiety, and stress. In this study to assess

depression (14 items), anxiety (14 items), and stress (14 items) as aspects of psychological strain, three subscales which were developed by Lovibond & Lovibond (1995) were used. This scale was translated into Turkish by Uncu, Bayram, & Bilgel (2006). The symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress are measured by 42 statements related to emotional state within the last week. For example, items include "I get angry" for stress, "I feel nervous" for anxiety, and "I felt sad and depressed" for depression. The response choices range from 1 (never or a little) to 4 (most of the time). The alpha for the current scale was .92 for Depression and .91 for Anxiety and .90 for stress.

### 3.3. Procedures

The survey was conducted at a single state hospital between 13 July and 27 July 2010. The questionnaire in a sealed envelope was distributed to 250 voluntary participants selected by random sampling. Two days later the completed questionnaires were returned to the researchers by the hospital manager. This research was conducted with a sample of hospital workers as they are a population known to be at particular risk for workplace violence.

## 4. Results

Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations and internal consistency reliabilities (coefficient alpha) are shown for all study scales in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Reliability analysis of the study instruments

Scales	Number of items	N	Mean	S.D.	C. Alpha
Job Satisfaction (JS)	5	116	19.40	3.61	0.77
DASS Totally	42				
Depression	14	105	7.96	7.16	0.92
Anxiety	14	100	9.40	7.34	0.91
Stress	14	102	12.82	7.22	0.90
VPCS	18	118			
Policies and Procedures	6	116	23.91	6.47	0.88
Practices and Response	6	112	22.95	6.74	0.89
Pressure for Unsafe Practices	6	115	22.44	5.90	0.85

The factor analyses for the study are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The Factor analysis of violence prevention climate

Violence Prevention Climate Dimensions	Factor loading		
	Practices	Pressure	Policies
Management in this organization quickly responds to episodes of violence.	.219	-.017	<b>.665</b>
Management in this organization requires each manager to help reduce violence in his/her department.	.199	-.152	<b>.793</b>
Management encourages employees to report physical violence.	-.050	.005	<b>.867</b>
Management encourages employees to report verbal violence.	.316	-.001	<b>.809</b>
Reports of workplace violence from other employees are taken seriously by management.	.161	-.028	<b>.726</b>
Abusive behaviour is not tolerated at work.	.023	-.005	<b>.696</b>
My employer provides adequate assault/violence prevention training.	<b>.692</b>	.222	.361
My employer provides adequate assault/violence prevention procedures.	<b>.771</b>	.125	.259
In my unit, violence prevention procedures are detailed.	<b>.782</b>	-.062	.114
In my unit, employees are informed about potential violence hazards.	<b>.869</b>	-.110	.139
In my unit, there is training on violence prevention policies and procedures.	<b>.744</b>	-.171	.112
In my unit, information about violence prevention is distributed regularly.	<b>.841</b>	-.304	-.009
In my unit, in order to get the work done, one must ignore some violence prevention policies.	-.290	<b>.679</b>	-.114
In my unit, whenever pressure builds up, the preference is to do the job as fast as possible, even if that means compromising violence prevention.	-.308	<b>.698</b>	-.129
In my unit, human resource shortage undermines violence prevention standards.	-.044	<b>.765</b>	.056
In my unit, violence prevention policies and procedures are ignored.	-.014	<b>.817</b>	-.106
In my unit, violence prevention policies and procedures are nothing more than a cover-up for lawsuits.	.047	<b>.842</b>	.007
In my unit, ignoring violence prevention procedures is acceptable.	.129	<b>.806</b>	.073

KMO: 0,802; p: ,000 (Bartlett's Test)

Table 3 contains correlations among all the variables in the study. Hypothesis 1 is addressed in the first column which indicated that violence prevention climate was significantly and negatively related to depression. A good violence climate was positively related to job satisfaction. There is a strong relationship at a significance level of 1% between responsibility and the practices arising from the information and training given by the organisation on the subject of workplace violence prevention and employees' depression negatively and job satisfaction positively.

**Table 3.** Correlation analysis among all variables

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
(1) Policies						
(2) Practices	.399(**)					
(3) Pressure (R)	-.098	-.182				
(4) Job satisfaction	.242(**)	.260(**)	.205(*)			
(5) Stress	-.029	-.135	.103	-.237(*)		
(6) Anxiety	-.053	-.079	.092	-.120	.732(**)	
(7) Depression	-.198(*)	-.334(**)	.095	-.301(**)	.757(**)	.812(**)

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

(R): Reversed

According to the correlation analysis results, the violence prevention climate dimensions of policies, practices and pressure for unsafe practices were found to have a positive significant relationship with job satisfaction. This result supports Hypothesis 1. While the strongest relationship is seen between the dimension of practices and responses and job satisfaction, the weakest relationship can be observed between pressure to perform unsafe practices and job satisfaction.

A significant negative correlation was determined between policies and practices and depression. In the dimension of practices and responses, this relationship was found to be stronger in comparison with policies and procedures. No significant relationship was found between pressure and depression ( $p > 0.05$ ). According to this, while Hypothesis 2 is accepted with the dimensions of policies and practices, it is rejected from the aspect of pressure dimension. No significant relationship was found between the violence prevention climate dimensions and stress and anxiety. In this regard, Hypothesis 3 and Hypothesis 4 are rejected.

At this stage of the study regression analysis was performed to define the strength of relationships between the independent variables of the violence climate subdimensions of policies, practices and pressure and the dependent variables of job satisfaction, depression, anxiety and stress.

**Table 4.** Result of regression analysis

Independent variable	Depended Variable			
	Job satisfaction		Depression	
Violence Prevention Climate Scale Dimensions	$\beta$	T	$\beta$	t
Policies	.067	1.141	-.045	-.339
Practices	.127*	2.282	-.312**	-2.676
Pressure (R)	.155**	2.681	.065	.547
F	4.90**		3.57*	
R <sup>2</sup>	.12		.10	

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

(R): Reverse

In the explanation of the dependent variable of job satisfaction, the subdimension of violence prevention climate stated as given priority by the organisation '*pressure to perform unsafe practices*' was a significant subdimension ( $p < 0.01$ ) and was seen to explain 12% of the total variables.

Whereas the dependent variable of depression, had a significant negative effect on the subdimension '*practices and responses*' which includes the information and training given by the organisation on the subject of workplace violence prevention as a subdimension of violence prevention climate, and the variables obtained were revealed to account for 10% of the total variables (Table 4).

Table 5. Result of regression analysis

Independent variable	Dependent Variable			
	Stress		Anxiety	
Violence Prevention Climate Scale Dimensions	$\beta$	T	$\beta$	t
Policies	.007	.053	-.100	-.673
Practices	-.099	-.803	-.054	-.432
Pressure (R)	.101	821	.110	.815
F	.60		.60	
R <sup>2</sup>	.02		.02	

(R): Reverse

The established regression model was found not to be statistically significant in terms of stress and anxiety dependent variables (Table 5). The hypothesis 'Policies and procedures in place to prevent workplace violence increase employee job satisfaction' is rejected from the results of the regression model (Hypothesis 5). The hypothesis that 'Training and practices to prevent workplace violence decrease depression stress and anxiety levels in employees' (Hypothesis 6) is seen to be accepted in respect of the dependent variable of depression. However, as the anxiety and stress dependent variables were found not to be significant in the established regression analysis model, Hypothesis 6 was rejected in respect of these variables.

## 5. Discussion

Today, violence is commonly observed in all races and cultures. Violent incidents in the workplace which negatively affect employees' health and safety present an important problem of health and safety at work. Being exposed to violent incidents at work or being a witness to violence has a negative effect on employees' feelings towards their work and the organisation. Additionally these types of violent incidents can be a reason for negative outcomes in the workers' physical and psychological health.

Employees' perceptions of organisational policies, procedures and practices directed towards controlling and removing workplace violence and aggression, stated as violence prevention climate, is an important concept in the effect on workers' health caused by workplace violence. Organisational policies and procedures directed towards preventing and controlling workplace violence and aggression create a positive violence climate.

According to the results of this healthcare sector research undertaken in a state hospital, a significant relationship was determined between employee job satisfaction and the influence directed to the subdimensions of a violence prevention climate of policies, practices and unsafe practices. A study by Kessler et al. (2008) determined a significant relationship between job satisfaction and these three dimensions.

While a significant negative correlation was determined between depression and the subdimensions of violence prevention climate policies and practices, no significant relationship was found between pressure for unsafe practices and depression. No significant relationship was found between violence prevention climate dimensions and stress and anxiety. In a study by Spector et al. (2007) a significant relationship was determined between the perceived violence climate and depression and anxiety. While research by Kessler et al. (2008) showed a significant relationship between practices and pressure, no significant relationship was determined between policies and depression. The same study determined a significant relationship between practices, pressure and anxiety.

Furthermore, the regression analysis results determined a significant relationship between practices and pressure for unsafe practices subdimensions and job satisfaction. According to this, organisational practices directed towards reducing violent incidents in the workplace (eg information and training on the subject of violence) and there being no pressures towards unsafe behaviour (eg violence prevention policies and procedures not being ignored) play a role in increasing job satisfaction. The regression analysis results also determined a significant relationship between the dimension of practices and depression. According to this result, the practice of the organisation giving information and training on workplace violence prevention is effective in reducing the rate of employee depression.

**Limitations and future directions:** As far as we know, this is the first study to assess perceived violence climate by employees of an organization in Turkey. The study has two main limitations. The first is that

the research phase was conducted in a state hospital in the Turkish health sector. Therefore, it is not possible to generalise the obtained data for the whole healthcare sector. The other significant limitation of the research is that the results are restricted to the individual's perceptions of the violence climate. When the results are being evaluated, the related factors of different individuals' different perceptions of the workplace violence climate must be taken into consideration.

Future studies in different sectors and different cultures will enable all the dimensions of the problem to be addressed. There is also a need for studies examining the effect of the violence climate on employees as well as the organisational results.

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