

Kristinka Ovesni

ORGANISATIONAL CLIMATE AND THE WORK-RELATED LEARNING OF EMPLOYEES: AN ANDRAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

ABSTRACT

The aim of this mixed methods research was to distinguish and to examine models of organisational climate regarding the work-related learning of employees. The theoretical rationale is found in the reflections of the learning supportive organisational climate as the main prerequisite of the process of participatory planning in adult education and learning, and as one of the core pillars in the process of building a learning organisation. For the purposes of triangulation and of complementarity, we adopted quantitative and qualitative methodology. The research was performed online from May to December 2018 and included employees from different companies in the Republic of Serbia. By using an explanatory sequential mixed methods research design with nested samples for the quantitative ($N_{qn}=687$) and the qualitative components ($N_{ql}=85$), three models of organisational climate regarding the work-related learning of employees have been distinguished: the organisational climate of the fear of repression, the service-oriented organisational climate, and the learning supportive organisational climate.

Keywords: *organisational climate, work-related learning of employees, andragogical perspective on organisational climate*

ORGANIZACIJSKA KLIMA IN Z DELOM POVEZANO IZOBRAŽEVANJE ZAPOSLENIH: ANDRAGOŠKA PERSPEKTIVA – POVZETEK

Članek predstavlja raziskavo mešanih metod, katere cilj je bilo odkriti in raziskati različne modele organizacijskih klim v zvezi z delom povezanim izobraževanjem zaposlenih. Teoretično utemeljitev dajejo razmišljanja o organizacijski klimi, ki podpira učenje zaposlenih ter je tako glavni pogoj za proces participatornega načrtovanja v izobraževanju odraslih in eden od stebrov procesa ustvarjanja učeče se organizacije. Zaradi triangulacije in komplementarnosti sta uporabljeni tako kvantitativna kot kvalitativna metodologija. Raziskava je bila opravljena prek spleta med majem in decembrom 2018, sodelovali pa so delavci iz različnih podjetij v Srbiji. Prek obrazložitvene zaporedne raziskave mešanih metod z gnezdenimi vzorci kvantitativnih ($N_{qn} = 687$) in kvalitativnih komponent ($N_{ql} = 85$) lahko z vidika

izobraževanja na delu ločimo med tremi modeli organizacijske klime: organizacijska klima strahu pred represijo, storitveno usmerjena organizacijska klima in klima, ki podpira izobraževanje delavcev.

Ključne besede: *organizacijska klima, izobraževanje zaposlenih, organizacijska klima z andragoške perspektive*

INTRODUCTION

Conceptual Framework of Organisational Climate

Organisational climate is deeply intertwined with the growth and development of an organisation, with the organisation's ability to adapt to internal or to a variety of external changes, and it has the potential to support or discourage the work-related learning of employees. Although interesting for andragogy, the term organisational climate has not been fully theoretically or empirically explained and researched. Besides authors who define organisational climate as an autochthonous psychological construct "developed with the aim of specifying environmental influences on motivation and behaviour" (Sušanj, 2005, p. 14), the prevailing understanding is that the multidisciplinary scientific focus of studying and researching organisational climate cannot be reduced to a psychological aspect referred to as a separate construct of "psychological climate in the organisation" (DeCotiis, 1991; Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009). While the construct "psychological climate in the organisation" is defined as a reflection of individual perceptions of psychological impact on the work environment that affects employee well-being, organisational climate, in general, is defined as an aggregate collective perception of various aspects of the work environment (Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009).

The term organisational climate entered the focus of interest of andragogy in the 1980s with the popularisation of the participatory model of planning activities in adult learning where a "climate conducive to adult learning" has particular importance (Knowles, 1980) and intensified in later decades with the introduction of the concept of a learning organisation (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015; Ovesni, 2019; Watkins & Marsick, 1993). Nowadays, the perspective on organisational climate that puts employee learning at the centre of research interest is of great importance. It is considered more of a cognitive than an affective phenomenon because it refers to the perception that employees have about the functioning of the organisation, and not to the attitude of the organisation towards them as individuals.

Organisational climate is a cognitive phenomenon – it represents the meaning that employees attach to various aspects of action in the organisation: events, policies, practices, procedures, as well as rewarded, encouraged, and expected behaviour. It is a key element that guides individual behaviour and the way an individual reacts to the organisational context. Organisational climate is a concept that reflects the beliefs, values, and meanings that employees attach to individual, group, or general behaviour in an organisation. The

organisational climate affects many aspects of an organisation's performance: the future goals and vision, knowledge, skills, and competencies of its employees, the openness and innovation of the employees' knowledge, the support given to employees to achieve optimal or improve existing performance, etc. (Ovesni, 2019).

Organisational climate is influenced by different factors and each organisation develops a unique organisational climate that has a direct impact on employee behaviour because each organisation is associated with unique organisational factors (policy, formal and informal structure, etc.), and because each organisation is associated with broader social and cultural factors related to the organisational context. As a reflection, the dimensions of organisational climate are determined differently. For Schneider and Barbera (2014) the dimensions of organisational climate are: support provided by management to employees, management structure, care for new employees, intra-organisational conflicts, employee autonomy and general employee satisfaction. Nazari, Herremans, Isaac, Manassian and Kline (2011) believe that organisational climate is represented by four dimensions: risk-taking, owner ideas, openness, and trust.

Organisational climate research often focuses on examining: (a) the psychological climate in the organisation, (b) the differentiation of the elements of organisational climate and organisational culture, (c) organisational climate as conducive to some other phenomenon, (d) organisational climate as a part/aspect of organisational processes, (e) organisational climate in relation to another construct (Ovesni, 2019). Empirical research on organisational climate is performed in such a way that: a) organisational climate is viewed as a mediator, (b) mediators of the organisational climate–outcomes relationship are studied, and (c) moderators of the organisational climate–outcomes relationship are studied (Ovesni, 2019). Additionally, we can distinguish between the “molar” (generic) research that focuses on the significant experiences of individuals concerning organisational climate on the one hand, and “molecular” (focused) research about the components of experience concerning organisational climate on the other (Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2011, as cited in Ashkanasy, Wilderom, & Peterson, 2011). Examples of research that retain both perspectives are rare, and they are usually molar, but with an additional molecular focus.

For some authors (Ehrhart, Schneider, & Macey, 2014) organisational climate is a subjective, aggregate perception of an organisation that describes the way an organisation affects employees. Therefore, they believe that organisational climate can be studied only from an individual perspective and through indicators such as organisational orientation, the interpersonal relationships of employees, problem-solving, and through processes such as communication, decision-making, etc. Individual determinants and factors of the organisational context are often found as antecedents of the organisational climate in research, while many studies have found that organisational climate is indirectly influenced by gender, age and the length of tenure (Johnson, Beyerlein, Huff, Halfhill, & Ballentine, 2002).

For the purpose of our research we consider organisational climate as a construct, evolved in social sciences, that represents the employees' perception of the instrumental, affective, and cognitive dimensions of organisational performance elements, that has differentiated effects on employee behaviour, performance, expression of innovativeness, learning, interpersonal relationships, transmission, storage and processing of information.

Organisational Climate Conducive to Adult Learning

Knowles' (1980) understanding of a climate that is conducive to adult learning is particularly important in the andragogical sense because organisational climate does refer to psychological, organisational and to physical elements. Significant physical elements in the context in which adults learn relate, for example, to the equipment in the space in which learning takes place, informal seating arrangements, space decoration, acoustic characteristics, lighting, etc. Among the most important psychological elements of a climate conducive to adult learning are acceptance, respect and support, the existence of a spirit of togetherness between the adult learners and the facilitators of the learning process, freedom of expression without fear of punishment or humiliation, while important organisational factors are policy, structure of management system, size, industry, sector, basic business activities, etc.

Knowles (1980) emphasizes that it is especially important for employees "to feel more 'adult' to an atmosphere that is friendly and informal, in which they are known by name and valued as unique individuals" (p. 47). In this sense, the term *organisational climate conducive to employee learning* is a reflection of the andragogical influence in the organisational context (Klemenčič, 2018; Kulić & Despotović, 2004; Watkins & Marsick, 2003; Ovesni, 2014; Purković & Klapan, 2011; Savićević, 2007). For efficient, andragogically designed development of employees, an organisational climate consistent with their individual learning needs and with the changing needs of the environment is necessary. A positive organisational climate has the effect of encouraging participation in human resource development activities, and networked with management incentives and associate support, a positive organisational climate has the effect of an important moderator of the employees' motivation for learning (Sonntag, Niessen, & Ohly, 2004).

The organisational climate related to the learning of employees is built not only by managers, but by all employees who play a key role in the organisation, "who learn from their experience, influence the learning of others, and create an environment of expectations that shapes and supports desired results that in turn get measured and rewarded" (Watkins & Marsick 2003, p. 134). Such a climate could be built by applying the strategies that are created in the organisation (Ovesni, 2019).

Empirical studies of the organisational climate viewed from an andragogical perspective are rare. Some researchers (Ovesni, 2019; Woods, Dinh, & Salas, 2017) found that the organisational characteristics that influence the formation of an organisational climate conducive to employee learning are: the organisation's support for various learning activities, the level of learning autonomy, and the participation requirements in different learning activities.

METHODS

The aspects of organisational climate relevant from the andragogical point of view, which reflect the organisation's approach to employee learning, form a research challenge that can be viewed through different lenses. For complex reasons, we decided to design the research of organisational climate and the work-related learning of employees from an andragogical perspective as a mixed method research that combines quantitative and qualitative components. The rationale to opt for such a research design is the fact that combined research provides significantly deeper insights into the nature of the relationship of the problems being examined, as well as insights that would not be visible if we opted for only one, either quantitative or qualitative, component of research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Matović, 2013). The aim of combining the quantitative and qualitative components in this research was to broaden the understanding of the studied problem (*complementarity*), and to achieve mutual confirmation and support of the results obtained by using quantitative and qualitative methodology, i.e. to acquire more in-depth insights and improve the possibilities in terms of the generalisation and interpretation of the obtained data (*triangulation*) (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The next reason for combining quantitative and qualitative methodology is our intention to maintain a molar and molecular perspective in the study of organisational climate because quantitative research of it can be conceived only as a limited aggregate collective perception of the work environment (Ovesni, 2019).

The subject of the research is the aspects of organisational climate relevant from the andragogical point of view. Accordingly, the research aimed to explore the relationship between organisational climate and the work-related learning of employees through several organisation¹ related indicators (number of employees in the organisation, basic business activities, industry, sector of activities, the organisation's approach towards employee learning). In accordance with the selected explicit-successive model of mixed method research, after we received the research findings in the quantitative component, we approached the planning and elaboration of content for the qualitative component of the research. Consequently, to provide deeper insight into the results obtained in the quantitative component of the research, we asked two research questions for the qualitative component: How does the organisation design learning activities for employees? What is its general approach towards the work-related learning of employees?

Instruments

Quantitative component. To collect data on the characteristics of the organisations in which the respondents are employed, the questionnaire consisting of four closed-ended questions was used; the questions related to: the size of the organisation (expressed in terms of the number of employees), basic business activities, the industry in which the organisation operates and the sector of activities that the organisation performs.

¹ Due to the nature and scope of this paper, indicators related to the individual characteristics of the employees are not included.

The scale used to examine the approach of the organisation towards employee learning in the quantitative component of the research consisted of 26 items representing heterogeneous indicators (Table 1). Fourteen items in the instrument were based on previous research (Ovesni, 2019). The task of the respondents was to assess the degree of agreement with the items, where mark 1 meant complete disagreement, and 5 complete agreement with the item. The analysis of the internal metric characteristics of the instrument indicated a satisfactory level of reliability for research in the social sciences (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.8593$), but also pointed out the fact that the indicators of the organisation's approach towards employee learning was sufficiently heterogeneous and that there were no statistical reasons for their further reduction (Cochran's $Q = 1750.457$, Sig. = 0.000).

Table 1: Indicators of the organisation's approach towards employee learning

Enabling / facilitating ...
days off to complete formal education
material support for the completion of formal education
program of induction for new employees
participation in courses
participation in on-the-job training
participation in off-the-job training
participation in interpersonal skills training
work with a mentor
material support for attending courses
participation in seminars organised for employees
participation in conferences
reading work-related, professional journals
participation in lectures on various topics in the organisation
participation in congresses as a representative of the organisation
participation in workshops
participation in meetings on various work-related problems
participation in webinars
acquiring new knowledge through cooperation with managers
encouraging employees to share knowledge through ICT
using social networks to exchange opinions with colleagues
using online forums to exchange opinions with colleagues
contacts with an expert for advice related to work or private life
encouraging learning from colleagues
contacts with users aimed to improvement of the job performance
encouraging cooperation with colleagues from other organisations
lack of provision of learning opportunities

Qualitative component. The instrument we applied to collect data for the qualitative part of the research was a structured interview. Apart from the general data on the bio-social-work characteristics of the interviewees (gender, age, educational level, area of formal education, length of tenure, length of tenure and position in the organisation in which they are currently employed), the instrument contained a list of the two aforementioned open-ended questions. The average duration of the interview was from 17 to 35 minutes, and with the consent of the interviewees, audio recordings were made and then transcribed. At the beginning of each interview it was emphasized that it was anonymous and the personal information of the interviewees is protected by the covering data on the organisations of employment, while personal names have been replaced by random ones.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were subjected (in the first component) to a few common (frequencies, std. deviation, means, χ^2 test with associated procedures etc. with IBM SPSS Statistics 23) and more complex statistical proceedings (ItemItem analysis with Cronbach's α statistics; ANOVA procedure; nonparametric tests with associated hypothesis testing models, etc. with IBM SPSS Statistics 23 and Dell Software STATISTICA 12.5). To supplement them, interview transcripts were processed with MAXQDA10 software. Interview transcripts were subjected to thematic analysis and thematic grouping of data. Data coding was performed in two cycles, whereby in the first cycle the collected data were grouped into two subcategories: the organisation of learning activities and the general approach of the organisation towards the work-related learning of employees. In the second coding cycle the obtained, classified data were: prioritised, integrated, synthesized, abstracted, and conceptualised.

Sample

Quantitative component. The data for quantitative analyses were collected online using the Kwiksveys application on the random sample of employees in different organisations from 10 cities in Serbia (Nqn=687). The online questionnaires were distributed to 925 respondents. We received a total of 687 completed surveys, with a response rate of 74.3%. The demographic variables included age, gender, and length of tenure (Table 2).

Table 2: Overview of the sample structure with respect to demographic variables

age	frequencies	Pct.
18 to 30 years	210	30.6
31 to 40 years	213	31.0
41 to 50 years	154	22.4
51 to 60 years	95	13.8
more than 61 years	15	2.1
Total	N=687	100.0%

gender	frequencies	Pct.
men	225	32.8
women	462	67.2
Total	N=687	100.0%
length of tenure	frequencies	Pct.
0 to 5 years	108	15.7
6 to 15 years	235	34.2
16 to 25 years	183	26.6
26 to 35 years	127	18.5
more than 35 years	34	4.9
Total	N=687	100.0%

Qualitative component. From the quantitative component sample, we selected 85 respondents with different lengths of tenure (N_{ql}=85) for the qualitative component. The sample includes 34 men and 51 women. Three interviewees are under the age of 30, 33 are between 31 and 40, 30 are between 41 and 50, 17 are between 51 and 60, and two interviewees are over 60 years old. Correspondingly, the sample for the qualitative component of the study includes 13 randomly selected interviewees with less than five years of tenure, 30 interviewees with 6 to 15 years of tenure, 22 interviewees with 16 to 25 years of tenure, 16 interviewees with 26 to 35 years of tenure, and four interviewees that have more than 35 years of tenure.

RESULTS

Quantitative Data

More than half of the employees as indicators of the organisation's attitude towards learning state that the organisation encourages them to learn from colleagues (68.7%) and supports them in participating in on-the-job training (52.7%). More than a third of the employees indicate that the organisation in which they are employed provides them with the following: reading professional journals (36.5%), participation in meetings on various work-related problems (36.5%), participation in courses (36.4%), exchange of knowledge through ICT (36.4%), use of online forums to share experience with colleagues outside the organisation (34.5%), off-the-job training (33.8%), cooperation with colleagues from other organisations (33.8%), and a program of induction for new employees (33.5%). Very few employees indicate that the organisation helped them financially in acquiring formal education (7.9%). However, it is very concerning that more than two out of five (43.1%) respondents indicate that the organisation in which they are employed does not provide them with special learning opportunities and that they are directed to self-inform about relevant changes in the work they perform.

Applied analysis of variance showed that there are statistically significant differences between respondents regarding the *number of employees in the organisation* (size of the organisation) in which they are employed in terms of multiple scores for reporting on the organisation's approach towards employee learning. Due to the limited explanation offered by an analysis of variance, through F-ratio, which is not able to tell us more about the differences between the groups of the data, we provided the results of: an analysis of magnitude of differences between groups, post-hoc comparison with REGWQ procedure and multiple comparison with Tukey HSD and Games-Howell tests for statistically significant results of the ANOVA procedure (Table 3).

Table 3: Overview of the statistically significant findings of the analysis of variance for the number of employees in the organisation and the organisation's approach towards employee learning

Enabling / facilitating ...	M	SD	SE	F(5,686)
reading work-related, professional journals	.30	.458	.017	F=4.26; p<0.01
participation in lectures on various topics in the organisation	.21	.410	.016	F=11.58; p<0.01
participation in meetings on various work-related problems	.37	.482	.018	F=3.47; p<0.01
contacts with users for improvement of job performance	.34	.476	.018	F=11.66; p<0.01
lack of provision of learning opportunities	.43	.496	.019	F=2.96; p<0.05
	Mgn. Dif.	W.st.	groups ²	
reading work-related, professional journals	1.01, p<0.01	4.45, p<0.01	5	
participation in lectures on various topics in the organisation	1.62, p<0.01	7.75, p<0.01	1	
participation in meetings on various work-related problems	1.04, p<0.01	4.03, p<0.01	5	
contacts with users for improvement of job performance	1.79, p<0.01	10.38, p<0.01	1, 5	
lack of provision of learning opportunities	.95, p<0.01	3.44, p<0.05	3	

Based on the results of the applied analysis of variance with post-hoc comparison tests (Table 3), it is possible to consider that enabling the reading of work-related, professional journals is significantly more often present in large companies with over 10,001 employees; in these organisations, employees participate in meetings about various problems in the work that are organised for them more often and have more contact with users in order to improve work performance, but a lack of provision of learning opportunities is

2 Results for group differences based on REGWQ Post Hoc Test (Cribbie & Keselman, 2003; Salkind, 2010). Legend: group 1 -- organisations with 1 to 500 employees, group 2 -- organisations with 501 to 1.000 employees, group 3 -- organisations with 1.001 to 5.000 employees, group 4 -- organisations with 5.001 to 10.000 employees, group 5 -- organisations with more than 10.001 employees.

also present more often. Although one would expect large companies to invest more in their employees' development, due to the material resources they have, the findings indicate a different trend in their human resource development policy. According to the obtained results, large companies express a tendency to enable employee participation only in those activities that are directly related to business improvement but not in structured or semi-structured learning activities, which are reduced almost exclusively to provision of professional literature. In large companies the provision of learning opportunities is insufficient. The absence of structured and organised learning activities for the employees may be a reflection of several delicate economic and political factors: the nature of the owners' capital (most of the capital in large companies is from foreign investors, without interest in the development of employees, i.e. into a foreign workforce), the types of work performed in these companies (retail business, the production of already developed products without departments for research and development, usage of already tested technology, etc.), compliance with labour laws, inadequately professionally prepared employees in the field of human resource development, etc. We also found that in the organisations with less than 500 employees, public lectures are less frequently organised, while contacts with users are rarely seen as an opportunity to improve business performance.

Of all the examined relations between basic business activities and indicators of the organisation's approach towards employee learning, it was found that alternative statistical hypotheses on the unequal distribution of answers among respondents with regard to whether organisations in which employees are engaged in production, distribution, or production and distribution of goods and services are confirmed for several indicators (Table 4). In all these cases, the Cramer's V coefficient is statistically significant, which indicates that the findings are not accidental and that the strength of the established stochastic relations between basic business activities and the indicators of the organisation's attitude to employee learning is significant.

Insight into the cross-tabulation for established connections shows that among all organisations that provide material support for the completion of their employees' formal education, 94.4% are organisations that provide services. Observing the percentage of participation in the construction of responses, we found that these organisations dominate over others (between 83.6% to 68.5%), in terms of enabling participation in different learning activities. On the other hand, the organisations engaged in the production of goods and provision of services enable employees to use online forums to exchange opinions with colleagues more rarely than expected (18.6%).

The reasons for such findings are unclear because the χ^2 test does not have potential for detailed statistical explanation (Salkind, 2010). More precisely, in the case of this research, the χ^2 test does not have potential to explain the complex relationship between indicators of the organisation's approach towards employee learning and the basic business activities of the organisation. Although it is possible to consider that the findings we obtained are affected by the situation in the Serbian economy, in which (according

Table 4: Overview of the statistically significant findings of χ^2 test for the basic business activities and the organisation's approach towards the learning of employees

Enabling / facilitating ...	χ^2	df	Sig.	Cramer's V
material support for the completion of formal education	9.954	2	p<0.01	.120
participation in off-the-job training	11.07	2	p<0.01	.127
participation in interpersonal skills training	6.482	2	p<0.05	.097
participation in conferences	10.282	2	p<0.01	.122
acquiring new knowledge through cooperation with managers	7.729	2	p<0.05	.106
using online forums to exchange opinions with colleagues	6.242	2	p<0.05	.095
encouraging cooperation with colleagues from other organisations	8.285	2	p<0.05	.110

to data for 2018) production business entities account for 56.64%, with the industrial production index for August 2019 being only 0.5% and gross domestic product (GDP) 4.4% (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2019). Based on the obtained results, it is also possible to consider that the orientation of economic development different from the current one, for example, in economic entities structured as small and medium-sized organisations with a clearer strategic orientation, would be reflected in a different way.

In accordance with the explanations of these findings, the result of the χ^2 test for the industry in which the organisation operates and the organisation's approach to employee learning shows that there are no statistically significant variations in the respondents' answers regarding the area in the organisation in which they are employed. Statistical null hypotheses on the equal distribution of responses were confirmed for all indicators included, which is evidenced by the Cramer's V coefficient. It is possible that the research findings reflect the current situation in the Serbian economy, where it seems there are no special investments in the development of any industry. The next possibility to explain the obtained results lies in the strategic orientation of the economic development of the Republic of Serbia. Although calls for a shift towards modern technologies are increasingly present in public discourse, the data obtained do not show that this industry is rapidly developing (in terms of investing in the learning of employees).

Based on the findings obtained using the χ^2 test and with associated procedures as well as cross-tabulation it can be noticed that there are statistically significant differences among respondents regarding the sector in which the organisations operate in terms of reporting on the organisation's approach to employee learning regarding several activities (Table 5).

Of all the examined relationships between the sector in which the organisations operate and their approach towards employee learning, it was found that alternative statistical hypotheses on the unequal distribution of responses among respondents were confirmed for a number of indicators (Table 5). In all cases, the Cramer's V coefficient is statistically significant (Table 5), which indicates that the obtained findings are not random and that the strength of the established stochastic relations is significant as well.

Table 5: Overview of the statistically significant findings of the χ^2 test for the sector in which the organisations operate and their approach towards employee learning

Enabling / facilitating ...	χ^2	df	Sig.	Cramer's V
days off to complete formal education	14.354	2	p<0.01	.145
material support for the completion of formal education	11.129	2	p<0.01	.127
participation in courses	17.272	2	p<0.01	.159
participation in on-the-job training	13.774	2	p<0.01	.142
participation in off-the-job training	8.508	2	p<0.05	.111
material support for attending courses	6.542	2	p<0.05	.098
participation in seminars organised for employees	49.447	2	p<0.01	.268
participation in conferences	52.517	2	p<0.01	.276
reading work-related, professional journals	11.516	2	p<0.01	.129
participation in lectures on various topics in the organisation	12.437	2	p<0.01	.135
participation in congresses as a representative of the organisation	44.305	2	p<0.01	.254
participation in workshops	8.170	2	p<0.05	.109
participation in meetings on various work-related problems	13.169	2	p<0.01	.138
participation in webinars	8.914	2	p<0.05	.114
acquiring new knowledge through cooperation with managers	20.006	2	p<0.01	.171
encouraging employees to share knowledge through ICT	0.140	2	p<0.01	.014
using social networks to exchange opinions with colleagues	6.263	2	p<0.05	.095
contacts with an expert for advice about work or private life	17.625	2	p<0.01	.160
encouraging cooperation with colleagues from other organisations	7.876	2	p<0.05	.107
lack of provision of learning opportunities	33.197	2	p<0.01	.220

A quick look at the results (Table 5) might give the illusion of an ideal picture of a balanced and widespread distribution of activities of employee learning, but with deeper analysis, even with insight into the simple cross-tabulation, such perception will dissipate into discouraging data. Thus, the provision of days off to complete one's formal education (80.4%) or the provision of material support for completing one's formal education (94.3%) is a very rare practice, especially in the private sector, although it is the legal obligation of the employer (Zakon o radu, 2018). Regardless of the sector in which they perform their activities, over four-fifths of the organisations, although this is an obligation prescribed by the Labor Law (Zakon o radu, 2018), do not provide employees with material support for participation in courses (83.8%). At the same time, the situation is slightly different in the non-governmental sector, where 'only' 68.6% of the organisations do not provide employees with material support for participation in courses. The organisations that operate in the public sector enable their employees to participate in on-the-job training (62.7%) and in meetings on various work problems organised for employees (45.6%) significantly more often than others. However, employees also report that the organisations very rarely allow them to participate in webinars (82.5%).

Although almost two thirds of the employees in the private sector report that their employer provides them with learning opportunities (64.4%), they also report that their employer does not enable them to participate in some of them. These "unclear findings", as explained in some previous studies (Ovesni, 2019), suggest that it is possible that learning activities are selectively provided to different groups of employees (e.g. participation in conferences or seminars for employees in senior positions).

The employees in the non-governmental sector report significantly more often that the organisations in which they are employed do not allow them to participate in lectures that the organisation conducts for employees (88.6%) or enable them to read magazines that contain information about the work they do (82.9%). It is possible that the reason for such a finding lies in the fact that the non-governmental sector consists of organisations with a small number of employees, which do not have sufficient resources to provide public lectures or to purchase professional journals. However, employees in the non-governmental sector report significantly more often on the support they receive to participate in other learning activities (Table 5).

Qualitative Data

The initial question referred to the organisation of learning activities in the organisations where the interviewees are employed. The aim of this question was to activate the critical thinking of the employees about the organisation of work-related learning activities. Two main themes with several dominant narratives have been retrieved.

In the first theme, *the absence of organised learning activities* (typical for 25 interviewees), the focus was on the answers about the lack of organised learning activities. Within the first topic, four types of dominant narratives were retrieved. The first type of narrative (typical for eleven employees) indicates the absence of organised learning activities. The

second type of narrative (typical for two employees) emphasizes resignation and a critical attitude towards how learning activities were organised in the past, but that they are no longer realised. The third group of narratives (typical for five interviewees) indicates a dominant “tone of dissatisfaction” due to the lack of learning activities or their selective distribution. For some employees, dissatisfaction with their exclusion from organised learning activities extends to general job dissatisfaction:

Human resources sometimes hold trainings for some other employees. But we never, ever had training for secretaries, so it is not like I am really learning in the workplace. And I don't think I have anything special to learn about my job. (Rose, 45, secretary)

Differences in the treatment of employees can be so strong that they lead to the creation of jealousy, dissatisfaction, and internal tensions in the organisation.

We have a sector that deals with that, but those courses, seminars, team building exercises are organised for other people. None of this is intended for associates. We are irrelevant. (Helen, 46 years old, associate)

In the fourth group (typical for seven interviewees) are the narratives of employees who decided to undertake the organisation of learning activities themselves because the organisation in which they are employed does not:

Regarding learning, I was mostly self-engaged and thanks to the Internet I managed to find out and learn something that was useful for my work. (Peter, 53 years old, associate)

Within the second theme, *organisers of learning activities* (typical for 60 interviewees), three types of dominant narratives have been retrieved. The first type of narrative (typical for 32 interviewees) showed that in some organisations work-related learning activities rarely take place, are unplanned, unarticulated, unstructured, and most often *ad hoc*, without human resources development services.

In the second type of narrative (typical for 22 interviewees), the employees state that their organisation's human resources development department is planning, organising, and implementing various learning activities. The third type of narrative (typical for 6 interviewees) shows that in the absence of articulated work-related learning activities, employees are “on their own”. Under such circumstances, employees often use ICT in their own free time, without the support of the organisation, with a strong self-directedness in the selection of work-related learning activities:

I often attend various courses and trainings on my own initiative because I like to learn and develop in my profession, because I like to be up to the task. (Ann, 54 years old, associate)

The next question was aimed at activating the critical thinking of employees about the general approach in their organisation towards the work-related learning of employees. Four main themes have been retrieved.

The first theme (typical for 26 interviewees) revealed that most employees are “on their own” regarding work-related learning activities. Some of the employees are not sure about the importance of such learning, while many of them are dependent on ICT.

Within the second theme (typical for 34 interviewees) the focus was on the habit that employees learn informally through collaboration with colleagues from the organisation. This type of learning has complex andragogical effects because it enhances interaction among employees and intensifies commitment and identification with the organisation and leads to creating an organisational climate conducive to learning. Informal learning through collaboration with colleagues from the organisation builds respect for older colleagues and encourages the intergenerational networking of employees; it has special significance for learning about the informal organisational culture and informal structure of the organisation:

Learning is realised mostly through mutual teaching between colleagues. The older and more experienced ones transfer knowledge to the younger ones directly in the workplace. (Tiana, 53, technician)

The third theme (typical for 12 interviewees) revealed that employees learn in teams too. In some organisations team learning is realised through dialogue among the employees while groups perform research of the possibilities for solving problems. The exploration of problem-solving opportunities, which can only take place in a trust-dominated organisational climate, is the key difference between imposing ideas and talking/dialogue as a way of learning.

My team has been established in such a way that, although there is a hierarchy, all members enjoy equality in the sense that they can always turn to anyone for help. I also helped older colleagues like they helped me. Each member of the team contributes to everyone else by sharing knowledge, that is extremely important in our field because of the overall changes. (Greg, 32, associate)

The fourth topic (typical for 40 interviewees) revealed that just-in-time work-related learning is an extremely important learning activity that they undertake. This type of learning, based on ICT, is often used for communication and sharing information between employees, usually to find an adequate solution to a current problem at work as soon as possible. It is characterised by a focus on knowledge, skills and solutions, and is inseparable from the work process:

We are primarily trying to solve problems on the spot, if that is not possible, then we establish communication with certain higher instances. ICT allows

us to solve the problem as soon as possible, using computers and the internet. That's what we can't do without ICT, which we rely on a lot. (Boris, 47 years old, technician)

This type of informal learning offers a variety of content and activities that can be undertaken. Just-in-time work-related learning is sometimes highly individualised, happens in real time, and provides the required information. Learning activities are approached asynchronously, at a time when it suits the employee. Sometimes, by involving colleagues from other organisations, it represents a kind of extension of collaborative learning, and in some cases, it is part of the organisation's strategy, enabling a rapid acquisition and timely circulation of knowledge through all organisational components.

DISCUSSION

The results emphasize the importance of a complex approach in redesigning organisational climate and the work-related learning of employees for the improvement of organisational performance. In spite of the findings that indicate that many organisations encourage employees to participate in on-the-job trainings, most of them expressed a tendency (for most of the employees) to maintain only learning from colleagues, which (although widespread) is an inadequate, outdated and insufficient practice. For management, it implies appropriate trainings aimed at the comprehensions of organisational complexity and at the importance of an andragogically developed climate for the work-related learning of employees, along with a rigorous implementation of legislation related to employee learning and training. Furthermore, because professionally trained andragogues are the group of practitioners that have adequate core competences for designing organisational climate and the work-related learning of employees, developed during their formal, university education, their broader engagement in the field of human resource development is of great importance.

Considering all results in both (quantitative and qualitative) components as sketched by the employees involved in this research, three possible models of andragogical perspectives of organisational climate could be distinguished:

- The organisational climate where the fear of repression for using time for learning is expressed together with a lack of group discussion with the employees and a lack of exchange of job relevant information among employees. The activities of employee learning in such organisations are limited and the actions of the employees are "veiled in secrecy", while communication with employees and especially with colleagues from other organisations is not allowed. Such a climate is often present in large companies, in the companies engaged in the production of goods and provision of services, and companies in the private sector.
- The service-oriented organisational climate where on-the-job trainings are organised and cooperation with colleagues from other organisations is encouraged. The organisational climate is characterised by the custom of advising an employee by

management, by selective distribution of support for learning from the experience of other colleagues, as well as by selective support for courses and formal education programs, and by unstructured learning activities that may (but do not have to) be realised through ICT. This organisational climate is often present in the organisations that operate in the non-governmental and public sector.

- The learning supportive organisational climate, where discussions among employees, managers, and colleagues from other organisations are common. The organisational climate in these organisations is, from the andragogical perspective, supportive of learning because a wide range of learning activities is offered to employees, sometimes with a certain degree of business secrecy due to the prohibition of social networking among colleagues. This kind of organisational climate is dominant in organisations that provide services.

CONCLUSION

Our study indicates the need to engage professionally prepared andragogues in positions in the field of human resource development, a more rigorous application of legislation related to employee learning and training, trainings aimed at informing and helping managers understand the importance of the work-related learning of employees in changing the world of business for the purpose of improving the organisational climate. This implies that by adopting a model of learning organisations, an organisation could benefit from the transformation into an andragogically designed working and learning context. Furthermore, organisations could benefit from more intensive work-related learning, e.g. just-in-time work-related learning based on ICT, which requires more transparency and the free flow of organisational knowledge among employees.

Although cross-sectional data and explanatory sequential mixed methods research design with nested samples makes that results of the study and the subsequent conclusions remain stable over time, our research should be complemented with probability samples and should move beyond the discourse of the local, Western-Balkan context by adopting comparative foci. In this respect some replicated studies with a similar research design or quantitative studies with more complex statistical data analysis would be appreciated.

Financing

The study was supported by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia (Grant no. 179060).

REFERENCES

- Cribbie, R. A., & Keselman, H. J. (2003). The Effects of Nonnormality on Parametric, Nonparametric, and Model Comparison Approaches to Pairwise Comparisons. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 63(4), 615–635.
- DeCotiis, T. A. (1991). Inductive measures of psychological climate. *Human relations*, 44(3), 265–285.
- Ehrhart, M. G., Schneider, B., & Macey, W. H. (2014). *Organizational Climate and Culture: An Introduction to Theory, Research, and Practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Johnson, D. A., Beyerlein, M. M., Huff, J. W., Halfhill, T. R., Ballentine, R. D. (2002). Successfully implementing teams in organizations. In R. L. Lowman (Ed.), *The California school of organizational studies handbook of organizational consulting psychology: a comprehensive guide to theory, skills, and techniques* (pp. 235–259). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Johnson, B. R., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher*, 33(7), 14–26.
- Klemenčič, E. (2018). Mnenja vodstvenih delavcev institucij v izobraževanju odraslih o učinkih Erasmus+ na področju izobraževanja odraslih: Primer Slovenije. *Andragoška spoznanja*, 24(2), 19–37.
- Knowles, M. S. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education*. New York, NY: Cambridge, Prentice Hall.
- Knowles, M. S., Holton III E. F., & Swanson, R. A. (2015). *The Adult Learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development*, VIII ed. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Kuenzi, M., & Schminke, M. (2009). Assembling fragments into a lens: A review, critique, and proposed research agenda for the organizational work climate literature. *Journal of management*, 35(3), 634–717.
- Kulić, R., & Despotović, M. (2004). *Uvod u andragogiju, prošireno i dopunjeno izdanje*. Belgrade: Svet knjige.
- Matović, N. (2013). *Kombinovanje kvantitativnog i kvalitativnog pristupa u pedagoškom istraživanju [Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches in Pedagogical Research]*. Belgrade: Institute for pedagogy and andragogy, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade.
- Nazari, J. A., Herremans, I. M., Isaac, R. G., Manassian, A., & Kline, T. J. B. (2011). Organizational culture, climate, and IC: an interaction analysis. *Journal of Intellectual Capital*, 12(2), 224–248.
- Ovesni, K. (2014). *Organizacija koja uči: andragoška perspektiva [Learning Organization: Andragogical Perspective]*. Belgrade: Institute for pedagogy and andragogy, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade.
- Ovesni, K. (2019). *Andragoški aspekti organizacione klime i organizaciono učenje [Andragogical aspects of organizational climate and organizational learning]*. Belgrade: Institute for pedagogy and andragogy, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade.
- Purković, D., & Klapan, A. (2011). Neprimjerenost obrazovnih institucija kao osnovna prepreka uspješnom obrazovanju odraslih u radnotehničkom području. In M. Matijević, T. Žiljak (Eds.), *Andragogical profession and competences of experts in adult education*, Book of proceedings of the 5th International conference (pp. 157–169). Zagreb: Agencija za strukovno obrazovanje i obrazovanje odraslih u suradnji s Hrvatskim andragoškim društvom.
- Salkind, N. J. (Ed.) (2010). *Encyclopedia of Research Design*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Savićević, D. (2007). *Osobnosti učenja odraslih*. Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike.
- Schneider, B., & Barbera, K. M. (2014). Summary and Conclusion. In B. Schneider, & K. M. Barbera (Eds.) *The Oxford handbook of organizational climate and culture* (pp. 679–688). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

- Schneider, B., Ehrhart, M. G., & Macey, W. H. (2011). Organizational Climate Research Achievements and the Road Ahead, In N. M. Ashkanasy, C. P. M. III Wilderom, & M. F. Peterson (Eds.) *Handbook of organizational culture & climate, 2nd ed.* (pp. 29–49). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Sonnentag, S., Niessen, C., & Ohly, S. (2004). Learning at work: Training and development. *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 19*, 249–290.
- Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. (2019). *Deskriptivni indikatori i ekonometrijske analize*. Retrieved September 17, 2020, from <https://www.stat.gov.rs/oblasti/deskriptivni-indikatori-i-ekonometrijske-analize/>
- Sušanj, Z. (2005). *Organizacijska klima i kultura: Konceptualizacija i empirijsko istraživanje*. Jastrebarsko: Naklada Slap.
- Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2009). *Foundations of mixed methods research: Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social and behavioral sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Watkins, K. E., & Marsick, V. J. (1993). *Sculpting the learning organization: Lessons in the art and science of systemic change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Watkins, K. E., & Marsick, V. J. (2003). Summing up: Demonstrating the value of an organization's learning culture. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 5*(2), 129–131.
- Woods, A., Dinh, J., & Salas, E. (2017). How do I learn what to do? How the science of training supports learning? In N. Chmiel, F. Fraccaroli, & M. Sverke (Eds.), *An introduction to work and organizational psychology: An international perspective, 3rd edition* (pp. 335–353). Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Zakon o radu. (2018). *Službeni glasnik Republike Srbije*, br. 95/2018.