

# WORK ATTITUDES AMONG PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANIZATION EXECUTIVES

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## Abstract

Work attitude has been conceived in terms of one's perceptions of job involvement, organizational climate and morale. Work involvement is a normative belief that is historically caused, whereas job involvement is a descriptive belief that is contemporaneously caused. Organizational climate is the perception of an individual about the organization on certain organizational structural and process variables. Morale is a broader aspect representing the organisational life and related perceptions than mere job satisfaction *per se*.

Boundaries between public and private sector activity seem to be blurring. At any rate in areas such as attitudes and values it would require a good deal of more behavioural research to establish the fact of differences as opposed to the sentiment of differences.

Based on the foregoing considerations an attempt has been made to study the work attitudes of 37 public and 37 private sector executives. Data was collected using the relevant sampling technique for a wider representation using the Work Attitude Scale (WAS). The results show that the public and private sector executives significantly differ on their mean job involvement ( $P \geq .05$ ), organizational climate ( $P \geq .001$ ) and morale ( $P \geq .01$ ).

## Introduction

The functioning and efficiency of the public and private sector organizations

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as well as the persons employed in these organizations always generate interesting but inconclusive debate. The functioning and efficiency factors are discussed excluding the important human resource factors. Strangely, the individual variables in both the sectors are scarcely addressed to. One frequently talks about the monetary benefits, perks and other concessions to the managerial personnel. Often, the behavioural approaches seems to be missing. Of course, there is no question of evaluation between the organizations but a possible comparison would open up new vistas in the understanding of both the sectors. However, the fact is that both the types of organizations belonging to different sectors exist. Boundaries between public and private sector activity seem to be blurring. At any rate, in areas such as attitudes and values, it would require a good deal of more behavioural research to establish the fact of difference as opposed to the sentiment of difference.

### **The Public and Private Organizations**

The report of the Planning Commission in 1952 was concise, clear and revealing. Even today it sounds good: "... the distinction between Public and Private sector should have a public purpose and there is no such thing under present conditions as completely unregulated or free enterprise. The view that private enterprises can function only on the basis of unregulated profit is anachronism. The public and private organizations cannot be looked upon as anything like two separate entities; they are and must function as parts of a single organism."

Ramasamy (1973) reviewed the objectives and performance of public sector enterprises and concluded that the right man for the right job and effective top management were essential features for successful functioning. He added that top management was an important condition for success.

The procedural issues between the public and private organizations are distinctions and specialities in each sector but not differences. Hence, studying the various organizations using efficiency alone as a criterion is unfair and illogical (Murray, 1985).

However, both public and private organizations have striking similarities with reference to

accountability  
 politicization, and  
 technology of decision making

As regards accountability, neither sector enjoys the confidence and has a corner on the morals market. Politicization has both good and evil aspects in both the organizations. However, these references are either blown up or misquoted and mis-represented in specific instances. Both the sectors have unequal decision making technology. The process of decision making is not to be claimed as rational or objective in both the cases. Again, there are situation specific, sector specific and industry specific instances existing in technology

of decision making, thus eliminating the process as an equal one.

Murray (1985) observes that public organizations adopt the management processes such as

Ideas of consensus  
Broadest social good, and  
Muddling through

The striking differences on management processes could be evidenced in the case of private organizations. The private organizations adopt processes such as

Criteria of economy  
Efficiency, and  
Rational results

The public sector organizations are observed to be over-cautious, rigid and less innovative compared to private sector organizations due to structural, procedural and strategic considerations. Likewise, more frequent turnover of the top leaders due to elections and political appointment as well as political instability results in greater disruption of implementation of plans in the public sector organizations. However, the very same structural, procedural and strategic considerations would equally be affecting the private organizations, in one way or the other. Buchanan (1974) reported that the public organization managers had lower work satisfaction and organizational commitment. The sentiments and beliefs are corollary to the findings just mentioned. However, the pattern seems to be that the public organization has been often rejected as an ineffective counterpart to the private one, and completely white washed as something which lags behind in everything.

The foregoing considerations suggest that the public enterprises lack top management leaders and suffer from unfavourable attitudes relating to job work and organization on the part of the employees. The present investigation was aimed at collecting the relevant information on the Top Management (CEOs & MDs) of various organizations that participated in a Management Développement Programme. The feelings of the sub-ordinates could be identified through the feelings expressed by the superiors and vice versa. The element of contamination is not ruled out. However, it could be considered to be marginal in any case. The studies by Jain (1986) and Rao (1981) support this contention. However, there are no indications that a number of important decisions differ between public and private organizations. The one difference is a case of varying considerations. These considerations include relevance of management, research, training and practice. More importantly, the foregoing considerations suggest that these possible differences would facilitate the understanding of organization and management in general. However, rejection of these efforts would deny the possible understanding and fail to supplement the better understanding of organization and management.

## **Method**

### *Sample*

Data was collected from the participants of a Workshop on "Top Management styles and Effectiveness", organized by the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad during 27-30 November, 1987. Details were gathered by mail. This resulted in collection of information from 37 individuals from six public organizations and 37 individuals from five private organizations on the WAS. In that one response from a public sector representative was found to be incomplete.

The age of the sample ranged from 44 years to 54 years. The respondents had a higher level of educational qualification and true representation at the national level.

### **Work Attitude Scale (WAS)**

The WAS was developed by Rao (1986). It has been widely used in Management Development Programmes, research and consultancy. The WAS has been accepted as a reliable and valid scale and purports to measure the various aspects of work viz., Job Involvement (JI), Organizational Climate (OC) and Morale (Venkatapathy, 1989).

The WAS consists of 20 simple statements to be evaluated in terms of a 7-point rating scale. The corresponding values to the 7-points are described in terms of percentages in the questionnaire.

The statements are cast in first person and third person to avoid redundancy and error anticipation. The respondent has to circle the numbers given against each statement at the appropriate places. Items pertaining to JI (2, 3, 7, 11, 15, 18 & 19), OC (4, 10, 12, 13 & 17) and Morale (1, 5, 6, 8, 9, 14, 16 & 20) are randomly given in the questionnaire.

The split half reliability co-efficients re 0.78, 0.86 and 0.81 respectively for the JI, OC and Morale sub-scale of the WAS.

### **Scoring**

All the 20 items are to be scored in the same (positive) direction. The total WAS score could be arrived at by adding the values of encircled items. The total of items 2, 3, 7, 11, 15, 18 & 19 would give the score on Morale. The higher the score, the higher the JI, OC and Morale. The maximum and minimum possible scores on JI are 49 and 7, OC 35 and 5 and Morale 56 and 8.

### **Research Question**

Evidence from the West (Murray, 1985) and India (Venkatapathy 1989, 1990) suggests that public executives lack in overall satisfaction, morale, organizational commitment, job involvement and leadership effectiveness. However, it

is also believed that the private organization executives would score high on all these behavioural characteristics. Do the public organization employees have unfavourable attitude towards their work? (including specific job functions). Do the private organization employees have favourable attitude towards their work? Is this a belief or the reality is something different from the belief? In order to answer these questions, the following null-hypotheses have been generated.

### Null-Hypotheses

The public and private organization employees remain homogeneous with regard to their work attitudes.

In that,

- 1 The public and private organization employees would remain homogeneous on job involvement.
- 2 The public and private organization employees would remain homogeneous on their perception of organizational climate.
- 3 The public and private organization employees would remain homogeneous on their morale.

### Analysis

In order to test hypotheses, Mean ( $\bar{X}$ ), and Standard Deviation (S.D.) were worked out to study the differences using Critical Ratio (C.R.) for the scores of the public and private executives on the WAS.

To test the null-hypotheses that the public and private executives remain homogeneous with regard to their work attitudes, the mean WAS scores were compared. Critical-Ratios were worked out for the mean differences on job involvement, organizational climate and morale. The results are presented in the Table below.

TABLE: The Mean, S.D. and C.R. of the Scores of the Public and Private Executives on the WAS

Work Attitude Dimensions	Public		Private		CR
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	
Job Involvement	40.17	8.45	35.63	9.92	2.11 *
Organizational Climate	28.76	6.41	24.30	6.25	3.06 **
Morale	46.71	8.86	40.33	11.06	2.77 **

\* Significant at .05 level

\*\* Significant at .01 level

From the Table it is evident that the C R worked out for the mean differences of public and private executives on

- a. Job Involvement
- b. Organizational Climate
- c. Morale

are statistically highly significant. Thus all the sub-hypotheses a, b & c are rejected. Hence the corresponding alternative hypothesis is sustained. That public executives differ significantly from the private executives on their work attitudes is retained. In other words, the public and private executives remain to be heterogeneous on their work attitudes, contrary to the assumption that the criterion group would remain homogeneous.

That the public executives significantly differ and have a higher level of favourable work attitude compared to the private executives elaborates that public executives have a higher level of

- a. Job Involvement
- b. Organizational Climate, and
- c. Morale

when compared with the private executives.

Salary is not the precondition for favourable work attitudes, especially higher in the hierarchy. However, salary is also one of the important aspects. The professionally trained managers exhibit concern towards career path with steady upward orientation. The positions in the private organizations are comparatively lower than those in the public organizations. Initial higher emoluments do not necessarily attract career conscious managers. At present managers plan their careers in such a way that they achieve targeted position after preplanned time span. This very well happens with the middle level executives. For the right man with the right approach there is no limit for growth.

The involved persons create favourable work environment. If a person achieves a milestone, he doesn't stop there. In private organizations, unlike in public organizations, a manager could reach the highest managerial position over ten years. Beyond that there could be no position to occupy and hence growth is sealed. The titles associated with job descriptions are not that attractive. Public sector organizations operate on a tall structure while the private sector organizations operate on a flat structure. Though the management effectiveness in future is aimed through flat structure (Athreya, 1992), the relative merits and demerits at the thinking and feeling levels hold good.

The executives belonging to public sector organizations have the scores in the following sequence:

- Morale
- Job involvement
- Organizational climate.

The executives belonging to private sector organizations also follow the same pattern.

The pattern is interesting. The group related concept like morale gets the higher preference compared to the individual related concept in an organizational climate where subjective perception of individuals plays a crucial role. Morale is something that exists in a group, while climate is one which is being perceived by the individuals, although both of them fall under the category of subjective phenomena.

In general, the work attitudes of the public sector executives show a high favourableness compared to the private sector executives. However, the individual subjective variables like climate has shown a lower score for both the groups. Still the two groups differ highly significantly on their perception of climate. The work attitudes of the public sector executives are attributed to various factors like job performance, mobility, individual growth, career growth, equality of life and positions and hierarchies. However, the work attitudes suffer unfavourableness among the private executives due to lack or absence of more than one of the factors as shown above. It would be interesting to carry out a national cross section study on the samples of different types of organizations, various states and organizational hierarchies.

The findings of the present investigation are considered to be highly significant, because the feelings and perceptions of the respondents were recorded only a couple of years ago.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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