

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
ORGANIZATIONAL ETHICAL CLIMATE,
ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST, PERCEIVED
STRESS, AND WORK ENGAGEMENT:
PERCEPTION OF PUBLIC-SECTOR EMPLOYEES
IN THE WEST BANK, PALESTINE**

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UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

2022

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by

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**Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirement
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

January 2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, associate professor Dr. Hazril Izwar Ibrahim for his valuable guidance, continuous support, and insightful feedbacks throughout accomplishing the work of this thesis, and I am truly honored to have such a dedicated supervisor.

A special appreciation to my wife and life partner Kawthar Jarrar for her never-ending support, encouragement and motivation. To my beloved prince Adam and little princesses Seema and Mays. Thank you for being such amazing kids who have always cheered me up with your cute smiles which mean the world to me.

My acknowledgement will never be complete without the special mention of my parents and my brothers Mazen, Osama, and Muhammad and my sisters for standing behind me with unconditional support, without which I would not have come this far. I am indebted to my brother Dr. Osama whose insightful comments have put everything in perspective.

Many special gratitude to Dr. Muhammad Hamdan and Dr. Adham Obaydat for offering me advice and support through this entire journey. I thank my colleagues and best friends who had assisted me directly and indirectly during my research, as well as all USM SOM staff for their great assistance.

Finally, I would like to thank H.E Walid Abu Ali, the Palestinian Ambassador to Malaysia whose sense of humor and warmth have made my stay in Malaysia feels so much like home in Palestine.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

OEC	Organizational Ethical Climate
OT	Organizational Trust
PS	Perceived Stress
WE	Work engagement
EE	Employee Engagement
PNA	Palestinian National Authority
GPC	General Personnel Council
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
WB	The West Bank
GEEI	Global Employee Engagement Index
SET	Social Exchange Theory
ToMD	Theory of Moral Development
IC	Instrumental Climate
CC	Caring Climate
IC	Independence Climate
RC	Rules Climate

LCC	Law & Codes Climate
PLS	Partial Least Square
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
ILS	(Shekel) currency used in the State of Palestine
HRM	Human Resource Management

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**HUBUNGAN ANTARA IKLIM ETIKA ORGANISASI, KEPERCAYAAN
ORGANISASI, PERSEPSI STRES, DAN KETERIKATAN KERJA: PERSEPSI
PEKERJA SEKTOR AWAM DI TEBING BARAT, PALESTIN**

ABSTRAK

Pelarasan iklim etika organisasi adalah penting bagi kementerian- kementerian di Palestin bagi mencapai kecemerlangan dalam perkhidmatan sektor awam dan mengekalkan pekerja di kementerian dengan mewujudkan kepercayaan serta menghasilkan persekitaran positif positif dalam mengukuhkan penglibatan kerja dalam organisasi. Kajian ini dapat memberikan pemahaman yang lebih teliti bagi para pengamal dan ahli akademik mengenai konsep iklim etika organisasi, kepercayaan organisasi, tekanan dan keterlibatan kerja dalam konteks Palestin. Teori Pertukaran Sosial (SET) dan Teori Pembangunan Moral (ToMD) digunakan sebagai teori-teori sokongan bagi kajian ini, kerangka penyelidikan dibentuk untuk mengkaji dimensi iklim etika organisasi iaitu, iklim instrumental, iklim peduli, iklim kebebasan, iklim peraturan dan iklim undang-undang dan kod dan penglibatan kerja, dengan pemboleh ubah perantara kepercayaan organisasi, serta tekanan sebagai pemboleh ubah penyederhana. Sebanyak 200 responden terdiri dari pegawai sektor awam yang disasarkan dari 21 kementerian di Tebing Barat Palestin mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini, dan perisian (PLS-SEM) digunakan untuk menguji kerangka kajian dan menganalisis data. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji iklim etika organisasi, kepercayaan organisasi, persepsi tekanan , dan penglibatan kerja di kementerian- kementerian Palestin dari perspektif pekerja tahap eksekutif. Kajian ini

mengusulkan dan menganalisis kerangka penyelidikan yang mengintegrasikan semua dimensi iklim etika organisasi, kepercayaan organisasi, persepsi tekanan dan keterlibatan kerja. Untuk tujuan ini, dijanakan 26 hipotesis yang menunjukkan bahawa amalan iklim etika organisasi mempunyai kesan yang signifikan terhadap kepercayaan organisasi, dan kepercayaan organisasi mempunyai kesan yang signifikan terhadap penglibatan kerja, dan persepsi tekanan mempunyai kesan yang signifikan terhadap penglibatan kerja. Penyelidik juga mengkaji fungsi kepercayaan organisasi sebagai faktor pengantara, dan menganggap tekanan sebagai faktor penyederhana. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa daripada 26 hipotesis, 21 disokong secara signifikan dan 5 tidak disokong. Kajian ini juga mengungkapkan bahawa dari dimensi iklim etika organisasi iaitu, iklim peduli, iklim kebebasan, iklim peraturan dan undang-undang dan kod iklim secara signifikan menyumbang kepada kepercayaan organisasi, sementara iklim instrumental tidak mempunyai hubungan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa kepercayaan organisasi mempunyai kesan yang signifikan sebagai faktor perantara antara iklim etika organisasi dan penglibatan kerja, sementara persepsi tekanan memainkan peranan penting dalam menyederhanakan hubungan antara kepercayaan organisasi dan penglibatan pekerja. Kajian ini menyumbang dalam memahami kepercayaan terhadap organisasi dengan menjelaskan ruang lingkup kepercayaan organisasi yang menjadi penghubung antara iklim etika organisasi dan penglibatan kerja, dengan itu, memperluas pemahaman kepercayaan terhadap organisasi sebagai elemen penting dalam proses pertukaran sosial. Sumbangan kajian ini diharapkan dapat memberi gambaran baru mengenai penglibatan pekerja di kementerian- kementerian Palestin.

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ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST, PERCEIVED STRESS, AND WORK
ENGAGEMENT: PERCEPTION OF PUBLIC-SECTOR EMPLOYEES IN THE
WEST BANK, PALESTINE**

ABSTRACT

The current study intends to examine the relationships between organizational ethical climate dimensions (instrumental climate, caring climate, independence climate, rules climate and law and codes climate) and mediating role of organizational trust, perceived stress as a moderator and work engagement dimensions (vigor, dedication, and absorption). The current study provides better understandings for the practitioners and academicians on the concept of organizational ethical climate, organizational trust, perceived stress and work engagement in a Palestinian context. Supported by Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Theory of Moral Development (ToMD), this study utilized a research model to examine the dimensions of organizational ethical climate i.e., instrumental climate, caring climate, independence climate, rules climate and law and codes climate and work engagement, with mediating variable of organizational trust, as well as moderating variable of perceived stress. A total of 200 respondents from targeted employees of 21 employees from ministries in the West Bank of Palestine participated in this study, and Partial Least Square – Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) software is employed to test the research model and analyze the data. The present study intends to examine the organizational ethical climate, organizational trust, perceived stress, and

work engagement in Palestinian ministries from the perspective of executive employees. This study proposes and analyzes a research framework that integrates all dimensions of organizational ethical climate, organizational trust, perceived stress and work engagement. For this purpose, The researcher uses 26 hypotheses that showed that organizational ethical climate practices have significant effects on organizational trust, and that organizational trust have significant effects on work engagement, and that perceived stress have significant effects on work engagement. The researcher also examines the function of organizational trust as the mediating factor, and perceived stress as the moderating factor. The findings of the study indicate that out of 26 hypotheses, 21 are positively supported and 5 are not supported. The present study also reveals that out of the dimensions of organizational ethical climate i.e., caring climate, independence climate, rules climate and law and codes climate significantly contributed to organizational trust, while instrumental climate does not correlate with it. The findings show that organizational trust has significant effects as mediating factors between organizational ethical climate and work engagement, while perceived stress plays important roles in moderating the relationship between organizational trust and employees' work engagement. This study will contribute to understanding trust in the organization by explaining the scope to which organizational trust mediates the relationship between the organizational ethical climate and work engagement, thereby, extending understanding of trust in the organization as an important part of the social exchange process. The contribution of the study hopefully brings new insights on the work engagements of employees in Palestinian ministries.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the objectives of the proposed study. It discusses the background of the study, research problems, research questions, research objectives, and the intended contributions of the study. Work engagement, a current and vital concern particularly in the public sector in Palestine. The conclusion of this chapter includes a discussion of possible avenues for future research as well as a definition of some usable terms.

1.2 Background of the Study

The public sector consists of organizations that transfer the services of the government; the size of the public sector organizations varies from country to country. The public sector is subject to the preferences of government, and usually a new administration commences in a reorganization with new boundaries, partnerships, etc., in varied areas of the public sector (The World Bank, 2013). Any reorganization results in uncertainty, and liable to long-term changes.

The role of government in countries around the world has evolved dramatically due to significant technological, economic, social, and political changes. Thus, ministries are expected to extend more reliable and credible services that can meet or exceed citizens' needs. Thus, Organizational climate is a construct that includes a broad range of individual estimation of work climate; climate is an organizational framework that refers to values, practice, traditions, procedures, and their effects on the behavior of

employees in the organization (Al Shobaki et al., 2018). Employee engagement is defined as a relationship of mutual concern between the employer and the employee; it occurs as an outcome of the interaction between the environment and the individual. Since the social exchange theory aligns with the argument of this study, the subsequent sections deal with organizational climate and personality between these concepts and employee engagement (Milhem et al., 2019).

The public sector in Palestine developed after the institution of the Palestinian National Authority, which employed thousands of employees in the ministries and public organizations and in the security forces in order to implement the functions transferred to it by the occupation authority. Therefore, between 1995 and 2000, the absorptive ability of employment for the public sector grew by 5% annually, reaching 61% of the overall labor force in 2000. This growth fundamentally drove to the rise of unemployment, mainly in public services, and impose big pressure on the fiscal budget (Morrar & Gallouj, 2016). At the end of 2014, the public sector employed 22.9%. As such, the salaries and pensions of the public sector represented about half of the Palestinian National Authority's (PNA) annual expenditure. Furthermore, the portion of the public sector in total employment has risen over the last years according to Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) (2015).

The organizational ethical climate represents the inside work climate with its different variables and features. The organizational climate plays a main role in promoting the ethical and functional behavior of persons working in terms of adjusting and changing values, actions, attitudes, and behavior (Abu-Naser & Amuna, 2018). Hence, the organizational climate represents the identity of the organization. A suitable environment

for persons supports the creation of helpful work environment that establishes constancy for both individuals and organization. If workers in the active organizational climate feel their significance in work and their capacity to participate in policy and procedures, trust between individuals and management will be established (Al Shobaki et al., 2018).

Employee engagement has become a very popular concept during the past twenty years. Organizations attempt to figure out how to make the employees engaged by employing several surveys and tools that improve performance and exemplify organizational culture. Engaged Individuals in the workplace are, in general, easier to work with because they are feeling respectable about their contributions to their organizations. Moreover, they represent a culture of employee engagement. Ideally, engaged employees are credited in the organization, which awards them more responsibilities that impact them positively (Albrecht et al., 2015).

Ministries in Palestine are a good example of organizations that require a good organizational ethical climate in order to improve organizational trust and employees' engagement so that they can carry out their duties to fulfill their organization objectives. Due to scarcity of research related to organizational ethical climate and its influence on organizational trust, perceived stress and work engagement, this study seeks to enrich the understanding on employee engagement by examining their relationship with the organizational ethical climate as independent variable. Organizational trust brings a new insight as a mediating factor, focusing on perceived stress and the relation between these variables.

1.3 Public Sector Employees and Ministries in Palestine

Insufficient studies have been scarcely devoted to organizational ethical climate,

organizational trust, perceived stress, and work engagement in Palestine. Additionally, studies in this field were in developed countries and have concluded that the human resource management plans are the influential factors in predicting employee performance (Guest, 2002; Wright et al., 2003; Khan, 2010; Quresh et al., 2010; Mellam et al., 2015).

The Palestinian political and economic situation, and its traditional culture, presents a unique framework for this research. Through the years, Palestinians have faced some difficulties due to the Israeli occupation, which has significantly affected Palestinian culture (Joudaet al., 2016). The economic and political facts which describe Palestinian culture have affected the organizational procedures of Palestinian organizations. Peace remains as evasive as ever, in spite of hope and effort.

The conflict in Palestine has certainly contributed to the uncertainty and stress. According to the Palestinian Human Development Report (2004), the military struggle and the persistent occupation have produced inveterate suffering of many people. When discussing quantitative indicators that depict such suffering, it is important to mention their unaccomplished aims and their future.

In spite of the recognition of the existence of stress, Palestinian organizations are not conscious of the importance of this issue and thus disregard its human and monetary consequences. Therefore, stress management has become a significant need for many organizations (Milhem et al., 2019). On the whole, Palestinian employees suffer from a lack of recognition and heavy workloads.

According to Khoury & Analoui (2010), research into 400 organizations reveals how Palestinian managers deal with stress in the workplace. It was found that the all of those who feel stressed (87%) misconceived the relationships with their managers as a

result of bad communication, work situation, and short income. In general, the research indicated that Palestinian employees suffer from lack of motivation, restricted management assistance, and intensive workloads, and incomplete efforts by employers to support employees in handling work-related tension (Khoury & Analoui, 2010b).

The following table presents information about the distribution of civil employees by job category and gender. According to Statistics on the Civil Service in the State of Palestine, Human Resources Statistics in Government Departments in the Civil Service with reference to the (annual report 2016-2017) of the Palestinian General Personnel Council, there are 89,440 civil employees in Palestine, spread across government facilities such as ministry, body, board, cabinet, authority, institution, office, and governorate. Employees are divided into seven categories according to the current civil service law: Upper, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth. The following table, which presents some key information about the civil service in Palestine, shows the distribution of civil employees by job category and gender:

Table 1.1 The Distribution of Civil Public Sector Employees by Job Category and Gender in West Bank in Palestine.

Job category	Gender		Total	Present
	Male	Female		
Upper	796	104	900	1.00 %
First	4628	1503	6131	6.85 %
Second	26723	25552	52275	58.40 %
Third	9795	9094	18889	21.11 %
Forth	2828	92	2920	3.26 %

Fifth	5484	2012	7496	8.38 %
Other	656	173	829	1.00 %
Total	50910	38530	89440	100 %

- 43% of the civil service in Palestine is female, while males account for 57%, a fair proportion that emphasizes the importance of measures that promote the advancement of gender opportunities per the principles of good governance and women's participation without discrimination in the public service on the basis of justice and equal opportunity. The requirements for holding civil service positions accord with the Basic Law and the Civil Service Act regarding merit and professionalism.
- The percentage of employees who work in the higher (first) categories is 7.85% of the total civil servants.
- The percentage of employees who work in the second category is 58.40% of the total civil servants. This indicates that the majority of employees are from the second category, including teachers, engineers, doctors and administrative staff.
- The third category includes technical, clerical and secretarial jobs such as printing and keeping documents, and it amounts to 21.11% of the total civil servants.
- The fourth category includes professional jobs in the fields of operation, maintenance, movement, transportation, mechanical and electrical workshops, power stations, and others. It is 9.38% of the total civil servants.

- The fifth category includes service jobs such as guards, messengers and alike, amounting to 3.26% of the total civil servants.

About 2626 employees in the second category working as executive employees in the following ministries on which my study will focus: The Ministry of Interior, The Ministry of Education, The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Ministry of Finance and Planning, The Ministry of Health, The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, The Ministry of National Economy, The Ministry of Justice, The Ministry of Local Government, The Ministry of Culture, The Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, The Ministry of Agriculture, The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, The Ministry of Social Development, The Ministry of Health, The Ministry of Public Works and Housing, The Ministry of Labor, The Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs, The Ministry of Information, The Ministry of Women's Affairs.

Constructing a perfect organizational ethical climate, especially public sector organizations, is an administrative procedure that will have an impact on work engagement and performance. The researchers have become increasingly concerned about the organizational climate issue and have become a main concentration of their ethics and behavior (El Talla, et al., 2018). Ministries are a good model of organizations that need a good regulatory circumference in order to develop employee performance, so that these employees can perform their dynamic function of public services.

1.4 Problem Statement

Based on an intensive review of the literature, insufficient empirical studies have been devoted to organizational ethical climate, organizational trust, perceived stress, and employee engagement in organizations and governmental ministries in developing countries. Furthermore, most of the previous studies were conducted in developed countries. Few studies are available about employee engagement about Palestine.

Over the last two decades, public organizations and ministries in Palestine have vastly grown (Al-Habil & El-Ghazali, 2017a). Public sector development in Palestine is singular and challenging as this system, in comparison with other public sectors in the area, has been built in an incomplete sovereign state.

Indeed, since the arrival of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in 1994, Palestinian ministries have been suffering from many of the administrative problems cited in the report of the General Supervisory Authority, including the waste of public funds, lack of organizational structures, job inflation, alarming unemployment, overlapping powers, and other areas. These problems have hindered the performance of these ministries (Al-Habil & El-Ghazali, 2017b). These structural defects in the Palestinian public sector are not compatible with relevant public policy. This policy gap, which was clear during the occupation period, is a residue of the Oslo Agreement.

The public sector employment in Palestine increased sharply after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, which employed thousands of employees in the ministries and public sector and in the security forces in order to carry out the actions dictated to it by the occupation authority. This growth mainly derived to the increase of disguised unemployment, at most in public services, and exerted substantial pressure on

the financial budget (PCBS, 2014).

Organizations need employees who are actively engaged with their work. Febriansyah, Pringgabayu, Hidayanti, and Citra Febrianti (2018), argue that an engaged employee as an individual is someone who is completely involved in and dedicated in the workplace. Work engagement is viewed as a significant construct because it has been associated with the enhancement of trust in organizations. It is therefore important for the managers to know and ensure that his or her employee work outcomes accomplish the particular work indicators in the workplace. The indicators are that the achievement overrides expectations or meet expectations.

Employee engagement is better described by its outcome. Engaged employees demonstrate higher standards of achievements and loyalty. Disengaged employees, however, do not. Most organization concentrate on performance; therefore, employee engagement has become a common topic (Anitha J., 2014). Employee engagement is the correlation individuals feel to their work in higher levels of accomplishment, commitment and loyalty. Given these favorable results, there are many of advantages in existing levels of employee engagement and methods in which engagement can be increased (Fairlie, 2011). Employee engagement assists organizations in getting their goals as it serves as a means of supporting employees' efficiency and performance, thereby reducing potential turnover and favorably effects various work results. Engagement can therefore influence employees' attitudes, and turnover levels (Mone, et al., 2011).

Employee engagement, vital for every organization, should make the most out of the capacity for employees to achieve if the working conditions are proper. Employee engagement is invaluable because it is directly linked to the achievement of organizational

goals, so increasing the engagement of employees is critical to meeting goals and to retaining talented employees. Investments made in employee engagement can result in increased productivity both quantitatively and qualitatively. High-performance work practices, leadership, rewards (whether financial or otherwise), and work/life balance are all critical to effective employee engagement.

The identification of the factors that influence the engagement of employees in the public sector is the responsibility of officials in the management of any organization; the ignoring of realizations or requests to improve the features of the organization that differentiate them from others is a problem-management. Meanwhile, researchers (Safadi et al., 2019; Milhem, 2019; Jouda, et al. 2016; Al-Habil & El- Ghazali, 2017) have concluded that there is a contrast in the engagement of staff in Palestinian ministries, and that there are many factors that affect their performance (Milhem et al., 2019).

According to Gallup's (2013) research in the Middle East and North Africa, the outcome for any region in the world is that of 10% of employees who are engaged in their workplace, while 55% are not engaged and 35% are disengaged. Specifically, in Palestine, the same study indicates that just 11% of employees are engaged in work, 64% are unengaged, and 25% are disengaged. (Morrar & Gallouj, 2016).

The concern of a credible study must stem from the researcher's sense of the importance of exploring the reality of the organizational climate and its impact on the participation of employees in the ministries of the Palestinian National Authority. In this study, it is important for managers to understand and ensure that his or her employee work-outcomes fulfill the specific work indicators for the workplace. This study examines the reality of the organizational ethical climate and employee engagement prevailing in

Palestinian ministries. Organizational ethical climate is one of the most important elements of the administrative development process and thus cannot be overlooked. It is apparent that the current organizational ethical climate in the ministries of the Palestinian National Authority suffers from some disadvantages (Al-Shobaki et al., 2018; Al-Habil & El-Ghazali, 2017; Jouda et al., 2016; Melhem et al., 2015). Therefore, providing a positive and healthy organizational ethical climate should encourage the participation of employees in the workplaces of the various ministries and thus enhance, increase, and improve organizational confidence, effectiveness, and performance.

Dimensions of organizational ethical climate are important for organizational support, participation with others and supervisors, and communication and safety. They are related to increased job satisfaction, organizational commitment, psychological health and decreased job stress (Bradley & Cartwright, 2002). The importance of organizational trust in West Bank ministries in Palestine are centered in structure and climate. They affect employee performance and engagement which will be reflected on performance of the organization.

Employee engagement is strongly affected by job resources (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004b), Weakness of these resources causes stress that affects an employee's job satisfaction and involvement. Van der Colff & Rothmann (2009) indicated that excessive job demands have a negative relation on work engagement. The level of an employee's abilities decreases because of job demands such as work load (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). If an employee's concentration disperses, his or her engagement level will decrease. Job stressors such as lack of autonomy in the workplace correlate negatively with all the work engagement variables – vigor, dedication and absorption (Ngarava & Mushunje, 2019).

Ethical climate and organizational trust in the Palestinian context have a vital relationship. This study deals with how the former has a positive or negative relationship with the latter. It does so through the applying of the Victor and Cullen framework of ethical climate. Thus, this explores the relationship, positive or negative, between organizational trust and work engagement in Palestinian ministries.

In summary, the problem of the study stems from the researcher's sense of the importance of exploring the reality of the organizational climate and its impact on the organizational trust, perceived stress, and employee's engagement in the ministries of the Palestinian National Authority. This study is important because it represents a crucial step in the development of the institutions of the Palestinian National Authority. Due to the gap in the literature between organizational ethical climate, organizational trust, perceived stress, and work engagement, this study seeks to examine the relationship of organizational ethical climate as the independent variable, organizational trust as a mediator, perceived stress as a moderator, and work engagement as a dependent variable to maximize employee engagement within the ministries in Palestine.

The problem in this study was the lack of knowledge and literature review regarding understanding how the public sector in Palestine is suffering from many problems including lack of organizational structure and structural defects in public sector are not compatible with relevant public policy.

1.5 Research Questions

This study, this study aims to address the following research questions:

1. What is a relationship between Organizational Ethical Climate (OEC)

and Organizational Trust (OT)?

2. What is a relationship between Organizational Trust (OT) and Work Engagement (WE)?
3. Does Organizational Trust (OT) mediate the relationship between Organizational Ethical Climate (OEC) and Work Engagement (WE)?
4. Does Perceived Stress (PS) moderate the relationship between Organizational Trust (OT) and Work Engagement (WE)?

1.6 Research Objective

The study aims to examine the relationship between organizational ethical climate, organizational ethical climate, and work engagement in the Palestinian ministries. The objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the relationship between organizational ethical climate and organizational trust.
2. To examine the relationship between organizational trust and work engagement.
3. To examine the extent to which the organizational trust mediates the relationship between organizational ethical climate and work engagement.
4. To examine the extent to which the perceived stress moderates the relationship between organizational trust and work engagement.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study will hopefully contribute to the theoretical and practical aspects of employees' engagement in the Palestinian ministries contexts.

Work engagement is vital for long-term success. Administrative staff in Palestinian ministries is an essential component of the organizational structure; without these employees, ministries could not carry out their critical tasks and duties for the community through public service. The development of managers and their employees' engagement is consequently crucial for the future well-being of the Palestinian ministries. Based on the comprehensive literature review of concerning employee engagement, there are potential theoretical contributions (Jouda et al., 2016).

Social Exchange Theory (SET) is one of the most widely used approaches in management research. This theory examines social exchanges between two or more individuals. SET estimates the quality of social exchange with forecasts influenced by the relationship between manager and employee. In this study, SET will be used to discuss the influence of the manager on their employees' engagement supported by organizational ethical climate, organizational trust and perceived stress in the workplace (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Because no experimental proof has yet been found regarding the role of management evaluations of employees' engagement in the context of the Palestinian ministries. Neither is there an experimental study which has proven that the roles of organizational ethical climate, organizational trust, and perceived stress influence employee engagement in the same sector. In this study, the organizational ethical climate and organizational trust will contribute new experimental evidence in this research model.

This study will utilize the SET to investigate the viewpoints of the employees on

their work engagement supported by the organizational ethical climate, organizational trust, and perceived stress in the Palestinian ministries. The study will also integrate the main variables of the study as a whole and extend the literature on organizational ethical climate, organizational trust, and perceived stress and work engagement. This study explores whether perceived stress works as moderator and gives a positive influence to increase and strengthen the relationship between organizational trust and work engagement in the workplace.

This study contributes to determining whether the impact of organizational ethical climate dimensions on the employee engagement and if such a method can be applicable in a Palestinian context. Furthermore, it is significant to examine the best way of governance for the organizations and ministries in Palestine, contributing to information through recognizing factors develop the organizational trust in the public sector of Palestine. This study about organizational ethical climate is likely to provide more analytical and conceptual understanding regarding the implementation of organizational ethical climate and the roles of organizational trust and perceived stress support in engaging employees at Palestinian ministries.

This study will hopefully provide more analytical and conceptual understanding regarding the implementation of organizational ethical climate and the roles of organizational trust and perceived stress to support and engaging employees at Palestinian ministries, and provide a substantial contribution to policy-makers who need empirical inputs to design the appropriate policy that can support public sector in Palestine.

1.8 The Scope of the Study

As noted previously, this study investigates organizational ethical climate at

ministries in Palestine, and is limited to the responses of employees in ministries in Palestine. Data will be collected among public sector executive employees who served in Palestinian ministries, which support fostering employee engagement in ministries in Palestine. Moreover, this study contributes to showing the impact of organizational ethical climate dimensions on the organizational trust, perceived stress, and work engagement, which will be reflected on the performance of the organization in the public sector of Palestine. This study will provide a testing ground whether such a method is appropriate for the Palestinian context.

1.9 Definition of Key Terms

- A. **Organizational ethical Climate:** Organizational ethical climate is an important aspect of the organization that mirrors the shared perceptions grasped by employees related to the norms, practices, and procedures in the organization, and whether the culture of the organization is right or wrong. Ethical matters are reflected in the work climate are shown through policies of organization, procedures, and practices (Schminke & Arnaud, 2015). Victor and Cullen (1988) write about five types of ethical climate: instrumental, caring, independence, rules, and law and code.
- B. **Organizational Trust:** This is a focal factor in increasing an organization's long-term prosperity and existence. Organizational trust is the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the activity of the other side based on the anticipation that the other party will execute an action significant to the trustor. Organizational trust is important

for both supervisors and employees; moreover, trust forms the foundation of compatible and fruitful relationships and effective cooperation within the organization (Mayer & Davis, 1995).

- C. **Perceived stress:** Stress occurs when an incident is perceived as pertinent to an individual's well-being, has the possibility for suffering or leakage, and requires psychological, physiological, and/or behavioral efforts to realize the situation and its outcomes (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Cohen et al. (1983) studied the void of the subjective component in assessing stress as an undesirable quality and developed the Perceived stress scale in response to measure feelings or thoughts that one has about how much stress he is under at a specific point or over a specific time period.
- D. **Work engagement:** Work engagement which is positive and fulfilling encourages employees cognitively, affectively, and physically. Work engagement is a positive and fulfilling disposition which encourages employees to work with vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004a). Work engagement is important because it gives the employees the opportunity for involvement in the organization to utilize and contribute their experiences, which helps the administration in determining key goals and objectives.
- E. **Palestinian ministry:** States may have differing numbers of ministries as well as aims to manage a sector or activity of several

public tasks in the state, which include public goods and governmental services. Thus, ministries in Palestine are expected to extend reliable and credible services that can meet citizens' needs (Al-Habil & El-Ghazali, 2017a).

1.10 Layout of the Thesis

Chapter One provides the background of the study, the statement of the problem, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study, and scope of the study. Chapter Two reviews the available literature concerning organizational ethical climate as the independent variable, organizational trust as a mediator variable, perceived stress as a moderator variable, and employee engagement as the dependent variable. In addition, it continues with the theoretical framework and hypotheses development. Chapter Three provides the research methodology, including instruments, respondents, sampling design, and techniques of data analysis. Chapter Four shows data analyses, findings, results, and hypotheses testing. Finally, Chapter Five encompasses data-analyses findings, theoretical and practical inclusions of the study. Study limitations and suggestions are also provided. The conclusion provides an overview of, as well as significance facts about, the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past years, many studies have been dedicated to the relationship between employees and their working organization. This study presents a review of the literature related to organizational ethical climate, organizational trust, perceived stress, and work engagement. Additionally, it examines the relationship related to organizational ethical climate and its five dimensions (instrumental climate, caring climate, independence climate, rules climate, law and codes climate), and presents the literature on organizational trust; following this, the moderating role of perceived stress is presented and the relationship of work engagement and its three dimensions (vigor, absorption, dedication) is examined.

The purpose of this study is three-fold. Firstly, it examines the relationship between organizational ethical climate and trust and employee engagement within a framework of social reciprocity. Secondly, it tests the mediation effect of organizational trust. Thirdly, it determines whether the moderation effect in perceived stress alters this relationship.

This chapter discusses underpinning theories followed by defining their search framework and development hypotheses.

2.1 Organizational Ethical Climate

Current studies such as Nedkovski, et al., 2017; Wang & Hsieh, 2013, propose that it is important to identify the culture of the organization and the policies that positively impact the needs and satisfy the desires of individuals and employees in the

organization. Organizational ethical climate mirrors the shared perceptions held by employees related to the norms, practices, and procedures in the organization and whether the culture of the organization is right or wrong (Nedkovski et al., 2017). Researchers emphasize the significance of studying the ethical work climate in organizations (Lopez & McMillan Capehart, 2009).

Negative ethical climates influence negative behavior, and positive ethical climates influence positive behavior. Further, success and ethical behavior occur in a positive ethical climate, but a negative ethical climate will show negative cooperation between success and ethical behavior (Deshpande, 1996).

DeConinck (2011) explored how the ethical climate in an organization influences sales persons' organizations identification, supervisory trust, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. The outcome of his study shows that an ethical work climate is correlated positively with supervisory trust. Elçi and Alpkın (2009) speak about many ethical types (self-interest, company profit, efficiency, friendship, team interest, social responsibility, personal morality, company rules and procedures, and laws and professional codes); the results of the study demonstrated that ethical climate could be used as a strategy tool for effective performance.

Victor and Cullen (1988a) argued that various types of ethical climate with organizations can be identified from constructing two dimensions which exists within organizations. The first dimension, derived from Kohlberg's (1984) theory of cognitive moral development, concerns three ethical standards: egoism, benevolence, and principle. The second dimension, derived from sociological theories on the roles of reference groups in organizations, concerns three loci of analysis: individual, local, and

cosmopolitan (Victor & Cullen, 1988b). Victor and Cullen (1988b) combined the two dimensions and suggested the classification of ethical climates into nine theoretical types. Using their ethical climate questionnaire (ECQ) in a following empirical study, they constructed five of the nine possible ethical climates to organizations. These five types were designated as:

- Instrumental climate: This type is described by employees who are make decisions in their own or the organization's preferable interests. Usually people in an instrumental climate keep their own interests.
- Caring climate: This type is described as the organization being worried about the good of all individuals in the workplaces a whole, and expecting each individual to do what is right for the customers and the public.
- Independence climate: The independence climate type authorizes employees to decide for themselves what is right and wrong; that is, people are guided by their own particular ethics.
- Rules climate: This type confirms organization rules and procedures; moreover, employees are expected to follow precisely organization policies.
- Law and code climate: Employees should abide by law and code climate over and above other considerations (Wang & Hsieh, 2013).

In the first climate type, the instrumental, employees do whatever they want, regardless of the consequences, to further their work; in the second, the law and order,

individuals follow the rules above all else. According to studies by (Bartels, Harrick, Martell & Strickland, 1998), a positive ethical climate is negatively associated with ethically related problems in, for example, human resource management, but correlates positively to job satisfaction and loyalty, though negatively correlated to the number of employee absences.

Victor and Cullen (1988), in their locus of analysis conceptualization, state that the individual, local, and cosmopolitan loci respectively refer to decision-making based on personal beliefs, the organization of oneself, and the community outside the organization (Martin & Cullen, 2006). The overlapping of these two theoretical dimensions of ethical climate results in nine theoretical climate types (Wang & Hsieh, 2013).

Victor and Cullen (1987, 1988) cross-classified the ethical criterion and locus of analysis dimensions, resulting in nine theoretical ethical climates as illustrated in Table 2.2.

Table 2.1 Theoretical ethical climate types

	Individual	Local	Cosmopolitan
Egoism	Self interest	Company profit	Efficiency
Benevolence	Benevolence	Team interest	Social responsibility
Principle	Personal	Company rules and procedures	Laws and professional codes

Source: Victor and Cullen (1988)

Studies by Vardi and Wiener (1996); Vardi(2001) confirmed that ethical behavior

is the outcome of an ethical work environment. This means that the individual's behavior is influenced by the environment. Hence, an ethical work climate is a crucial synthesis of ethical behavior in organizations.

An ethical work climate benefits the organization in several ways. Ethical organizations are perceived to have better reputations and inspire its employees to work honestly, producing better products and services, which improves organizational performance (Prottas, 2013). Put differently, an ethical work increases employees' satisfaction and enhances work attitudes (Jaramillo et al., 2006). The organizational ethical climate is the employees' realization of the policies and practices in the organization, as well as the manner of interaction, attitudes, and behaviors (Elçi & Alpkan, 2009). It influences the behaviors and circumstances of a personal social system (Testa et al., 2013). Identical to the organizational climate, an ethical work climate informs employees about its internal work operations and public understanding about organizational behavior (Lee, 2016).

There are several benefits of an ethical work climate (Barnett & Vaicys 2000). First, it improves brand image and thus attracts more customers. An ethical work climate also encourages compliance with discipline and provides better products and services, which increases the organization's sales. Second, an ethical work climate raises employee contentment and boosts attitudes toward work (Lee, 2016). Finally, according to Wang & Hsieh (2013) an ethical organizational climate enhances valuable relationships and is more effective in enhancing benevolent behavior and good corporate citizenship.

Overall, an ethical organizational climate promotes more viable relationships. Furthermore, an ethical work climate is important throughout an institution, as it forms a

common objective for decision-making.

2.2 Organizational Trust

Trust has a long narrative of being critical for perception of interpersonal dynamics, which is a key function in organizational behavior and achievement (Shaw & Fairhurst, 1997). Without trust, maintaining relationships between individuals and organizations can be costly and might lead to retaliation in the workplace and other unacceptable organizational behaviors (Kramer & Tyler, 1996). On the other hand, trust in the workplace can lead to improved levels of organizational commitment (Guinot et al., 2013).

Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman (1995) defined trust as the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the activity of the other side based on the anticipation that the other party will execute an action significant to the trustor. While Mishra (1996) argued that trust increased organization's prosperity and existence, and this is especially true because of the competitiveness nature within the current global work climate (Hassan et al., 2012).

Shockley-Zalabak and Morreale (2014) define trust as "The organization's willingness, based on its culture to be appropriately vulnerable if it believes that another person's and employees or organization is eligible, and truthful, interested, reliable, and identified with joint goals, principles and values". Lewicki, Elgoibar, and Euwema(2016) linked trust to distrust. They defined trust as "confident positive expectations regarding another's conduct," and they defined distrust as "confident negative expectations regarding another's conduct." This definition shows that trust is more than one-dimensional, and diverse from the meaning of distrust. At least, it uses two different idioms to describe each purpose of a continuum. Furthermore, their research has used

Social Exchange Theory as a framework for understanding how these relationships develop and their importance to the organization (Sousa-Lima et al., 2013a).

Trust is therefore commonly viewed as significant for successful organizational mission, and distrust is considered harmful for organizational conformity and conduct. For example, Drucker (1999) wrote about the reciprocity of familiarity within organizations and that this reciprocity is crucial if organizations are to survive (Yiu & Law, 2012). However, organizational leaders often answered defensively inquiries related to trust scales in their organizations, and their answers might prevent individual as well as organization from knowing (Nedkovski et al., 2017). Cohen (2016) defined organizational trust as a psychological state comprised of the willingness to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of an organization. Sousa-Lima et al. (2013) indicated that trust building with organizations is a key element for developing a social exchange relationship. They proposed that trust is central factor that enhances the organization's success and survival, and that trust is very important to facilitate the formation of work-related behavior.

Trust is the “emotion of believing and engaging without fear and hesitation” (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005). Trust means that one side in a relationship is curtailed that the other side will not exploit his or her weakness (Duane & O'Reilly, 2017), which entails expecting positive actions from other individuals (Jong & Elfring, 2010). Trust is a concept based on sincerity and integrity in the most general feeling (Gülbahar, 2017). Organizational trust is important for both supervisors and employees. Trust forms the foundation of compatible and fruitful relationships and effective cooperation within the organization (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998) in order to increase the organization's level