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## Organizational performance focused on users' quality of life: The role of service climate and "contribution-to-others" wellbeing beliefs



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### ABSTRACT

The investigation of organizational factors as precursors of the quality of life (QoL) of service users in organizations for individuals with intellectual disability has been relatively neglected. With this in mind, this study tests the mediation of service climate between employee's "contribution-to-others" wellbeing beliefs (COWBs) and organizational performance focused on the QoL of individuals with intellectual disability. A total of 104 organizations participated in the study. Data were collected from 885 employees and 809 family members of individuals with intellectual disability. The results of the multilevel mediation model supported the hypotheses. When employees believe that their own wellbeing depends on helping others (COWBs) service climate reported by employees is stimulated. Service climate in turn was associated with organizational performance focused on QoL of people with intellectual disability, assessed by family members. The manuscript concludes with theoretical and practical implications of the study.

### What this paper adds?

Achieving satisfactory life conditions for individuals with intellectual disability requires that employees deliver "Quality of Life" (QoL) oriented services based on beliefs that emphasize "helping others" as meaningful job motivation. However, few studies focus on the links from the characteristics of service providers to the QoL of service users. We focus on two relevant service setting antecedents of the QoL of individuals with intellectual disability: organizational service climate and employee's beliefs about the degree to which their wellbeing is based on helping others. High service climate indicates that employees perceive that their organization is actively involved in user service. Accordingly, service climate provides a framework for stimulating performance directed to improve users' QoL because user concerns become critical in organizations with high service climate perceptions. This user orientation should be based on a facet of the culture that reinforces beliefs that define "helping others" as valuable and meaningful. The current study focuses on "contribution-to-others" wellbeing beliefs, understood as the degree to which employees define their own wellbeing based on supporting and helping others. Thus, we propose service climate as the link connecting employees' beliefs with improvements in QoL produced by the performance of organizations for individuals with intellectual disability. Our findings confirmed this mediation of service climate using a multi-informant design that considered both employee ratings and evaluations by family members of the

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improvements in the quality of life of the individual with disability. We confirmed employees' beliefs and service climate as the breeding ground to improve QoL in organizations.

## 1. Introduction

Progress in modern societies has led to an increasing interest in service organizations for individuals with intellectual disability. Specialized services have evolved toward inclusive settings where individuals with intellectual disability are considered active and autonomous people and their quality of life (QoL) is the main goal of the service (see Harbour & Maulik, 2010). Therefore, QoL of service users has become a critical objective for organizations (Reinders & Schalock, 2014). To this end, the role of employees is quite relevant because of their day-to-day interactions with service users. Achieving satisfactory life conditions for individuals with intellectual disability means that employees have to deliver QoL-oriented services based on values and beliefs that emphasize “helping others” as meaningful job motivation. However, few studies focus on the links from the characteristics of service providers to the QoL of service users, although some exceptions indicate that contact employees' service performance can play a significant role in other similar contexts (Wu, Mak, & Wan, 2007). In the current manuscript, we focus on two relevant service-setting antecedents of the QoL of individuals with intellectual disability: organizational service climate and employee's beliefs about the degree to which their wellbeing is based on helping others.

Schneider, White, and Paul (1998) defined service climate as “employee perceptions of the practices, procedures, and behaviors that get rewarded, supported, and expected with regard to customer service and customer service quality” (p. 151). Accordingly, high service climate indicates that employees perceive that their organization is actively involved in user service. Traditionally, service climate has been viewed as a competitive advantage related to organizational outcomes such as service quality, user satisfaction, and loyalty intentions (Hong, Liao, Hu, & Jiang, 2013). Previous studies have focused on service climate as a path to financial gains in different sectors such as the banking industry (Ehrhart, Witt, Schneider, & Perry, 2011) or restaurants and hotels (Gracia, Cifre, & Grau, 2010). However, in services for individuals with intellectual disability, the consequences of service climate go beyond financial gains and have a more social nature. Following the terminology by Mintzberg (1989), these organizations have characteristics of missionary configurations, where ideology plays a relevant role. More specifically, the QoL of service users is in itself the desirable end, producing better life conditions for service users. In this context, service climate provides a framework for stimulating users' QoL because user concerns become critical in organizations with high service climate perceptions. Thus, we extend the investigation of service climate as a strategic climate in organizations for people with intellectual disability, connecting it to the QoL of the users.

Organizational climate in general and service climate in particular emerge from a deeper core of the culture, that is, employees' fundamental ideologies, assumptions, and values (Yagil, 2014). In services for individuals with intellectual disability, genuine user orientation should be based on a facet of the culture that focuses on beliefs that define “helping others” as valuable and meaningful. Accordingly, the current study focuses on “contribution-to-others” wellbeing beliefs (COWBs), understood as the degree to which lay people define their own wellbeing based on supporting and helping others (McMahan & Estes, 2011). These beliefs are also present in the workplace, describing the degree to which employees believe that their own wellbeing at work is based on serving others (Pătraș, Martínez-Tur, Gracia, & Moliner, 2017). Considering the nature of these beliefs, we propose that, when employees believe that their own wellbeing depends on helping others, user-oriented procedures and practices are more likely. Therefore, we examine the relationships among COWBs, organizational service climate, and QoL of individuals with intellectual disability. (Fig. 1)

The present study makes at least two relevant contributions to the existing literature. First, it considers the link from COWBs, as a critical facet of organizational culture, to service climate. Because climate is the operationalization of cultural beliefs in daily work (Morgan, Rapp, Glenn Richey, & Ellinger, 2014), COWBs are considered as the *breeding ground* for a high service climate where the service user is the priority. Second, it investigates the link from these beliefs and climate to organizational performance focused on QoL assessed by family members of people with intellectual disability. Although the impact of internal organizational processes on external performance assessment is critical in understanding the achievement of objectives, there is still a gap in the research about the links from culture-climate aspects to user evaluations (Wolf, Dulmus, Maguin, & Cristalli, 2014). Specifically, research on service climate has focused mainly on user perceptions of customer experiences, such as service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty (see Bowen & Schneider, 2013), which are relevant when financial profit is the organization's main goal. However, when the organization pursues social goals, other service performance indicators are relevant, such as users' QoL (Moliner, Gracia, Lorente, & Martínez-Tur, 2013). Hence, we propose service climate as the link connecting employees' beliefs to organizational performance focused on the QoL of individuals with intellectual disability.

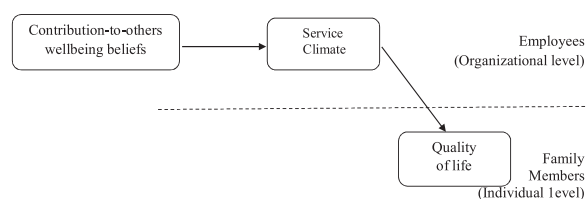


Fig. 1. Proposed model.

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