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Manager Personality, Manager Service Quality Orientation, and Service Climate: Test of a Model

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Manager Personality, Manager Service Quality Orientation, and Service Climate: Test of a Model

Abstract

[Excerpt] Receiving poor customer service is an irritating experience. Often the first recourse for the customer is to ask to speak to the manager. Undoubtedly, customers make this request with the presumption that the manager plays a pivotal role in ensuring the delivery of service quality and can make things better. Situations where the manager fails to do so can be frustrating for both customers and subordinate employees.

As important as managers are to service delivery, it is paradoxically true that due to the nature of service production, they have less control over service quality than their counterparts in manufacturing (Bowen & Schneider, 1988). Accordingly, managers in service organizations must create situations where the work environment is supportive of service quality (Schneider, White, & Paul, 1998). Schneider and his colleagues (e.g., Bowen & Schneider1988; Schneider, 1990; Schneider et al., 1998; Schneider & Gunnarson, 1990) have referred to this environment as a "climate for customer service." Indeed, a number of studies (see Dean, 2004, for a review) have suggested that businesses that successfully create a climate for customer service tend to have customers who report higher service quality (Johnson, 1996). Moreover, service climate has a positive relationship with sales through its effects on customer satisfaction (Schneider, Ehrhart, Mayer, Saltz, & Niles-Jolly, 2005). The benefit of creating desired climates is not limited to service climates. This relationship is supported by research linking climate for safety to accidents (Barling, Loughlin, & Kelloway, 2002; Zohar, 2000; Zohar & Luria, 2004) and procedural justice climate to performance and absenteeism (Colquitt, Noe, & Jackson, 2002).

Less documented is how such climates are created in the first place. One stream of research investigating the development of climates has focused on specific managerial behaviors, actions, and practices. For example, Zohar and Luria (2004) found that coherent or consistent managerial behaviors were significant predictors of safety climate. In this article, we seek to go back a step in the causal chain by exploring personality as an antecedent of managers' service quality orientations. Following J. Hogan, Hogan, and Busch (1984), we define service quality orientation as a set of "attitudes and behaviors that affects the quality of the interaction between . . . the staff of any organization and its customers" (p. 167). Our proposal is that managers with certain personality traits are more likely to facilitate the development of a climate for service. Here, we seek to expand upon the work of numerous organizational scholars and to propose that managers with particular personality traits are more likely to exhibit a positive service quality orientation. In what follows, we develop a model explicating the links between personality, managerial service quality orientation, and a climate for customer service.

Keywords

service quality, service climate, manager personality, orientation

Disciplines

Other Business | Performance Management

Comments

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by exploring personality as an antecedent of managers' service quality orientations. Following J. Hogan,

Hogan, and Busch (1984), we define service quality orientation as a set of "attitudes and behaviors that

affects the quality of the interaction between . . . the staff of any organization and its customers" (p.

167). Our proposal is that managers with certain personality traits are more likely to facilitate the

development of a climate for service. Here, we seek to expand upon the work of numerous

organizational scholars and to propose that managers with particular personality traits are more likely to

exhibit a positive service quality orientation. In what follows, we develop a model explicating the links

between personality, managerial service quality orientation, and a climate for customer service.

Managers' Service Quality Orientation and Service Climate

Meeting customer service standards places numerous demands upon employees. Service

employees need knowledge and access to information to help solve customer problems (Berry,

Parasuraman, & Zeithaml, 1994), and they need to be able to deal with angry customers, even in

situations where the customer is rude, the employee is exhausted, or both (Berry et al., 1994). In short,

customer service work is often stressful and emotionally draining, leading some to describe it as

"emotional labor" (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Hochschild, 1983). Without the right support structures

and guidance, this potentially stressful work environment can take a negative toll on employees and

customers alike. However, by supporting and rewarding service quality, managers can create

environments in which meeting customer demands is facilitated, supported, and encouraged. In

particular, managers need to make it clear to their subordinates that customer service is a priority

(Schneider et al., 1998). They can do so by explicitly recognizing and rewarding employees who provide

good service, ensuring that employees have the autonomy to make service-related decisions, and by

clearing roadblocks to providing service, such as making sure equipment is running properly. In addition,

these managers need to instill in their employees a sense of confidence and empowerment that will

allow them to provide effective responses to customers (Bowen & Lawler, 1992).

There is research support for the link between service quality orientation and a positive service

climate. Schneider and his colleagues (1998) found that "actions taken by an employee's immediate

manager that support and reward the delivery of quality service" (p. 153) were critical for developing a

climate for service; these service climate perceptions were in turn related to customer perceptions of

service quality. More recent research (Schneider et al., 2005) has shown that these managerial

behaviors not only eventuated in service climates but had long-term consequences for unit customer

satisfaction and sales. Therefore, we expected that managers' service quality orientation would be

positively related to service climate.

> *Hypothesis 1*: Managers' service quality orientation will be positively related to employee
>
> perceptions of service climate.

Personality and Managers' Service Quality Orientation

Big Five personality traits. In the broader domain of the organizational sciences, theoretical and

empirical work explaining the link between personality and work-related behavior has been steadily

growing (cf. Barrick & Mount, 1991; Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003), with much of the research in

the past 2 decades focusing on and finding wide-ranging support for the five-factor model of

personality, also referred to as the Big Five. According to this model, personality characteristics can be

organized into five meaningful traits: openness to experience (e.g., cultured, intellectual),

conscientiousness (e.g., careful, dependable), extraversion (e.g., outgoing, sociable), agreeableness (e.g.,

pleasant, nice), and neuroticism (e.g., anxious, intense) or its positive pole, emotional stability (Digman,

1990; R. Hogan, Hogan, & Roberts, 1996; Ones, Viswesvaran, & Dilchert, 2005). The utility of the Big Five

is evident across a number of meta-analyses, which have documented the relationship between

personality and on-the-job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Tett, Jackson, & Rothstein, 1991).

There is empirical evidence that some of the Big Five traits are related to service quality

orientation. Early work by J. Hogan and colleagues (1984) identified dependability (similar to

conscientiousness) and adjustment (similar to emotional stability) as components of service quality

orientation. In a more recent study, scores on emotional stability and conscientiousness predicted

service quality orientation in food service workers (Brown, Mowen, Donavan, & Licata, 2002). We

extended this work in our focus on managers by predicting that two of the Big Five dimensions—

conscientiousness and emotionally stability—would be positively associated with managers' service

quality orientation.

As noted above, conscientiousness, which assesses dependability, achievement, and attention

to detail, has been correlated with service quality orientation (Brown et al., 2002; Hurtz & Donovan,

2000). Conscientiousness should be positively related to behaviors that encourage adherence to high

service quality standards and dependability. For example, conscientious managers will display greater

attention to detail and therefore may be more thorough in noticing and removing obstacles to customer

service. Their achievement focus may lead them to set high standards and express a commitment to

customer service quality among their employees.

Emotional stability, which describes emotional adjustment and a lack of negative affect, may be

positively related to an ability to consistently provide assurance to both customers and employees,

particularly in the face of emotionally stressful situations. As with conscientiousness, emotional stability

has been previously correlated with having a customer service quality orientation. In particular, Brown

and colleagues (2002) argued that emotional instability may be related to an inconsistent desire to meet

customer needs. We also suggest that a manager's propensity to experience negative affect and anxiety,

which lies at the heart of emotional stability, may "spill over" onto employees via emotional contagion

(cf. Barsade, 2002), which in turn could affect service quality. Thus, we expected emotional stability to

be negatively related to service quality orientation.

We did not expect that the three other Big Five dimensions, specifically agreeableness,

extraversion, and openness, would have relationships with service quality orientation. This expectation

was based on the lack of existing empirical evidence for these relationships. First, research by Brown et

al. (2002) failed to find significant relationships between extraversion and openness with service quality

orientation. Second, the results of Barrick and Mount's (1991) meta-analysis suggest that agreeableness

does not predict job performance "even in those jobs containing a large social component (e.g., sales or

management)" (p. 21). These personality traits are treated as control variables, rather than predictors,

in the present study.

Hypothesis 2a: Conscientiousness and emotional stability will each be positively related to (and

have separate and unique effects on) managers' service quality orientation.

The Big Five have been extremely useful in predicting a wide range of outcomes across many settings

(Barrick & Mount, 1991; Judge et al., 2003), and thus, there is a temptation to rely on it when

attempting to predict hitherto unexplained variance in criteria. Indeed, doing so often makes good

conceptual and empirical sense, given the robust predictive validity of the model. However, by

examining only the Big Five, one risks neglecting other potentially important predictors of the behaviors

or outcomes in question. Research by Paunonen and Jackson (2000), for example, suggests that there

are personality dimensions that fall outside of the traditional Big Five. Because the service context

provides distinct challenges for both employees and managers, it may be necessary to look at

personality traits in addition to the Big Five in order to predict service quality orientation in this

environment. Toward this end, we considered aspects of personality that are not the focus of the Big

Five. Specifically, because the Big Five is a taxonomy, it attempts to represent a description of

personality, not necessarily a self-appraisal of worth (Block, 1995; Digman, 1990; Judge, Erez, Bono, &

Thoresen, 2002). Indeed, Tellegen and Waller (1987, as cited in Almagor, Tellegen, & Waller, 1995)

noted that researchers (e.g., Cattell, 1943; Norman, 1963) deliberately excluded evaluative terms from

the trait descriptor lists used to develop the Big Five. Yet because managers in the service context may

benefit from a positive fundamental appraisal of their own self-worth to enact the assurance and

responsiveness necessary for creating positive service climates, we looked to a personality trait that

describes a person's self-appraisal or evaluation— namely, core self-evaluations.

The nature of core self-evaluations. Core self-evaluations are defined as "basic, fundamental

appraisal[s] of one's worthiness, effectiveness, and capability as a person" (Judge et al., 2003, p. 304)

and are indicated by several well-studied personality traits: self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus

of control, and neuroticism (Judge, Locke, Durham, & Kluger, 1998). Core selfe-valuations have been

positively related to numerous criteria, including job and life satisfaction (Judge & Bono, 2001; Judge et

al., 1998), goal setting and task motivation (Erez & Judge, 2001), and job performance (Judge & Bono,

2001; Judge et al., 2003). Recently, a unidimensional measure of core self-evaluations (the Core Self-

Evaluations Scale [CSES]; Judge et al., 2003) was successfully developed and validated. Judge et al.

(2002) pointed out that these four constructs comprising core self-evaluations are conceptually related,

though not necessarily identical. Indeed, Judge and his colleagues (1998, 2002) have found that the four

elements of core self-evaluations consistently correlate with a single higher order factor. They

concluded that the four core traits represent a fundamental, global, and deeply held personal evaluation

of one's self-worth, competence, and effectiveness.

Based on the four traits that comprise core self-evaluations, it is possible to describe managers who have a positive core self-evaluation as having a positive sense of self-worth or esteem and as having faith in their ability to handle the variety of problems that arise in any job (high generalized self-efficacy). They are likely to take initiative and responsibility for their subordinates (internal locus of control) and to believe that aspects of the work environment that affect them, their subordinates, and the performance of their unit, are within their control. Finally, managers with positive core self-evaluations are secure, even tempered, not anxious, and likely to engage in interpersonal interactions that are characterized by positive affect. As a result, we expect that such managers are likely to create positive service climates because they will be more likely to have a service quality orientation, which according to J. Hogan et al.'s (1984) definition, is a set of attitudes and behaviors that promote high-quality interactions among employees and customers. Examples of these attitudes and behaviors include setting standards for customer service, removing barriers to service quality, taking responsibility for their employees and customers, and rewarding employees for providing excellent service (Bowen & Lawler, 1992). In addition, emotionally stable managers with positive self-esteem are more likely to be able to model effective service interactions because they will be more confident about being able to do so and will be able to persist even in high-stress interactions with customers. On the basis of this reasoning, we expected that managers with higher core self-evaluations would be more likely to have a positive service quality orientation.

Hypothesis 2b: Managers' core-self evaluations will be positively related to service quality orientation.

Meta-analytic research has found that compound personality traits (that is, those comprised of items that tap several of the Big Five) tend to have stronger relationships with a general criterion (e.g., overall job performance) than any single trait in the Big Five (Ones et al., 2005, p. 396). Core self-

evaluations are an example of such a compound trait. Therefore, we expect that core self-evaluations should predict variance in service quality orientation beyond that accounted for by relevant traits in the Big Five alone. In addition, because the Big Five are not evaluative, we believe that core self-evaluations may tap a piece of the criterion space not accounted for by conscientiousness and emotional stability.

Hypothesis 2c: Core self-evaluations will show incremental validity in predicting service quality orientation beyond the variance accounted for by conscientiousness and emotional stability.

Service Quality Orientation as a Mediator

There is empirical and theoretical evidence that personality is related to manager attitudes and behavior and that manager attitudes and behavior, in turn, are relevant for building an organizational climate (e.g., Schneider et al., 1998). There is little empirical work proposing a direct link, however, between manager personality and organizational climate. We propose, in keeping with logic developed by Schneider, Smith, and Sipe (2000), that managers enact their personality on their work group through their behavior and attitudes, which in turn contributes to a service climate. In other words, manager personality has an indirect effect on workplace climate, in that a service quality orientation completely mediates the relationship between personality and service climate. This logic has been implicit throughout our discussion; here, we state this hypothesis directly.

Hypothesis 3: The relationship between managers' personality and service climate will be mediated by service quality orientation.

Method

Sample

The data for this study were collected from 173 stores of a supermarket chain located in the

northeastern United States. The unit of analysis was the individual departments nested in each grocery

store (e.g., meat, bakery, deli). A total of 11,250 employee and 2,750 department manager surveys were

distributed to supermarket employees. Of these, 4,500 usable employee surveys from 1,008

departments and 1,100 manager surveys were returned to the university in prepaid envelopes, for a

response rate of approximately 40%. For data analysis purposes, departments consisting of five or more

employees were retained for analysis (Bliese, 1998).[1] This reduced the number of departments in the

sample to 286. Employee surveys that could not be matched with a department manager, as well as

manager data that could not be matched with a particular department, were deleted.[2] This reduced the

matched sample size to 145. Because the data aggregation and matching process was complicated,

Table 1 presents how the final sample was determined.

Procedure

Employees completed the survey on the job, and participation was strictly voluntary. Anonymity

was assured by having participants mail the surveys directly to Benjamin Schneider. Employee responses

were matched to their manager through the combination of their store identification number and

department number (e.g., store #17, bakery department).

Control of Response Bias

Employees provided both the service quality orientation ratings and the global service climate

ratings; department managers provided self-reports of core self-evaluations and of the Big Five traits.

Therefore, the relationship between service quality orientation and global service climate could be

subject to percept–percept bias, as employees completed both measures. Ostroff, Kinicki, and Clark

(2002) demonstrated that percept–percept bias, long an area of concern in individual-level research, is

present at aggregate levels of analysis as well. In order to control for this effect, we split the employee

sample within departments when testing relationships between service quality orientation and climate

(Ostroff et al., 2002). Specifically, half of the employees within a given department provided service

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INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

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quality orientation ratings, and the other half of the employees provided the climate ratings. For this

analysis we chose departments with six or more employee respondents, which reduced the department

sample size from 286 to 228. Therefore, the sample size to test Hypothesis 1 (where percept– percept

bias was relevant) was 228. For Hypothesis 3, we used the full sample to obtain as much statistical

power as possible, but tested the link between service quality orientation and climate using the split

samples as well to rule out percept– percept bias. The coefficient for the split sample appears in

parentheses in Figure 1. We chose to retain all 145 departments for Hypotheses 2a–2c (in which the

personality variables were reported by managers, and service quality orientation ratings were provided

by employees) to retain as much relevant data as possible.

Measures

Global service climate. We used Schneider et al.'s (1998) eight-item Global Service Climate Scale

to assess service climate, on which responses range from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). A sample item

includes "Overall, how would you rate the climate for service in your department?" The alpha for this

scale was .90.

Service quality orientation. Service quality orientation was assessed using the four-item

Managerial Practices Scale developed by Schneider et al. (1998). Response options for this scale range

from 1 (to no extent) to 5 (to a great extent). Sample items include "My department manager recognizes

and appreciates high quality service" and "My department manager spends time 'on the floor'

interacting with customers." The alpha for this scale was .87.

Core self-evaluations. Managers were asked to rate themselves on seven items from Judge et

al.'s (2003) CSES. The original scale is 12 items; we deleted 5 items that participants may have found

overly personal in an applied setting (e.g., "Sometimes I feel depressed"). Responses for the measure

were based on a 1 (very inaccurate) to 5 (very accurate) scale. The alpha for the scale we used was .76.

Big Five personality traits. The Big Five were assessed with Goldberg's (1999) personality

measure. Each item was answered on a 1 (very inaccurate) to 5 (very accurate) scale. Sample items and

internal consistency reliabilities for the subscales as used here were as follows: for Extraversion, "Feel

comfortable around people" (α= .92); for Agreeableness, "Make people feel at ease"

(α= .81); for Conscientiousness, "Pay attention to details" (α=.81); for Openness to Experience, "Spend

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INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

---

time reflecting on things" (α= .74); and for Emotional Stability, "Get upset easily" (reverse scored; α=

.85).

Control variables. Two variables were used as controls in the current study: store layout and

whether or not employees in the store were unionized. Physical store attributes, such as size, age of the

facility, and layout have been shown to relate to customer satisfaction (Bitner, 1990; Conlon, Van Dyne,

Milner, & Ng, 2004). Second, the presence of a union may affect the way employees view management

and their work environment. All hypotheses were initially tested with these two variables controlled for,

but they had no significant effect in any of our analyses. Therefore, we did not include them in the

present analyses, unless otherwise noted in the text.

Data Aggregation

We averaged employee responses regarding their managers' service quality orientation by

department, so that each manager had one score on this scale. In addition, we gave each department

one score on the global service climate variable by aggregating employees' responses. To test whether

aggregation was appropriate, we calculated the intra-class correlation coefficients, ICC(1) and ICC(2), as

well as the average $r_{wg(j)}$ statistic (a measure of interrater agreement), for data from departments of five

or more employees. The results are presented in Table 2. The ICC(1) indicates the amount of lower-level

variance that is accounted for by the grouping or by the higher level variable. Bliese (2000) reported an

acceptable ICC(1) range from .05 to .20 (p. 361); the values from these data are commensurate with

these figures. The ICC(2) indicates the reliability of the unit-level means (Bliese, 2000); a typical cutoff is

.70 (James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1984). Lance, Butts, and Michaels (2006) suggested that the .70 cutoff for

$r_{wg(j)}$ is not yet established in the research literature, hence we hesitated to interpret these scores here.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

Although the ICC(1) and ICC(2) values are within an acceptable range (Bartko, 1976), the average

$r_{wg(j)}$ value for the service quality orientation scale is a bit lower (.64) than the standard cutoff (.70)

suggested by James et al. (1984). Given the acceptable ICC values, we decided to proceed with the data

aggregation for this scale. Because employee responses were also nested within stores, we calculated

the ICC(1) and ICC(2) values from both the service quality orientation and climate variables across all

stores. The ICC(1) values (.05 for climate and .04 for service quality orientation) were small. As

interpreted by Bryk and Raudenbush (1992) and Singer (1998), this suggests that approximately 5% of

the total variance in global service climate and service quality orientation can be accounted for by store-

level effects, or differences among stores (such as location). (By comparison, 17% of variance in climate

can be explained by department-level effects.) Taken together, these analyses support aggregation to

the department-, but not store-, level of analysis. Nevertheless, we tested our hypotheses using

hierarchical linear modeling to control for store-level effects. Results for the model with both service

quality orientation and core self-evaluations as fixed effects suggested that the means for climate did

not significantly vary between stores (τ_{00} = .01, σ^2 = .22, Wald z = .394, ns).

Results

Table 3 shows the zero-order correlations among the primary variables in this study. The

correlations among the Big Five and core self-evaluations range from .32 to .44, and all are significant (p

< .05). These correlations suggest that although the CSES and the Big Five have some overlap, they are

clearly not redundant. Also, the correlations among the CSES, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and

Emotional Stability are similar to those reported by Judge et al. (2003), but the correlations between the

CSES and Agreeableness and Openness are larger (.32 vs. .12 to .15 for Agreeableness; .44 vs. -.10 to -.05

for Openness).[3]

Hypothesis 1 predicted that service quality orientation would be positively associated with

service climate. As shown in Table 3, this was indeed the case. Service quality orientation significantly

predicted global climate scores (r = .49, p < .05). This correlation was conducted on the split sample and

does not have percept–percept bias. After unionization and store format were controlled for, service

quality orientation predicted climate beyond the variance accounted for by these controls, β= .49, p <

.001, ΔR^2= .24; F_{change}(1, 224) = 69.75, p < .01, and thus Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Hypothesis 2a predicted that Conscientiousness and Emotional Stability would be positively

related to service quality orientation, after we controlled for the other Big Five traits (Agreeableness,

Openness, and Extraversion). We also controlled for manager gender and length of tenure by entering

them into the regression equation. Due to missing data on the manager demographics, the sample size

for this analysis was 139. As shown in Table 4,

Hypothesis 2a was not supported (Agreeableness β= .13, Conscientiousness β= .00, Emotional

Stability β= -.03, all ns). Hypothesis 2b predicted that core self-evaluations would be positively related to

service quality orientation. Hypothesis 2c predicted that core self-evaluations would explain additional

variance in service quality orientation beyond that accounted for by the Big Five. As shown in Table 4,

both hypotheses were supported. The CSES significantly predicted scores on service quality orientation

(β=.26, p < .05), even after we entered the Big Five, ΔR^2= .04, incremental F(1, 130) = 5.70, p < .05.

INSERT TABLE 4 HERE

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the relationship between manager personality and global service

climate would be mediated by service quality orientation. Because none of the Big Five dimensions was

related to service quality orientation or service climate, we used core self-evaluations as the only

predictor to test for mediation, using Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach for determining mediation

(see Table 5). The first step in this sequence is to show that the independent variable (core self-

evaluations) is significantly related to the mediator (service quality orientation). With data collected

from 145 departments, core self-evaluations significantly predicted service quality orientation (β= .20, p

< .05). The second step is to show that core self-evaluations (the independent variable) are significantly

related to global service climate (the dependent variable); the results (presented in Table 5) support this

conclusion (β= .18, p < .05). The third step in Baron and Kenny's approach is to regress both the

independent variable and the mediator on the dependent variable; full mediation is supported when the

relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable is not significant once the

mediator is controlled. Once the effect of service quality orientation is controlled, the relationship

between core self-evaluations and global service climate becomes nonsignificant (β= .01, ns). The

decomposed direct and indirect effects are shown in Table 6; the indirect effect of core self-evaluations

on climate via service quality orientation was .17. (To find the indirect effect, one multiplies the direct

effects, or .20 .85 in this case; see Kline, 2005, p. 128.) A Sobel test of the indirect effect was significant

(z = 2.42, p < .05), and the total direct effect of core self-evaluations on service climate was .18, which is

the same as the raw correlation between these two variables reported in Table 3. The results of this

analysis suggest that the relationship between core self-evaluations and global service climate is fully

mediated by service quality orientation.

INSERT TABLE 5 HERE

We also used structural equation modeling to test the mediating effect of service quality

orientation, using data aggregated to the department level of analysis (N =145). We tested a

measurement model that included the indicators of the latent core self-evaluation, service quality

orientation, and global service climate constructs. We included a path linking core self-evaluations to

service quality orientation and service quality orientation to global service climate, as well as a direct,

unmediated path linking core self-evaluations to climate. Because none of the Big Five dimensions was

related to service quality orientation or service climate at p < .05, we excluded them from the model.

The path model is shown in Figure 1 (for simplicity, we do not include indicators). The data fit the fully

mediated model well, x^2(141, N = 145) = 271.83, comparative fit index = .93, root-mean-square error of

approximation = .08, standardized root-mean-square = .05. In support of Hypothesis 1, service quality

orientation was positively associated with service climate (β=.95, p < .01). Consistent with Hypothesis

2b, managerial core self-evaluations were positively associated with service quality orientation (β= .26, p

< .01). Finally, in support of Hypothesis 3, the link between core self-evaluations and service climate was

mediated by service quality orientation, as indicated by the nonsignificant path between core self-

evaluations and service climate (β= .00, *ns*).

Discussion

The goal of this study was to explore antecedents of service climate by examining both

managerial service quality orientation and the personality traits associated with this orientation. Our

results suggest that manager personality plays a role in the development of service climate, a finding

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INSERT TABLE 6 HERE

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that, to our knowledge, has not been empirically tested before. The results of this study also support the

idea that managers help create, through their attitudes and behavior, climates for customer service

(Schneider, 1987; Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995). In this study, managers with positive core self-

evaluations were more likely to have a positive service quality orientation, which in turn was positively

related to global service climate. These findings resonate with other research linking managerial action

and behavior to organizational climate. Early work by Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939) found, for example, that a specific form of leadership style (e.g., democratic, laissez faire, or authoritarian) affected group social climates. Recently, Zohar and Luria (2004) found that supervisor behavior was related to the safety climate reported by subordinates. The current study supports and expands on these findings by using personality to predict which managers are most likely to have a service quality orientation, a "behavioral syndrome" (J. Hogan et al., 1984, p. 170) supporting a positive service climate.

This study also expands upon the growing literature on core self-evaluations and their relationship with work-related outcomes. Core self-evaluations have been linked to a number of employee outcomes such as job satisfaction (Judge et al., 1998), individual-level job performance (Judge & Bono, 2001), and the intensity of job search behavior after unemployment (Wanberg, Glomb, Song, & Sorenson, 2005). The theoretical mediators between core self-evaluations and certain job-related behaviors are intrinsic motivation and goal-setting behavior; researchers have found empirical support for these mediators in several studies (cf. Erez & Judge, 2001; Judge, Bono, Erez, & Locke, 2005). Put another way, those people who see themselves as agentic, effective, and basically good are more likely to be motivated from within, which in turn is related to performance behaviors. We suspect that intrinsic motivation may mediate the relationships between core self-evaluations and service quality orientation as well. On the basis of the current literature, it is possible that intrinsic motivation plays a key role in the relationship between manager personality and organizational climate. Future research should examine the intermediate linkages between managers' personality and the environments they help to create.

Perhaps the most interesting finding is that core self-evaluations predicted service quality orientation beyond the variance accounted for by the traits of the Big Five. This is especially noteworthy given that core self-evaluations and the Big Five were moderately correlated in the present sample. We

believe this result is theoretically interesting for two reasons. First, although some of the Big Five, such

as Conscientiousness and Emotional Stability (cf. J. Hogan et al., 1984), have been previously linked to

customer service quality orientation of front-line service workers ("boundary-spanners"), there is little

research on core self-evaluations in this domain. The results of this study suggest that core self-

evaluations may be tapping variance that is not attributable to the Big Five and that this variance is

useful in predicting managerial service quality orientation.

Second, recent research on personality and customer service has focused on predicting

individual-level service performance, such as self-ratings of customer service (Liao & Chuang, 2004) and

supervisory ratings of restaurant server performance (Brown et al., 2002). However, we know

comparatively little about the personality characteristics of managers, as opposed to employees, that

are related to group-level service quality outcomes, such as service climate. As recent research has

supported the linkage between service climate, customer satisfaction, and sales (Schneider et al., 2005),

we believe this is a useful area of inquiry. The results of this study expand our knowledge of how the

attributes of managers shape the larger work environment, at least as studied here in a service context.

Strengths and Limitations

A relative strength of this study is that ratings of personality and service climate were collected

from different sources, and when data were collected from the same raters (i.e., ratings of service

quality orientation and global service climate), we attempted to account for percept–percept bias. As

research linking personality and climate continues, these relationships should be explored with respect

to other organizational boundary conditions.

As with all research, this study has several limitations. The results of this research would have

been strengthened by the inclusion of customer ratings of service quality as an outcome of service

climate. Being able to replicate prior research findings linking service climate to customer satisfaction

and sales—as, for example, Schneider and his colleagues (1998) have done—would have allowed us to

draw some conclusions about the causal chain linking climate to the bottom line. Although we were

unable to do this in this study, we extrapolate from prior research (Koys, 2001; Ryan, Schmit, &

Johnston, 1996) in suggesting that the relationship between service climate and customer satisfaction

and sales is likely to be rather robust.

Although our findings suggest that core self-evaluations are linked to service quality orientation,

which is in turn related to employee perceptions of climate, we do not know if service quality

orientation in fact causes service climate or if core self-evaluations cause orientation. Theoretically, we

assume that the temporal sequence starts with the leader's personality, which in turn contributes to the

development of a particular service climate though a series of behavioral patterns (cf. Zohar & Luria,

2004). The current data provide a cross-sectional, rather than a longitudinal, view of these relationships.

Future research should build upon the current findings by testing the relationship between manager

personality and the development of a service climate over time.

Practical Implications

The results of the present study suggest several practical implications for service organizations.

As also suggested by Schneider et al.'s (2005) research, these findings indicate that managers who

demonstrate specific behaviors, such as modeling effective interactions with customers and providing

material and emotional support, are more likely to have a positive service climate as reported by their

employees. Perhaps training programs can be developed to specifically improve service quality

orientation. Alternatively, organizations can develop performance appraisal systems that specifically

measure and reward it.

Assuming that manager personality also plays a role in the development of service climate, a

second practical implication is that it may be useful for organizations to select first-line managers in

service jobs using core self-evaluations or other similar compound personality traits. Previous research

suggests that service quality orientation can be used to select employees in boundary-spanning jobs (cf.

J. Hogan et al., 1984). We are not suggesting that improving service quality orientation, either through

manager development or selection, is the only method for improving service climate. Certainly there are

other routes to the development of an effective service climate (e.g., the implementation of customer-

friendly policies and procedures), but this research suggests that there are personal, as well as

situational, antecedents of organizational climate.

Conclusions

In this study we sought to test a model concerning the role of manager personality in

understanding service climate. We also expanded the current research on core self-evaluations by

linking it with managerial service quality orientation. Our results suggest that core self-evaluations are

positively related to service quality orientation in first-line managers above and beyond the Big Five and

that manager service quality orientation fully mediates the relationship between manager personality

and service climate. Companies interested in creating service climates will have a higher probability of

doing so if they hire managers who are more likely to display a service quality orientation.

Table 1

Determination of Sample Size

No. of surveys	Individual employees	Departments	Managers
Administered	11,250		2,750
Returned (useable)	4,500	1,008	659
From departments with			
5+ employees[a]	3,058	286	
6+ employees[a]	2,768	228	
5+ employees and manager data	1,486	145	145
6+ employees and manager data	1,311	110	110

[a] This is the number of cases before employee data were matched to manager data.
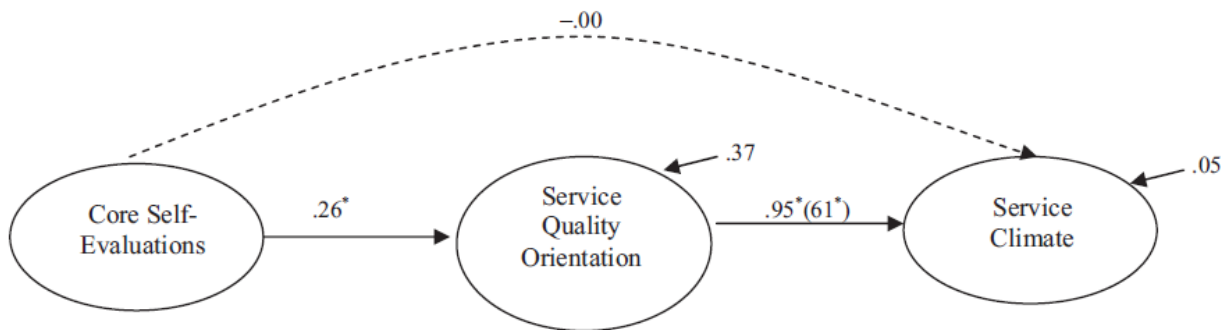

Figure 1. Hypothesized path model with standardized coefficients. The parameter estimate in parentheses represents the coefficient estimated using a split (no response bias) sample. The dotted line represents the path for the partially mediated model. $^*p < .05$.

Table 2

Aggregation Statistics for Dependent Variables

Dependent variable	ICC(1)	ICC(2)	Mean $r_{wg(j)}$
Service quality orientation	.17	.72	.64
Service climate	.16	.70	.82

Note. ICC = intraclass correlation coefficient; ICC(1) = the amount of lower level variance that is accounted for by the grouping or by the higher level variable; ICC(2) = the reliability of the unit-level means; $r_{wg(j)}$ is a measure of interrater agreement.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Key Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Conscientiousness	4.21	0.49	—							
2. Agreeableness	4.22	0.53	.49**	—						
3. Emotional stability[a]	3.61	0.69	.33**	.30**	—					
4. Extraversion	3.41	0.67	.21**	.33**	.22*	—				
5. Openness	3.60	0.53	.29**	.39**	.20	.51**	—			
6. Core self-evaluations	4.00	0.53	.42**	.32**	.44**	.38**	.44**	—		
7. Service quality orientation	3.58	0.61	.10	.11	.10	−.09	.01	.20*	—	
8. Service climate	3.25	0.50	.16	.11	.17*	−.03	.08	.18*	.49*[b]	—

Note. N = 145, except as otherwise noted.
[a] Higher scores indicate greater emotional stability. [b] n = 228.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 4

Hierarchical Regression of Manager Personality and Manager
Service Quality Orientation

Step	Predictor	B	SE B	β	R^2	ΔR^2	$\Delta F(1, 130)$
1	Manager tenure	0.02	0.04	.16	.04	.04	2.65
	Manager gender	−0.12	0.12	−.09			
2	Extraversion	−0.18	0.10	−.19	.07	.03	1.61
	Openness	−0.07	0.13	−.06			
	Agreeableness	0.16	0.13	.13			
3	Conscientiousness	0.00	0.14	.00	.08	.01	0.45
	Emotional stability	−0.03	0.10	−.03			
4	Core self-evaluations	0.32	0.14	.26*	.12	.04	5.70*

Note. $N = 139$. The dependent variable is service quality orientation.
* $p < .05$

Table 5

Hierarchical Regression of Core Self-Evaluations, Service Quality Orientation, and Global Service Climate

Step	Predictor variable	Criterion	B	SE B	β	t	R^2
1	Core self-evaluations	Service quality orientation	0.24	0.10	.20	2.44*	.04
2	Core self-evaluations	Climate	0.17	0.08	.18	2.14*	.03
3[a]	Service quality orientation	Climate	0.66	0.04	.85	19.03*	.73
	Core self-evaluations	Climate	0.01	0.04	.01	0.12	

Note. $N = 145$. Hierarchical regression was conducted using Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach.
[a] In Step 3, service quality orientation and core self-evaluations were entered on the same step of the regression equation.
* $p < .05$.

Table 6

Decomposition of Standardized Effects

Predictor	Service quality orientation	Climate
1. Core self-evaluations		
Direct effect	0.20	0.01
Indirect effect (via service quality orientation)		0.17
Total effect		0.18
2. Service quality orientation		
Direct effect		0.85

Note. The data are standardized betas.

Notes

1. The relationship between personality and service quality orientation was also tested using a
    data set in which five employees were randomly sampled from each department (see Schneider,
    Salvaggio, & Subirats, 2002, for an example of this procedure). The results were identical to
    those results found using departments of five employees or more.

2. We conducted t tests to see if there were differences on the service quality orientation and
    climate variables for departments without corresponding manager personality data; these tests
    were nonsignificant. There were 193 managers who did not have corresponding employee data;
    a set of t tests revealed that these managers did not differ on the personality variables.

3. Perhaps the discrepancy is attributable to differences between the samples involved (i.e., food
    service employees and sales representatives in a pharmaceutical firm in Judge et al., 2003, vs.
    supermarket employees in ours); with the present information, however, we can only speculate
    about why the correlations are different.

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