

Do Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Construction Workers Perceive Safety Climate the Same Way?

Measurement equivalence of a safety climate measure among Hispanic and White Non-Hispanic construction workers

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Overview

The use of safety climate measures for needs assessment and interventions has become increasingly popular. Typically, safety climate scores are determined by asking workers to evaluate statements like “the general contractor’s safety personnel step in to stop unsafe operations,” or “my foreman thinks that safety is more important than productivity.” But researchers continue to expose ethnic disparities in safety and health outcomes: is it possible that Hispanic and non-Hispanic construction workers also respond differently to a standard safety climate survey instrument? Researchers analyzed safety climate surveys submitted by 4,182 workers employed in 14 different construction trades, comparing the responses of three groups: Hispanic workers who completed the survey in Spanish, Hispanic workers who completed the survey in English, and non-Hispanic whites who completed the survey in English. They found that responses to most questions on the survey were equivalent among the three groups, but noted some exceptions deserving of further study.

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Key Findings

- Respondents across the three groups responded similarly to the safety climate measure, a finding encouraging for safety climate research.
- Hispanic workers who completed the survey in Spanish rated management’s commitment to safety somewhat higher than did Hispanic workers who completed the survey in English; both Hispanic groups rated management’s safety commitment more highly than non-Hispanic whites did. This appears consistent with hypotheses that Hispanic immigrant workers have different expectations of management than non-Hispanic whites, or that there are cultural differences in one’s willingness to be perceived as criticizing an authority figure. However, white non-Hispanic workers in the sample tended to be older and have more construction industry experience than the Hispanic construction workers surveyed, which may account for some of the variation.
- Findings from this research highlight the fact that researchers need to obtain a better understanding of the cultural factors that may influence safety climate perceptions. Expanding our knowledge of cultural differences in safety perceptions can ultimately help us create better safety interventions, effective for all construction worker populations.



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