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**The relationship between social climate and decision-making in residential aged care facilities**

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**DEFINITIONS**

- Social climate:
  - "...an environment's unique personality which regulates people's behaviour in that environment" (Moos and Lemke, 1996 p. 110).
  - Perceptions of social climate result from a process of concept formation that arises from a combination of:
    - actual events
    - qualities of a setting
    - the person's role within the system
    - the person's own values and beliefs.

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**BACKGROUND**

- Research has demonstrated the importance of social climate to resident quality of life in aged care.
  - Eg. satisfaction, health, activity levels
- Little research has explored the relationship between social climate and resident involvement in decision-making.
- Mitchell and Kemp (2000) investigated the relationship between resident involvement in decision-making and social climate, as part of a larger quality of life study.
- Found that American facilities where social climates promoted Resident Influence also had more opportunities for resident decision-making.

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**RESEARCH AIMS**

- No studies have investigated the relationship between social climate and the functioning of resident committees.
- Aim to determine the relationship between social climate and resident committee processes and outcomes in aged care facilities.

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**METHOD**

- Facilities
  - 15 SA facilities
- Method
  - 134/230 residents who regularly attended resident committee meetings completed questionnaires(58%)
  - 34 males (25%), 99 females (74%), and one person who did not indicate their gender
  - Complete with help (Leah, staff, volunteers, family 46%) at organised session
  - Complete questionnaire in own own time and post back (43%)
  - Group session (11%)

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Variable	Example Question	Possible range
Decision making (actual)	Who makes decisions in relation to the meals?	0-16
Decision making (ideal)	Do you think that residents should have some responsibility for making decisions about the meals?	0-16
Satisfaction with participation and leadership	In the resident committee meetings, can you participate in decisions?	0-5
Effects of participation	As a result of resident meetings, are your personal interests better looked after?	0-3
Group characteristics including cohesiveness and productivity of meeting group	Is there a friendly group atmosphere are resident meetings?	0-6

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Social Climate Variable	Description (0-9)	Example
<b>Cohesion</b>	Helpfulness and support of staff and residents	Do residents get a lot of individual attention?
<b>Comfort</b>	Comfort in physical environment	Can residents have privacy whenever they want?
<b>Conflict</b>	Resident's tendency to be critical of one another and facility	Do residents ever start arguments?
<b>Independence</b>	How self-sufficient residents are and are encouraged to be	Do residents sometimes take charge of activities?
<b>Organisation</b>	Residents' knowledge of what to expect in daily routines and understanding of rules/procedures	Are activities for residents carefully planned?
<b>Resident Influence</b>	Residents' influence on policies and freedom from restriction	Are suggestions made by the residents acted upon?
<b>Self-disclosure</b>	Residents' open expression of feelings and concerns	Are personal problems openly talked about?

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### RESULTS – DECISION -MAKING

- Residents were involved in making decisions in average of only the 3/16 areas.
- Actual decision-making was less than the ideal; a difference that was statistically significant ( $t(98) = -4.84, p < .001$ ).

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	Cohesion	Comfort	Conflict	Independ.	Organis.	Resident Influence	Self-disclosure
Actual decision-making	.33**	.33**	-	-	.30**	.35**	-
Ideal decision-making	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Satisfaction with participation	.55**	-	-	.56**	.41**	.44**	.21*
Effects of participation	.50**	.25*	-	.42***	.48***	.41***	-
Group characteristics	.27**	-	-	-	-	.26*	.23*

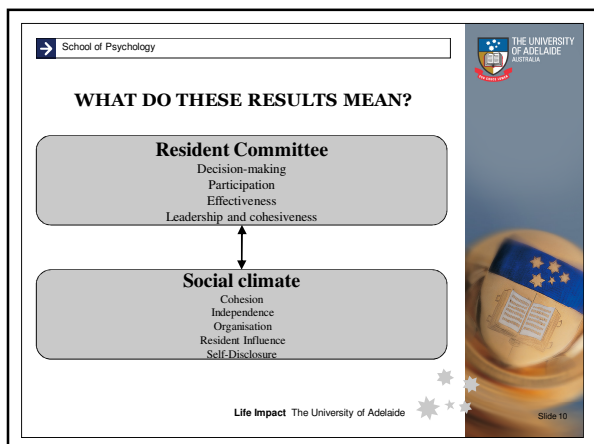
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### SUMMARY OF WHAT I FOUND?

- A number of aspects of the facility social climate were significantly correlated with resident committee characteristics.
- Cohesion, Independence, Organisation, Resident Influence, and Self-Disclosure were significantly associated with positive aspects of most of the resident committee characteristics.
- Conflict had the lowest overall relationship although still significant correlations with relevant resident committee variables.
- Ideal decision-making was the only resident committee variable that was unrelated to any of the social climate variables.

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### WHAT CAN WE DO? IMPROVE SOCIAL CLIMATE

- Introduce measures to develop social climates that promote resident Cohesion, Independence, Resident Influence, Self-Disclosure and Organisation.
- A number of studies have investigated ways to improve social climate:
  - Resident Independence and Influence - clearer policies (Timko and Moos)
  - Resident control- Educating staff about problems associated with low control and learned helplessness - improved the delivery of care (Solomon and Vickers).

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**WHAT CAN WE DO?  
IMPROVE SOCIAL CLIMATE**

- Resident Influence - introducing formal methods for obtaining resident and family opinions, such as surveys and the introduction of policies and procedures for resident privacy.
- Cohesion - establishing a welcoming committee and having residents participate in a training course for improving communication skills.
- Possible resistance, conflict, and low morale that may impede the successful implementation of changes designed to improve social climate.

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**WHAT CAN WE DO?  
IMPROVE RESIDENT COMMITTEES**

- Direct impact:
  - Assessment of differences between residents' actual and ideal levels of social climate.
  - Use to discuss in meetings.
  - Influence policies.
- Indirect impact:
  - General improvements in resident committees.
  - Encourage decision-making, more influence.
  - Gradually filter out into facility social climate.

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**FURTHER RESEARCH**

- Further longitudinal research is required:
  - to consider the extent to which changes in social climate can be used to facilitate effective resident committees which provide residents with a greater level of decision-making and control.
  - to consider whether resident committees can be used to change social climate.

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**THANK YOU**

Please share any stories of resident committee success with me!

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