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Empirically Investigating the Impact of Employee Engagement on Counterproductive Work Behavior of Academic Staff

| Hazrat Bilal[*] | Naveed Farooq[†] | Kauser Hayat[‡] |

Abstract   *This study aims to assess the impact of Employee Engagement (EE) on counterproductive work behavior. An adopted survey instrument comprised of EE and CWB was used. Data was composed from academic staff through self-administered questionnaire. The sample entailed 199 respondents randomly drawn from academic staff of the universities owned by private sector. The instruments were found reliable and valid. The statistical tools such as descriptive statistics score, ANOVA, F-test, T-test, coefficient correlations and regressions were used to analyze the data. The upshots of the study proposed sufficient evidence for the correlation between EE and CWB and concluded a negative connection between these two variables. The study recommended that universities shall focus more on EE in order to reduce the CWB and hence increase the overall employee's performance. Academics can incorporate results of this study to develop models that would promote the EE and CWB area.*

Key Words: Employee Engagement, Counterproductive Work Behavior, Academic Staff

Introduction

Employee Engagement (EE) has an essential role in improving the employee performance (Macey & Schneider, 2008) and increases both individual and organizational level results (Saks, 2006). Kahn (1990) stated that engagement is the psychological state of mind, which encourages and motivates employee of an organization to contribute towards achievement of individual as well as organizational objectives. Engaged employees feel joy, meaningfulness, ownership, safety and psychological presence during performing a specific role within organization. Kahn (1990) addresses three psychological dimensions of engaged employees, which are cognitive, emotional and physical dimensions. The same dimensions of engagement are also particularized by Schaufeli et al. (2006) as absorption, dedication and vigour.

Engaged staffs are intrinsically motivated, works from the core of heart and soul and have passion for excellence (Fleming & Asplund, 2007). They are always optimistic about their work and willingly contribute to the success of an organization by focusing on cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects to achieve the organizational desired outcomes (Albrecht, 2010; Shuck & Wollard, 2010). On the other hand disengaged employees withdraw their cognitive, physical and emotional endeavour in performing a role (Kahn, 1990). These withdrawal behaviors of employees leave employees effortless, defensive, and emotionally unexpressive and lead to poor employee performance and hence, expose more to CWB (Colbert et al., 2004).

Counterproductive Work Behavior is one of the important negative dimensions of employee's performance (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002; Griffin & Lopez, 2005). CWB of an employee is a deliberate and voluntary behavior which roots violation of organization norms in the form of absentees from work (Henle, 2005), deviance (Bennet & Robinson, 1995), anti-social behavior (Sackett & Devore, 2001), theft (Greenberg, 1997) workplace violence and revenge (Barling, Dupre & Kelloway, 2009; Bies & Tripp, 2005) and bullying (Rayner, Hoel & Cooper, 1999). It can be seen in many forms (Sackett, 2002) but in the present study it is studied as of Robinson and O'Leary-Kelly's (1998) perspective, which is the employees' aggressive work behavior during performing a role.

[*]Assistant Professor, Center for Management & Commerce University of Swat, KP, Pakistan. Email: hbilal@uswat.edu.pk
[†]Assistant Professor, Assistant Professor Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, KP, Pakistan.
[‡] Lecturer, Government College of Management Sciences, Wana South Waziristan, Tribal District, KP, Pakistan

Few studies have attempted to study the tie between EE and CWB in developed countries (Ariani, 2013; Arslan & Roudaki, 2019; Balducci, Schaufeli, & Fraccaroli, 2011; Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Hur, Moon, & Lee, 2018; Lebrón, Tabak, Shkoler, & Rabenu, 2018; Sulea et al., 2012). Based on Social Exchange Theory, this study in hand was carried out to empirically analyse the link between EE and CWB from the perspective of academic staff working in universities owned by private sector in evolving countries like Pakistan. The objective of the existing study is to empirically explore the influence of EE on CWB.

Literature Review

Employee Engagement

EE is a distinct and unique construct requires for an organization to gain competitive advantage and success (Saks, 2006). Academicians and practitioners have acknowledged the significance of engagement of individual employee within an organization (Gallup Management Journal, 2005). Goffman (1961), suggested that people's behavior in organization exhibit transient attachment to, that is "something in which the individual can become unself-consciously engrossed is something that can become real to him" (Pg.72) and detach one's self in performing a role. The behavior of extricating oneself from performing a role indicate role embracement or role attachments and behaviors deliberately unravelling the people from their task roles or separating of people from one's role postulate role distance or role detachments and is considered as apathetic behavior (Hochschild, 1983) or disengagement (Kahn, 1990). The momentum where one's bring in or remove themselves from specific task behavior are employee's adjustments of self-in-role, in order to handle internal and external ambivalences and are known as engagement and disengagement respectively (Kahn ,1990).

Kahn (1990) first time introduced engagement in his ethnographic studies of the psychological circumstances of personal engagement and disengagement of an individual employee. He described engagement as the "harnessing of organizational members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employee and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. This self-employment and self-expression are the investing of one's energies into role behavior and engrossing the self with in the role reflects behaviors to appropriately express one's self in performing a task is simply deploying 'hand, head and heart' in performing a specific task performance (Ashforth & Humphery,1995: p.110). Kahn noted that engaged employees are psychologically, physically and emotionally present, attentive and focused in performing a specific role and both person and role remain invigorated. It means that the employees of an organization actively participate in their own and organization's tasks, which is a profound and extensive linkage that leads an individual to go beyond and above for triumphing organizational thrive (Gebauer, Lowman & Gordon, 2008).

In literature engagement can be viewed on the basis of four approaches (Shuck, 2011). The first one is "The Need-Satisfying Approach" based on the Kahn (1990) theory of engagement. This approach refers that engaged employees are highly attached with their organization and always available to organization physically, cognitively, mentally and emotionally while executing a particular role. The next approach is "The Burnout-Antithesis Approach". It considers engagement as a unique concept and the exact opposite of burnout. Maslach and Leiter (1997), expressed that burnout entails exhaustion, cynicism and lack of accomplishment, which are contrary to the engagement components such as energy, involvement and efficacy. Schaufeli, et al., (2002) termed engagement as "a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption" (p.74). The next succeeding approach is "The Satisfaction-Engagement Approach", which is based on Harter et al., (2002) Gallup's engagement concept. According to this approach, engagement is the employee's willingness, satisfaction and enthusiasm in performing a specific role. This concept is considered the most practical version consisting of satisfaction and involvement. The last approach is "The Multidimensional Approach" where engagement can be studied from two separate standpoints that are job and organizational engagement. The first one is comprised of cognitive, emotional and behavior components related with performing a role, whereas organization engagement refers to the performing of a role as an associate of the organization (Saks, 2006).

The academicians and practitioners both accept that EE is positively associated with the business outcomes (Saks 2006). Slåtten & Mehmetoglu (2011) recommends that the most effective and used concept of engagement

is established by Schaufeli, et al., (2002),which elaborates that engagement is a unique concept and cannot be only studied as antithesis of burnout but can be studied by having its own separate scale. Therefore, in the present study we have incorporated the Schaufeli et al., (2002) independent scale of EE termed as Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. It is comprehensive, valid and reliable which encompasses three facets of engagement called vigour, dedication and absorption (Scheufeli, 2012). Vigour means high energy and mental resilience while working, willingness to invest in jobs and persistence even when confronted with problems. Dedication is marked by meaning, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenges. Absorption is regarded as being fully focused and intensely integrated into the work, where time passes fast and difficult to get out of work one has.

Counterproductive Work Behaviour

Rotundo and Sackett (2002) considered CWB or workplace deviance behaviour one of the important components of job behaviors which negatively contribute to overall job performance. Sackett and DeVore (2001) advocated that CWB is an employee's intentional, voluntary and purposeful behavior that is contrary to the legitimate interest of an organization. CWB of an employee suffers organization and employee individually or both together (Robinson & Bennet, 1995). According to Chappell and DiMartino (2006), coping with CWB of employees is the most important challenge to an organization in many countries. It is known in various shapes such as organizational delinquency, theft, work absence, client abuse, workplace aggression, and organization retaliatory behaviors, workplace deviance, revenge; mobbing and bullying, resource misuse, sexual harassment, harassment and sabotage, withdrawal, dissatisfaction and misuse of employer's assets (Hogan & Hogan, 1989; Greenberg, 1990; Perlow & Latham, 1993; Baron & Neuman, 1996; Bies, Tripp & Kramer, 1997; Keashly & Jagatic, 2003; Spector, Fox & Domaglaski., 2006; Chang & Smithikrai 2010: Bashir et al., 2012).

CWB is harmful to an organization and usually such behavior of employees arises due to unfriendly organization climate, poor hiring practices, organizational injustice and constraints, narcissism, agreeableness, envy, negative emotions, vague job description and inappropriate performance appraisal, job stress, obnoxious and mistreated supervision (Kamp & Brooks, 1991; Boye & Wasserman, 1996; Fox, Spector & Miles, 2001, Penney & Spector, 2002; Khan, Quatulain & Peretti, 2009: Krischer, Penney & Hunter, 2010; Shamsuding, Subramaniam & Ibrahim,2011; Shoss, Eisenberger, Zagenczyk, 2013). It is the dysfunctional voluntary behaviour having the potential to harm organization through affecting its employer or possessions or by hurting its employees which leads to low efficiency and effectiveness. Such behavior embraces both acts of commission and omission like abusing others, work avoidance, work sabotage and overacts (McShane & Glinow, 2005). These activities can be in or extra-role and are explicitly or discreetly meant at damaging organization such as strikes and time theft such as consuming time on personal phone calls during duty timings (Sackett & DeVore, 2001).

Engagement and CWB

Many researchers have studied employee engagement with relationship to other variables such as contextual performance (Bilal et al., 2015) and task performance (Alfes, Shantz, Truss, & Soane, 2013), Organizational Citizenship Behaviour but little research has been done on the relationship of engagement and CWB (Ariani, 2013; Rich, 2006).This study has been conducted in developing countries like Pakistan to determine the link between EE and CWB of academicians of Private Sector Universities. Employees who are highly engaged usually show lower counterproductive work behaviour, while disengaged employee are more exposed to counterproductive work behavior (Colbert, Mount, Harter,Witt, & Barrick, 2004; Ariani, 2013;Rich, 2006).

The relationship between EE and CWB can be better understand from perspective of Social Exchange Theory (SET) of (Blau, 1968). According to SET, employee response positively to favourable situations and negatively to unfavourable situations (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This theory provides the basis for explaining that why employees choose to engage more or less (Ariani, 2013). If an employee is not handled favourably, they will reciprocate the same thing as well (Whatley, Webster, Smith, & Rhodes, 1999). Hence less engaged employees involve themselves in such activities which can potentially harm their employment and organization (Ariani, 2013) Therefore, in the light of this, it is hypothesized that

H1: EE has a negative impact on CWB

Methodology

The data for the present research was randomly gathered from 199 academicians. Simple random sampling procedures were adopted to draw a sample from academic staff. The data were gathered through a self-administered questionnaire. The instrument consisted of seventeen questions related EE adopted from Schaufeli et al., (2002) and nine questions allied with CWB embraced from Robinson et al., (1998). The EE scale Cronbach's alpha value of reliability of 17-items was calculated .85, which was in compliance with the studies of Schaufeli & Bakker (2003) and Shimazu et al., (2008). The alpha value of 9-item scale of Robinson et al., (1998) scale was found 0.90, and hence both the scales were considered reliable for further process. Further Pearson Correlation and regression tools were applied to investigate the link between EE and CWB.

Analysis

The data collected from 199 academic staff through questionnaire were evaluated by SPSS, version 21. Correlation and regression analysis were applied. The outcome of the correlation between EE and CWB is given in the following Table 1. The Pearson correlation results indicated a negative relationship of 0.67 at significant level 0.01, which means that one unit change in EE brings -0.67 units change in CWB. This supports our hypothesis that there is a negative link between EE and CWB.

Table 1: EE and CWB Correlations (N =199)

		EE	CWB
EE	PC**	1	-.670
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000

** Pearson Correlation

Due to the nature of sole continuous variable, the impact of EE on CWB was carried out through simple regression. The output of the study are given in the subsequent Table 2.The results displaying F-value=160.24, significant at 0.000, which supports the strength of the link of both the variables.

Table 2. NOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.w
1	Regression	22.275	1	22.275	160.238	.000
	Residual	27.386	197	.139		
	Total	49.661	198			

Further to confirm the said relationship, the slope and intercept of the regression line was evaluated. The outcome exhibited in Table 3 indicates a constant value of 4.12 and slope -.543 of regression line represent that EE predicts a 0.543 unit negative change in CWB. This shows that EE have a significant negative impact on CWB of academicians with an overall variance of 44.9% shown in table 4. The universities focusing more on EE reduces CWB and hence support our hypothesis.

Table 3: Coefficientsa

Model		Unstand. Coeffici.		Standard. Coefficient.	t
		B	Std. Err	B	
1	(Constant)	4.118	.084		49.011
	CWB	-.543	.043	-.670	-12.659

Dependent Variable: EE

Table 4. Regression Summary

Model	R	R²	Adj. R²	Std. Err of the Est.	Δ Statistics				
					ΔR²	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. ΔF
1	.670ᵃ	.449	.446	.45972	.449	160.238	1	197	.000

    a. *Predictors: (Constant), EE*

Discussion and Contribution of the Study

The outcomes of this research supported the results of the Colbert et al., (2004) and the present study results also supported the Ariani (2013) study of negative connection between EE and CWB. This study has added to the existing research as no similar study has ever been conducted on the negative or deviant behavioral aspect of academicians in both developed and less developed countries like Pakistan. This study also helps the decision makers of private universities to focus human resource policies on employee engagement instead of wasting resources on decreasing or controlling the deviant or counterproductive work behavior. This will ultimately increase the overall employee's performance

Conclusion and Limitations

This study was a cross sectional study and was only limited to the academicians of private own universities. This study also ignored the administrative staff employed in such universities. Furthermore, this study has not considered other motivational factors like intrinsic and extrinsic motivation impacts along with EE on the counterproductive work behaviour. Therefore in future a longitudinal study may need to be conducted to consider the time variations over time. A comparative study can also be carried out within the administrative and academic staff of the same universities as well as with other public universities situated in the similar vicinity. In order to generalize its results, an international study in similar setup is also recommended.

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