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Role of self-efficacy in Work Engagement of Employees: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

Employee engagement is an issue of concern to all organizations and they adopt monetary as well as non-monetary methods to achieve the same. Moreover, in the current existing competitive environment both academicians and practitioners view employee engagement as a strategic asset which the firms seek to acquire in order to outplay their rivalry firms. Despite identification of various organizational factors by different scholars and researchers, large variations in the level of engagement have been observed when employees are put under similar working conditions in organizations. In this context through theoretical support this study suggests that difference in self-efficacy level of employees is responsible for different level of engagement of employees in the organization.

Keywords: Self –efficacy, Work engagement , Employees

Article

To achieve high levels of productivity the contemporary organizations are focusing more and more on human resource activities, such as skill training, performance appraisal, succession planning, employee well-being and development etc. which have been known to enhance and sustain their organizational performance (Combs and Skill, 2003). The modern highly competitive work environment has imposed more demands on the performer than before (Varje *et al*., 2013, p. 50). In the last decade the notion of employee engagement has witnessed a great deal of interest (Wollard and Shuck, 2011) which has been shown to be positively related to various organizational constructs like higher performance and higher levels of affective commitment (Xanthopoulou *et al*., 2009 Shuck, 2011). Employee engagement can be described as positive association with work and an affective feeling characterized by determined and positive cognitive state.

Engaged employees remain involved and absorbed in their job in such a manner that they are always ready to face challenges, don't think about the time while working, intrinsically motivated and have stronger organizational commitment. But the highest level of engagement cannot be achieved unless employees have confidence on themselves that they have the ability to accomplish the objectives which they have set for themselves (Bandura, 1997). According to Bandura the belief that an individual can successfully perform the task which has been assigned to him/her is known as self- efficacy. In this context, Pinquart and his colleagues (2003) suggested that individuals with higher levels of self- efficacy were less likely to become unemployed and more likely to be satisfied with their jobs (Pinquart et al., 2003).

Self-Efficacy

The term self- efficacy acquired from Bandura's (1997) socio-cognitive conceptualization describes an individual's belief about his/her potential and capabilities to perform a task or face the environmental challenges. Similarly within working conditions self-efficacy may be explained as one's self evaluation of his or her ability to meet the working condition demands with the resources that are provided to the individual (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy at workplace can also be explained in terms of activeness of individuals in the working environment for example people with more self- efficacy are more likely to be proactive when they are put under difficult conditions at work and in those conditions they are ready to take more responsibilities than those with low self-efficacy. Self- belief also plays a role of psychological and physical health factor of the individuals. The occupational literature confirms that low self- efficacy causes high level of depression and anxiety while individuals with high self-efficacy are more satisfied with their job (Jex and Bliese, 1999). Moreover self- efficacious employees in the organization set more challenging goals for themselves, invest more, persist longer and are better in dealing with failing experiences than persons low in self-efficacy (Heuven et al., 2006).

Engagement

The analysis and implementation of the concept of employee engagement is gaining unprecedented interest in the discipline of human resource development. The idea of employee engagement is comparatively new for HRM and updated in the literature nearly two decades ago (Markos and Sridevi, 2010). Kahn (1990) proposed that while doing their work, people make use of varying degrees of their, physical, cognitive and emotional capabilities. According to him people have varying extent of personal engagement in accordance with their perceptions of the benefits, or the meaningfulness, i.e. the positive sense of return on investment of self in role performance.

In another perspective Maslach et al. (2001) hypothesized employee engagement as the positive antithesis to burnout describing engagement as a consistent encouraging affective state of mind portrayed by high degree of pleasure and satisfaction. During that phase the burnout literature was dominated by two features firstly, burnout was closely attributed to employees who are working as professionals and perform the duty of conversing with the people in stressful conditions for e.g. health care, customer relation etc. and secondly burnout was considered as an antithesis of job engagement. They argued that employee engagement as the state of energy, efficacy and involvement, and argued that when burnout occurs, the state of energy associated with the work would turn into exhaustion, the state of involvement would revert to cynicism, and the state of efficacy would turn into inefficacy or ineffectiveness.

The latest interpretation of the concept of employee engagement manifested from a multidimensional approach of employee engagement. Saks (2006) postulated that an engaged workforce may be a consequence of a social exchange model adopted by the organizations and their managers at the workplace and is credited as the academic researcher who introduced the distinct states of engagement i.e. job engagement and organizational engagement.

High level of engagement leads to outcome that are seeks to achieve for example the chances of engaged employees to leave the organization are very less which helps the organizations to save to costs which it has incurred in training and development of employees over a period of time. According to Baumruk & Gorman (2006) employees who are engaged in their work exhibit three general behavior which facilitates the organizational performance; these are say, stay and strive. Say emphasizes on how the employee build the image of the organization through indulging in verbal communication either with the co-workers or by referring the potential employees and customers. The stay indicates the level of desire of the employees to remain as a member of the organization, despite of good opportunities available in the other organizations. At the last strive focuses on how much extra time and effort an employee invest in the success of the organization. Thus employee engagement is a cognitive state which every organizations strives to achieve in the modern competitive world.

Self-Efficacy and Work Engagement

The researchers who conceptualized engagement in terms of burnout defined engagement as an antithesis of burnout. Maslach et al. (2001) explained engagement as a concept which is characterized by energy, involvement and efficacy, the counter terms of three burnout dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. Further the anticipating role of three personal resources i.e. self-efficacy, organizational-based self-esteem and optimism on engagement was examine in a study which was conducted among the Dutch technicians who are highly skilled. Results of the study revealed that employees who are highly engaged are also high on the self-efficacy dimension, they are highly confident that they would be able to meet the demands either of the work or of the environment. Moreover, engaged workers consider themselves as achievers of good outcomes in future (optimistic) and also believe that their needs can be satisfied only by participating in the organizational activities.

Based on the literature review and background a positive relationship between of self- efficacy and the three dimensions of employee engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption) can be assumed. Vigor can be expressed as a high level of energy which the employees are always ready to invest in their work even in difficult working conditions (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006). It has been noticed that only those individuals who belief that they can do a particular work will most likely to invest and spend more efforts.The absorption dimension reflects the full concentration and deep engrossment in one's work, "where time passes quickly and one has difficulty detaching oneself from work" (Gonzalez-Roma *et al.*, 2006, p. 166). Time passes very quickly for those employees who are absorbed in their job and at the same time who feel they have adequate skills and capabilities to perform their task. Dedication symbolizesa feeling of being challenged, inspired and strongly immersed in

work and experiencing a sense of significance (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008). Self-efficacy beliefs affect the choice and the amount of challenge and commitment to personal goals (Appelbaum and Hare, 1996).

Conclusion

In this study, a conceptual relationship between self-efficacy and work-engagement has been examined. Various studies have highlighted the role of work engagement as a crucial dimension for attaining optimal organizational performance. The predicting role of self-efficacy in work engagement highlights the significance of development of directed towards development and enhancement of self-efficacy belief at work. Intensified employees' beliefs in their abilities to have expertise in their job may result in higher level of work engagement. Well-established approaches prevail to enhance self-efficacy through its main sources, such as mastery experience, social persuasion and vicarious experience, all of which have extensively demonstrated their effectiveness in organizational context (Bandura, 1997).

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