



PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL AS PREDICTOR OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AMONG MID-LEVEL SUPERVISORS IN GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

It is must for organizations to focus on human resources to utilized their potential to the fullest. The present study seeks to explore the role of psychological capital on Employee Engagement and commitment in government organization. 79 male government employees in supervisory roles from four Government offices with mean age of 44.5 years in the pay level six to eight and minimum 20 years of experience participated in this study. Data was collected using Organizational Commitment Questionnaire, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale and Psychological Capital Questionnaire. Results revealed that psychological capital was significantly related with Affective Commitment, Normative Commitment and Employee Engagement. None of the dimensions of psychological capital was found to be related to Continuance Commitment. Optimism again did not show significant correlation with any of the dependent variables. Regression analysis showed Hope predicts Affective Commitment and Self-efficacy predicts Normative Commitment. It is evident that the psychological capital of employees influences their Organizational Commitment and Employee Engagement making it pertinent for the organizations to ensure sound psychological capital through regular trainings and personality development programs.

Keywords: *Organizational Commitment, Employee Engagement, psychological capital, government employees.*

Introduction

According to a document published by PRS Legislative Research (2015), Central government share in organised sector employment in India has gradually decreased over the past 15 years. In 2012, central government employed 8.5% of the organised workforce which was a decline of about 4%, from 12.4% in 1994. The majority of government employees belong to Group C, with a share of 88.7%, followed by Group B with 8.5% and Group A with the least employees at 2.8%. Group A employees typically take up higher administrative positions in the government, with Group B workers acting as middle management and Group C employees providing assistance. As per an article published in the Economic Times (2014), around 31.18 lakh central government in position as on March 1, 2018 against a total sanctioned strength of over 38 lakh posts.

Middle level supervisors are an important link between the decision makers and the working staff of government organizations. Their job is stressful and requires work related positive attitudes and behaviour. The role of managers and the organization's human resources department in the 21st century have grown increasingly complex when it comes to motivating and retaining people (Idris, 2014). Effective management of human resources is challenging and requires a dynamic attitude. Success of any organization lies in the balance between decision maker's expectations from its employees to deliver and their actual output and this is made possible by middle management by clarifying doubts, motivating teamwork and lead by example. Central Government employees in the pay level of 6-8 (Group B) constitute this group and they are crucial to the day-to-day functioning of any office. Their job is demanding both in terms of time and man-management demands which could lead to stress, absenteeism and burnout (Lombard, 2009). Certain positive psychological states, such as psychological capital, have been shown to have an impact on employee's improved attitudes to work engagement and behaviours of organisational commitment in various work contexts (Youssef & Luthans, 2007).

Certain positive-psychological states can have an impact on desired employee attitudes, behaviour and performance which is the focus of positive organizational behaviour (POB). Psychological capital is one of the core constructs of POB (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). Psychological capital is one's positive psychological state of development that is characterized by: (1) having (efficacy) to take on and put necessary effort to succeed at



challenging tasks; (2) having positive attribution (Optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) displaying perseverance toward goals and, if necessary, redirecting paths to goals (Hope) to succeed; and (4) ability to sustain and bounce back when faced with setbacks and adversity, and even beyond (Resilience) to attain success (Luthans, Luthans & Luthans, 2004).

Organizational Commitment is “a psychological state that (a) characterizes the employee’s relationship with the organization, and (b) has implications for his/her decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization” (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The commitment denotes the bonds and connections that people make at their workplace and these bonds vary in terms of type, including continuance, normative, and affective; and target such as the organization, supervisor, work team, projects etc. (Klein, Molloy & Brinsfield, 2012).

Allen and Meyer (1990) proposed a three-component model of organisational commitment: affective, continuance and Normative Commitment. Affective Commitment refers to the employee’s positive emotional attachment to and involvement in the organisation. Continuance Commitment refers to need based commitment weighing benefits of staying versus the costs that are associated with leaving the organisation. Normative Commitment refers to an employee’s feeling of obligation to remain with the organisation. OC has also been investigated as a predictor of employee effectiveness in carrying out the mission and vision of the organizational leadership (e.g. Singh & Gupta, 2015). Mercurio (2015) stated that...“Affective Commitment was found to be an enduring, demonstrably indispensable, and central characteristic of Organizational Commitment”.

Employee Engagement is posited as the individual’s investment of himself/herself completely into a work role (Khan, 1992). Hewitt et al (2004) describes engagement as the measure of an employee’s emotional and intellectual commitment to their organization and its success. Clearly, engagement and commitment can potentially translate into valuable business results for an organization. It is an optimistic decisiveness where one goes beyond the assigned responsibilities and displays an improved level of ownership to promote the commercial interest of the organization (Robinson, Perryman, & Hayday, 2004). Employee Engagement has come out as the indicator which governs the relationship of the employee with work performance and commitment (Sundaray, 2011).

Psychological Capital encompasses measurable and developable applications related to the potential and psychological capacity of human resources, which result in performance increases in organizations (Keles, 2011). In a meta-analysis of 51 independent samples psychological capital was found to have strong, significant, positive relationship with desirable attitudes (e.g., commitment, and well-being), behaviours (e.g., citizenship) and performance (self, supervisor rated, and objective) and a negative relationship with undesirable attitudes (e.g., stress, anxiety, and turnover intentions) and behaviours (e.g., deviance) (Avey, Reichard, Luthans & Mhatre, 2011).

Need for the Study

Psychological Capital, Employee Engagement and commitment has been studied widely in western society and research in Indian context has been limited to IT sector, call centres, hospitals, etc. There is a wide gap in research literature concerning psychological capital, Organizational Commitment and Employee Engagement of mid-level supervisors in government sector. This study is an endeavour to get some understanding of these concepts in this group of employees so that the learning can be used by the organizations to further get desired positive outcomes.

Objectives

1. To study the relationship between Psychological capital, Employee Engagement and Organizational Commitment among mid-level supervisors in government organizations.
2. To study Psychological Capital as a predictor of Organizational Commitment among mid-level supervisors in government organizations.
3. To study Psychological Capital as a predictor of Employee Engagement among mid-level supervisors in government organizations.



Hypotheses

H1. To would be a significant relationship between Psychological capital, Employee Engagement and Organizational Commitment among mid-level supervisors in government organizations.

H2. Psychological Capital would significantly predict Organizational Commitment among mid-level supervisors in government organizations.

H3. Psychological Capital would significantly predict Employee Engagement among mid-level supervisors in government organizations.

Research Methodology

Study Design

In this cross-sectional design study, convenient sampling was adopted to study the relationship between psychological capital, Organizational Commitment and Employee Engagement among mid-level supervisors in government organizations.

Participants

A total of 92 Mid-level supervisors in four different offices of government in three cities were contacted. 13 responses were incomplete hence they were removed from the study and finally the 79 male government employees in supervisory roles from four Government offices with mean age of 44.5 years in the pay level six to eight and minimum 20 years of experience participated in this study.

Measuring Instruments (Tools used)

Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-17) (Schaufeli et al., 2002) was used to measure work engagement. It is a self-report questionnaire and has 17 items comprising of three subscales, namely, vigour (6 items), dedication (5 items) and absorption (6 items). Scoring is on a seven-point Likert scale, varying from 0 = never to 6 = every day. The scale has been found to have high reliability coefficient of 0.93.

Psychological capital was measured using The Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) (Luthans et al., 2007) and it comprises of four subscales, namely, Hope, Optimism, Resilience and Self-efficacy. The PCQ is a self-report questionnaire having 24 items with each subscale consisting of six items. It is scored on a six-point Likert scale with the response options varying from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree. The Cronbach alphas reported for the subscales are: Hope 0.87; Optimism 0.78; Resilience 0.72; and Self-efficacy 0.87 and overall internal consistency of the scale is 0.91.

The Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Allen & Meyer, 1990) was used to measure the commitment and it has three subscales that measure different types of organisational commitment, namely, Affective Commitment, cognitive commitment and Normative Commitment. It has 24-item that are to be rated on seven point-scale and scores on the scale varies from 1= strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree.

Data Analysis

Data was scored manually and fed in excel sheet and was analysed using Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS version 21.0. The descriptive statistics were computed to ascertain the mean, SD and ranges. Pearson product moment correlation was carried out to study the relationship between variables and thereafter stepwise multiple regression was carried out to study the relationship between psychological capital as an independent variable and Organizational Commitment and Employee Engagement as dependent variables.



Results

The mean, SD and range of the scores for the variables of interest are given in Table 1

Table 1: Mean, SD and Range of variables (N=79)

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Age	40	50	44.5	4.32
Years in Service	20	29	20.4	3.90
Affective Commitment	20	40	30.38	4.07
Continuance Commitment	18	40	27.38	4.93
Normative Commitment	15	39	27.90	4.31
Employee Engagement	27	90	54.54	25.10
Self-efficacy	18	36	26.91	4.25
Hope	18	36	29.14	4.25
Resilience	7	36	25.19	4.97
Optimism	6	36	25.94	4.77

The sample has obtained average scores on all three types of Organizational Commitment. The sample has moderate level of Employee Engagement wherein none of the participants has displayed very high scores. They have moderate to high scores on all the four dimensions of psychological capital, ie. Self-efficacy, Hope, Resilience and Optimism.

A correlation analysis between various subscales of psychological capital (Self-efficacy, Hope, Resilience and Optimism) with Employee Engagement and three subscales Organizational Commitment (Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment and Normative Commitment) was carried out. Product moment correlation was calculated to study the relationship between these study variables and the correlation coefficients were tabulated in the Table 2.

Table 2: Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients.

Variable	Self Efficacy	Hope	Resilience	Optimism
Affective Commitment	.112	.320**	.173	.034
Continuance Commitment	-.127	.115	-.039	-.003
Normative Commitment	.270*	.117	.221	-.038
Employee Engagement	.357**	.387**	.305**	-.142

*, $p < 0.05$ Statistically significant; **, $p < 0.01$ Statistically significant

While Affective Commitment showed a significant correlation with Hope subscale of psychological capital, Normative Commitment had significant correlation with Self-efficacy subscale of psychological capital. However, Normative Commitment did not show any significant correlation with any subscales of psychological capital. Interestingly Employee Engagement showed positive correlation with Self-efficacy, Hope and Resilience but did not come out related to Optimism subscale of psychological capital.

Considering various subscales of Psychological Capital as the independent variables (predictors) and Organizational Commitment and Employee Engagement as dependent variables a multiple regression analysis was carried out to determine the predictive values.



Table 3: Multiple regression to determine the predictive value of the Self-efficacy (Subscale of Psychological Capital) on the Normative Commitment (Subscale of Organizational Commitment).

Model	Predictor	Adj R ²		F-Value	Significance
1	SE	.061	.270	6.031	.016

Dependent Variable: Normative Commitment

Multiple regression was carried out to examine the relationship between dependent and independent variables. Out of four dimensions of psychological capital only Self-efficacy came out as a significant predictor of Normative Commitment whereas none of the other three dimensions, namely, Hope, and Resilience predicted Normative Commitment. Self-efficacy accounted for 6% variance in Normative Commitment.

Table 4: Multiple regression to determine the predictive value of the Hope (Subscale of Psychological Capital) on the Affective Commitment (Subscale of Organizational Commitment).

Model	Predictor	Adj R ²		F-Value	Significance
1	Hope	.102	.320	8.766	.004

Dependent Variable: Affective Commitment

Out of four dimensions of psychological capital only Hope came out as a significant predictor of Affective Commitment whereas none of the other three dimensions, namely, Self-efficacy, and Resilience predicted Affective Commitment. Self-efficacy accounted for 10.2% variance in Affective Commitment. None of the dimensions of psychological capital predicts any variance in Continuance Commitment.

Table 5: Multiple regression to determine the predictive value of the various subscales of Psychological Capital on the Employee Engagement.

Model	Predictor	Adj R ²		F-Value	Significance
1	Hope	.139	.387	13.549	.000
2	Hope	.191	.306	10.192	.000
	SE		.262		

Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

Out of four dimensions of psychological capital Hope came out as a significant predictor of Employee Engagement accounting for 13.9% variance. Hope and Self-efficacy together predicted 19.1% variance in Employee Engagement whereas Optimism and Resilience did not come out as significant predictors of Employee Engagement.

Discussion

The participants were in the age group of 40 to 50 years with minimum 20 years of experience with not less than 5 years in the supervisory capacity wherein their responsibilities include ensuring their subordinates' performance and also conveying the expectations of the organization back to them thus acting like an important link in the senior and lower management. The group has shown moderate to high scores on all dimensions of Psychological Capital which is considered an individual's positive psychological state of development indicating that most of the supervisors in the sample viewed themselves as having confidence, perseverance toward goals and capacity for sustaining and bouncing back even when faced with adversity.



The group displayed average level of Organizational Commitment which is an individual's psychological bond to the organisation, including a sense of job involvement, loyalty and belief in the values of the organisation. Further the scores revealed a moderate level of Employee Engagement which is a two-way relationship between employer and employee.

The hypotheses that there would be a significant relationship between Psychological Capital, Employee Engagement and Organizational Commitment among mid-level supervisors in government organizations were partially supported by the analysis. Whereas, three dimensions of Psychological Capital did show significant relationship with Employee Engagement, it did not show significant correlation with Continuance Commitment. Only Hope came out to be significantly correlated with Affective Commitment and Self-efficacy with Normative Commitment. Findings are supported by a study conducted on 132 employees of a trade organization in Iran it was found that Among the three dimensions of Organizational Commitment, which includes Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment and Normative Commitment, only the relationship between Psychological Capital and Affective Commitment was significant at 0.05 (Etebarian, Tavakoli & Abzari, 2012). The current findings support those of Shahnawaz and Jafri (2009) who found that Psychological Capital and Organisational Commitment were not related very strongly.

Psychological Capital showed significant positive correlation with Employee Engagement and findings are supported by a study conducted on 93 employees of ceramic industry in East java wherein results showed a significant positive effect of Psychological Capital on Employee Engagement (A'la, Witjaksono & Kistyanto, 2019) Similar results have been reported by other researchers (Sihag & Sarikwal, 2014; Constantine, Paola, Ceschi, & Sartori 2017).

Psychological Capital did not predict Continuance Commitment for this group though Self-efficacy predicted Normative Commitment and Hope predicted Affective Commitment. Similar findings were reported by Avey et al. (2008), with employees from a broad cross-section of organisations and jobs, and found that Psychological Capital was related positively to their positive emotions which were, in turn, related to their attitudes of engagement. Shahnawaz & Jafri (2009) in their study found that Psychological Capital did not predict Organizational Commitment whereas in another study of Psychological Capital and organisational commitment in an Indian sample it was found that Psychological Capital is the predictor of Organizational Commitment (Sahoo & Sia, 2015). Much research has been focused on the affective component of organisational commitment (Field and Buitendach, 2011) as the affective component is thought to have the strongest and most consistent relationship with desirable workplace outcomes. According to Lee and Chen (2013) Psychological Capital influences employee's continuance and Affective Commitment. There has not been a consensus among researchers regarding the relationship between Psychological Capital and Organizational Commitment and the results of the present study confirm the same.

Hope and Self-efficacy subscales of Psychological Capital emerged as significant predictor of Employee Engagement for this group. In a study conducted on 106 call-centre employees in South Africa Psychological Capital emerged as a significant predictor of Employee Engagement whereas Organizational Commitment did not (Simons & Buitendach, 2013). The selection and retention of employees with higher in Psychological Capital may have a positive impact on work-related outcomes (Avey et al., 2010b). Data from 420 middle level IT professionals from India were collected and results revealed positive impact of Psychological Capital on Employee Engagement and also said that employee with higher level of Psychological Capital show higher level of work engagement at workplace in IT industries (Sihag & Sarikwal, 2014). In a study of 30 participants from a defence establishment of India, Banerjee & Yadav (2016) results revealed positive relationship of Psychological Capital with Employee Engagement. In a study of a sample of 200 IT professionals from India, Psychological Capital (Psychological Capital) emerged as significantly related to Employee Engagement. The finding suggested Psychological Capital is a significant predictor, along with other variables in fostering Employee Engagement (Soni, Rastogi & garg 2016).



According to cognitive mediation theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) of employees' emotions in the workplace, employees' psychological beliefs and appraisals (i.e., Hope, Optimism, Resilience and Self-efficacy) may act as a potential source of work engagement and organisational commitment. Research studies have shown that Optimism is related positively to Employee Engagement and employee performance (Medlin & Faulk, 2011; Tombaugh, 2005) though the findings of the present study contradict it. Kang & Busser (2018) in their study found that Psychological Capital and service climate were critical to elevating Employee Engagement and showed a stronger impact for Managers' engagement than Frontline Employees' engagement and Employee Engagement was a critical mediator.

Some of the findings were supported by previous studies while some of findings did not. There has always been disagreement among researchers with respect to role and impact of Psychological Capital, Employee Engagement and Organizational Commitment and this group was unique in terms of responsibilities, work tasks, experience and nature of employment which could have contributed to certain novel findings. Supervisors in government organizations had spent minimum 20 years in the same organization rising from lower ranks and all the employees know each other personally. They have job security but at the same time growth and promotion is not entirely performed based and in such scenario role of Psychological Capital and its effect on Organizational Commitment is bound to be different than what has been reported for private sector companies where attrition rate is high and growth is performance and output linked.

Conclusion

Psychological Capital and its impact on Employee Engagement and Organizational Commitment has been a focus of various research studies namely, IT, Call centres, Private sector, etc., but there is a huge void of such research endeavours in government sector in general and mid-level employees of government organizations in particular. This study was an effort in that direction wherein 79 mid-level employees in the supervisory roles in government organization participated to further our understanding. The findings of this study have raised more questions than it has been able to answer. There is a requirement to study the commitment and engagement of government employees with a fresh perspective taking their role and organization culture and practices into consideration.

Limitations

This study was an effort to address the issue of Employee Engagement and commitment with regard to Psychological Capital in government sector. Though this study does further our understanding of this sector yet the sample was small and any generalization would be far-fetched. It would be pertinent to include various pay level employees across different roles and positions so that a clear picture of relationship among study variables can emerge and the understanding may be utilized for better management practices.

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