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Dr. Zulfiqar Ullah Siddiqui

Punita Borpujari Deori

Prof. Akbar Husain

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Potential Benefits of Occupational Self-Efficacy and Employee Engagement for Enhancing Employees' Sustainability

Dr. Farah Shoaib*

ABSTRACT

Employee engagement (EE) has always been an important concept in positive organizational behavior (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). The emergence of positive psychology movement has made researchers shift their research from burnout (characterized by cynicism, exhaustion, personal inefficacy) to an opposite, positive state, namely work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2006; Storm & Rothmann, 2003). The conceptualization of self-efficacy in the present study is based on domain specific variable termed as "occupational self-efficacy (OSE). The study aims to explore the effect of occupational self-efficacy on employee engagement which leads to employees' sustainability.

*Employees' intention to stay and organizational commitment reflected employees' sustainability. Data was collected from three different print media by 189 participants. The findings suggested that occupational self-efficacy is the most important predictor of employee engagement ($R^2 = .49$). The correlation between OSE and EE shows positive relation ($r = .69^{**}$) and the organizational commitment was significantly high among these employee. The quantitative method was used in the present study.*

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Occupational Self-Efficacy, Sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement has emerged as one of the most interesting phenomena attracting both researchers and practitioners.

"In every profession and pursuit, engagement ignites talent and skill and disengagement shuts it down. The brilliance and full potential of even the brightest employee will never be expressed unless he/she is engaged. It is the ratio of engaged to disengaged workers that drives the financial outcomes and impacts profitable growth" (Loehr, 2005).

* Assistant Professor, Integral University, Lucknow.

The existing literature on employee engagement focuses more on work-related conditions (Langelaan, Bakker, van Doornen, & Schaufeli, 2006; Saks, 2006; Kelista Lea Burns, 2016) than individual factors of engagement. However, individual factors also play an important role in employee engagement. It is worth questioning why employees in similar work environments report different levels of engagement. Why do some employees flourish in particular jobs whereas others do not? (Langelaan et al. 2006)? Why do employees differ in performing their tasks and their levels of engagement and energy differ? (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009a)? Based on the findings of extensive research, Wellings et al. (2005) explained that some employees, based on a set of personal characteristics, are more likely to be engaged than others in their work. Six personal factors were significantly correlated with engagement: attachment to the job, agreeableness, and emotional stability, openness to experience, achievement orientation, and self-efficacy. Studies on personal factors related to engagement have been conducted in the West (cf. Hallberg, Johansson, & Schaufeli, 2007; Langelaan et al., 2006; Zhang, Gan, & Chan, 2007; Mauno, Kinnunen, & Ruokolainen, 2007; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2007). Indian researchers have contributed to this stream (P. Surya, 2010; Ravichandran. K et al 2011& Richa Chaudhary , 2013).

This study is an attempt to enrich the literature with personal characteristic and employee engagement in the Indian workplace context. Specifically, the study attempts to examine the role of occupational self-efficacy (domain-specific), which is an individual characteristics (Leiter, 1992), in making employees engaged.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement is rooted in positive organizational behavior (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008). The emergence of the positive psychology movement has led researchers to shift their research from burnout (characterized by cynicism, exhaustion, and personal inefficacy) to an opposite, positive state, namely work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2006; Storm & Rothmann, 2003).

Kahn (1990) coined this term and defined engagement as “the harnessing of organization’s members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performance.” With this definition, engagement can be understood in three terms: the expressions of employees on the physical, cognitive, and emotional levels.

Schaufeli & Bakker, (2001); Schaufeli et al., (2006) has categorized work engagement in three terms: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor is the high levels of energy and mental resilience. Dedication is can be understood in terms of being inspired, enthusiastic, and involved in one’s work. Absorption is to be engrossed in work. The benefits of having engaged employees in organizations provide positive outcomes at both personal and organizational levels (Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti, & Xanthopoulou, 2007).

Burnout researchers have also defined engagement as the positive antithesis of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001), and According to Maslach et al. (2001), engagement

is characterized by energy, involvement, and efficacy, the direct opposite of the three burnout dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy.

OCCUPATIONAL SELF-EFFICACY

Bandura (1997), founding father of self-efficacy defined the term as "belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required producing given attainments' (p. 3). It is the belief that one can acquire with the skills one currently possesses (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy is one of the most important components of social cognitive theory, and directly influence human thought, motivation, action, and performance. Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) suggested that self-efficacy enables employees to produce positive work-related outcomes.

There are ways of researching self-efficacy in different definitions, such as a global construct generalized over several domains (Shelton 1990), as a domain-specific variable (e.g., Schwarzer & Fuchs 1995), and as a task-specific behavior. Löve et al., 2012; Azizli et al., 2015 suggested that Self-efficacy can be divided into general self-efficacy and domain-specific self-efficacy. The conceptualization of self-efficacy for the present study is based on domain specific variable termed as "occupational self-efficacy. Collani (2002) define occupational self-efficacy as "one's belief in one's own ability and competence to perform successfully and effectively in situations and across different tasks in a job". In other words, occupational self-efficacy is related to the domain of the workplace.

Salanova et al. (2002) prioritized the need for a domain-specific measure over a general measure of self-efficacy

Research interests have shifted from generalized self-efficacy (Schwarzer, 1999) to more specific kinds of self-efficacy (Chemiss, 1993; Murphy, Coover, & Owen, 1989; Schaubroeck & Merrit, 1997) due to its robust results. Theoretically, this is because self-efficacy beliefs are domain-specific; a person's self-efficacy belief is very likely to differ depending on the activity to which it is related (Bandura, 1997, 1999). The distinction between various levels of self-efficacy specificity exists; therefore researches need to highlight the differences and their effect on the organizational success. In this study occupational self-efficacy has been studied as an antecedent of employee engagement which leads to organizational sustainability.

Rigotti, Schyns and Mohr (2008) defined occupational self-efficacy as "the competence that a person feels concerning the ability to successfully fulfill the tasks involved in his or her job". Pethe, Chaudhary, and Dhar (1999) defined it as "the belief in ability and competence to perform in an occupation."

Empirical research has verified the effectiveness of occupational self-efficacy with a broad range of attitudes, behaviors and work performance measures such as commitment (Schyns & Collani, 2002), job satisfaction (Rigotti et al., 2008), work-related performance (Rigotti et al., 2008), performance increase (Eden & Ravid, 1982), training success (McLaughlin, Moutray, & Muldoon, 2008; Tziner, Fisher, Senior, & Weisberg, 2007), learning styles (Berings, Poell, Simons, & van Veldhoven, 2007), and career satisfaction (Abele & Spurk, 2009). The available literature supports the relation between occupational self-efficacy, work attitudes and behaviors. The significance of occupational self-efficacy for employee well-being (Grau, Salanova, & Peiro, 2001) and engagement (Salanova, Llorens, Cifre,

Martinez, & Schaufeli, 2003) has been clearly demonstrated in literature.

The findings of Bresó et al., (2011) demonstrated that employees high on occupational self-efficacy tend to be determinant and driven by their belief in future success.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND OCCUPATIONAL SELF-EFFICACY

According to Bandura's (1982) seminal work on self-efficacy, there are four primary factors that contribute to its development: mastery experiences, social persuasion, vicarious learning, and emotional states. Schyns (2004) posits that these four factors are equally instrumental in fostering occupational self-efficacy (OSE). Drawing upon the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2004), it is evident that the experience of mastery, vicarious learning, and social persuasion precipitate enhanced positive emotions. This emotional upswing, in turn, bolsters an individual's sense of self-efficacy, which serves to enhance their overall well-being and work engagement (Fredrickson, 2004). From the perspectives of the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), the availability and utilization of one's strengths, coupled with job resources, are essential for cultivating positive emotions. This, in turn, fosters feelings of self-efficacy and work engagement. Deci and Ryan's (1985) work highlights the significance of job resources in promoting a sense of competence and efficacy among employees. Proctor and colleagues' (2011) research provides empirical support for the positive relationship between the use of strengths, self-efficacy, and well-being. Koutsounari and Antoniou's (2011) study also underscores the interconnectedness of job resources, OSE, and work engagement.

The literature review, in conjunction with Fredrickson's (2004) broaden-and-build theory, suggests that the deliberate cultivation of weaknesses can lead to a broader action-thought repertoire. This expanded repertoire can, in turn, enhance an individual's resilience and adaptability, ultimately contributing to their self-efficacy and well-being. Saks (2019) reevaluated his employee engagement model (2006) and found that skill variety is the main antecedent of employee engagement.

Furthermore, the combination of high occupational self-efficacy and employee engagement has been shown to have a synergistic effect on employees' sustainability. A study by Bakker and Schaufeli (2008) found that employees who reported high levels of both self-efficacy and engagement were more likely to experience a state of "work engagement," characterized by high levels of energy, enthusiasm, and dedication to their work. This state of work engagement has been linked to lower levels of burnout, higher levels of job performance, and greater overall well-being.

- Hypothesis 1 Employees high on occupational self-efficacy will be more engaged at their workplace.
- Hypothesis 2 Employee engagement will lead to organizational commitment and thus, it will be positively associated with it.
- Hypothesis 3 Employee engagement will be negatively related to employees' intention to quit.

METHOD

Sample

The target sample of the present study consists of journalists (N=77), editors (N=33), graphic designers (N=23) and technicians (N=56) from Dainik Jagran (Varansai, N =72), Hindustan Newspaper (N= 58) and Dainik Jagran (Allahabad, N= 59). A total of 189 employees participated in the study. The sample comprised of 144 male and 45 female age ranged between 20-45. The educational qualification varied; there were 74 post graduates, 105 graduates, 6 intermediate and 4 other.

MEASURES

1. Occupational Self Efficacy(OSE)

To measure OSE, the short version OSE scale developed by Rigotti et al., (2008) was used. The shortened version of scale has been tested in five countries (Germany, Sweden, Belgium, Great Britain and Spain) and a one-dimensional model was accepted for the different language versions. Rigotti et al (2008) found reliable Cronbach alpha coefficient for this one-dimensional model that range between .72 and .90. Schyns and Szensny (2010) also found a reliable Cronbach alpha coefficient of .78 for this scale. The scale consisted of six items.

2. Organizational Commitment

The scale on organizational commitment develop by Rhoades et al., (2001) was adapted to measure the construct. The scale had 6 items. Five of these 6 items were originally adapted from Mayer and Allen's affective commitment scale (1997) and one item concerning pride in organizational membership was from the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire by Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979).

The Cronbach alpha value of the scale was .90.

3. Intention to Quit

To measured intention to quit a scale of Colarelli (1984) was adapted. This scale was composed of three items estimating to which extent respondents are thinking about leaving the organization. Out of these three items Item 1 was reverse scored. High scores represented strong intentions to quit. Colarelli (1984) found an alpha reliability of .75 for this scale.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data were analyzed using correlation analysis. First, the means, standard deviations and inter-correlations were computed for the study variables.

Table No. 1. Mean, Standard Deviation and Inter-correlation

Variables	Mean	SD	EE	OSE	OC	ITQ
EE	4.02	.52	1	.69**	.70**	-.25**
OSE	4.24	.57		1	.62**	-.21**
OC	3.96	.51			1	-.22**
ITQ	3.77	.49				1

*p<.05. ** p<.01.

EE-employee engagement, OSE-Occupational Self-Efficacy, OC-Organizational Commitment, and ITQ- Intention to Quit

The above table shows that there is positive and significant correlation between occupational self-efficacy, organizational commitment and employee engagement. This is also notable that the intention to quit is negatively correlated. The employees high on occupational self-efficacy will be highly motivated and will be committed to their organization and they will stay in the organization for longer time.

Table No 2. Correlation of Occupational Self-efficacy with Employee Engagement and its Domain

Individual Factors	Employee Engagement			
	Affective	Cognitive	Behavioral	EE
OSE	.52**	.35*	.43**	.56**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

The above table shows Occupational self-efficacy was highly correlated with employee engagement and it's all domains.

Table No 3. Correlation between Domains of Employee Engagement and Consequences

Consequences	Employee Engagement			
	Affective	Cognitive	Behavioral	EE
Organizational Commitment	.61**	.19	.34*	.54**
Intention to Quit	-.23	-.25	-.27	-.30

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

The above table shows that organizational commitment was significantly correlated with employee engagement and its affective, cognitive and behavioral domain except cognitive domain was not found significant with organizational commitment. The outcome intention to quit of employees was negatively correlated with employee engagement and its domain.

DISCUSSION

The domain specific self-efficacy was studied in the present study. The result suggested that occupational self-efficacy is the most important predictor of employee engagement. The hypothesis was confirmed with the findings.

The results of correlational analysis indicated that occupational self-efficacy and employee engagement were positively and significantly correlated.

The results of the present study can be lucidly elucidated through the lens of Albert Bandura's seminal social cognitive theory (1986), which provides a robust theoretical framework for understanding the intricate relationship between occupational self-efficacy and employee engagement. Bandura posits that efficacy belief or an individual's conviction in their ability to successfully navigate tasks and achieve desired outcomes, serve as the foundation of human spirit and motivation. Consequently, a fortification of occupational self-

efficacy can significantly strengthen an employee's confidence in their capacity to effectively manage their responsibilities and attain their goals, thereby facilitating a deeper immersion in and dedication to their work. Furthermore, self-efficacious individuals, armed with the conviction that they are skilled to master challenges and thrive under pressure, are more likely to seek out and engage with personally meaningful and fulfilling activities. This heightened sense of purpose and engagement can be attributed to their inherent belief in their capabilities and resilience (Kittredge, 2010). The findings of present work corroborate with some previous work in which employee engagement was positively linked with self-efficacy. (Pati & Kumar, 2010; Xanthopoulou, 2007, 2008, 2009; Llorens, Salanova, Schaufeli, & Bakker, 2007; Salanova et al., 2003).

The findings of Salanova et al. (2003) demonstrated the importance of self- and collective efficacy in explaining employee engagement. They reported that groups with higher levels of collective efficacy showed higher engagement and group performance. Bakker, Gierveld and Van Rijswijk (2006) conducted a study on female school principals and suggested that resilience, self-efficacy and optimism highly contributed to employee engagement, and were able to explain unique variance in engagement scores.

Breso et al. (2011), based on their quasi-experimental study among university students, reported that self-efficacy interventions focused on students' psychological states lead to a significant increase in employee engagement. Chaudhary, R. (2013) found that occupational self-efficacy plays a significant role in distinguishing the groups of engaged employees from non-engaged ones, with 54.8% of the variance in the discriminant function being explained by group differences.

The robust evidence linking employee engagement to turnover intentions has important implications for organizations. Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes (2002) conducted a meta-analysis of 7939 business units across 36 companies, concluding that engagement is a significant predictor of turnover. This finding has been replicated in subsequent studies, such as the research by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) in Dutch organizations, and more recent studies like Juhdi, Pa'wan, and Hansaram's (2013) work. The consistent findings across different contexts suggest that organizations can significantly reduce turnover by focusing on enhancing employee engagement.

Hallberg and Schaufeli (2006) reported a moderate negative relationship between a composite measure of work engagement and turnover intention.

Saks (2006) showed, in a heterogeneous sample of 102 employees, that job and organization engagement partially mediated the effects of a variety of job resources on, for example, organizational citizenship behavior and organizational commitment.

These findings can be explained with social exchange theory. Saks (2006) has also explained employee engagement with social exchange theory.

LIMITATIONS

It is important to note several limitations of the present study and directions for further research. The present study focused on knowledge-based organizations,

where employees scored high on both occupational self-efficacy and engagement. These findings suggest that fostering self-efficacy is a key strategy for promoting employee engagement within this type of organizational context.

Interestingly, the research findings may not generalize to all types of organizations or industries. For instance, in print media organizations where the job focus is more on the task at hand, the primary driver of engagement may differ. Further research is needed to explore how self-efficacy interventions and their impact on engagement vary across different organizational settings.

Moreover, future research should consider the interrelated nature of socio-demographic variables and personal resources (optimism, hope, and personality factors) to better understand causality. These variables should be the focus of future studies, along with a larger sample size to improve generalizability. Additionally, the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between self-efficacy and employee engagement, as demonstrated in recent studies, should be further explored in the Indian context.

Future research in this area should continue to explore the interventions that can be implemented to enhance these factors in the workplace

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