

A Holistic Approach in Reducing Organizational Cynicism : The role of Job Autonomy

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to develop a framework regarding organizational cynicism. The model of this study seeks to explain the relationship between job autonomy and organizational cynicism. An extensive review helps to develop the possible relationship between the variables. The proposed framework of this study is useful for the future researchers to expand more studies on organizational cynicism. In order to fill the gap and inconsistencies found in the past studies, it is assumed that the role of job autonomy is important to reduce organizational cynicism.

INTRODUCTION

The changing environmental condition, gaps between individual and social expectation, complexity of work life and difficulties in time management of today's workplace create tension for employees. Organizations used to thrive on the favourable work attitudes of their employees. However, in many organizations, the unfavourable attitudes among employees are a fact of life that organizations have to face. Among these attitudes, a relatively problematic issue that organizations have to deal with is organizational cynicism which known as a negative attitude towards organization (Dean, Brandes and Dwardkar,1998). An emerging topic of organizational cynicism have met scholarly interest for over the years. This concept has become the focused topic in various social sciences research disciplines such as management, psychology, sociology, philosophy, religion and political science (InceandTurhan,2011). There is a growing concern among the researchers and practitioners regarding employees attitudes that potentially have devastating effects on organizations. As "Cynicism is everywhere in organizations (Dean et.al, 1998, p.341)

The existing literature on organizational cynicism mainly comes from developed part of the world and only few studies have covered this issue in developing countries (Bashir, Nasir, Saeed & Ahmed, 2010).There might be different factors than leads towards employees' organizational cynicism. For example, if employees working in the private sectors based in the USA feels frustrated, the factors which influence their level of frustration could be not similar to factor which cause frustration among employees who are working in the public sector of other countries such as Malaysia and other part of the world. Moreover, there are huge differences in lessons learnt based on contextual factors from research that have been done in the development countries may not necessarily have similar implication in the developing/underdeveloped parts of the world. On the other circumstances, it is also agreed that studies on organizational cynicism that have been done in other countries is relevant to be generalized in other country including Malaysia (Mohd Noor & Mohd Walid,2012).

One of the major concerns that trigger organizational cynicism is less autonomous power given to the employees. The absence of autonomy creates melancholy (Stets, 1995) and frustration which results towards misbehavior and felony (Agnew, 1984) creating seriousproblems for the organization. Although employees are hardworking and take seriously on their work, but still they seems to less satisfied and lack of passion which cause them to be less committed to the organization. These

problems happened as employees feel restricted from working freely and be a part in decision making regarding their own work by themselves. (Naqvi, Ishtiaq, Kanwal&Mohsin Ali, 2013). In handling with the issue organizational cynicism, the job autonomy is one of the necessary weapons to reduce negative attitude. This is because autonomy gives individuals the liberty to control the rate of work and to establish work assessment procedures (Dee, Henkin&Chen , 2000). Furthermore employee will not face strict controls (Meyer, 1987). Although job autonomy has been found to negatively related with organizational cynicism (Avey, Hughes, Norman and Luthans ,2008), there are some inconsistencies found in the past research which seems difficult to confirm the relationship of these two variables, especially between the need and actual practices of job autonomy (Dee et al., 2000; Agnew, 1984). This can be due to the reality that job autonomy is considered as a risky option. Many organizations are not willing to empower their employees because autonomy is difficult to handle and it also places a higher responsibility and trust on the empowered individual with minimum supervision (Langfred,2004). With such inconsistencies found, it is relevant for the present study to investigate more to discover the relationship between job autonomy and organizational cynicism.

Problem Statement

One of the major concerns that trigger organizational cynicism is less autonomous power given to the employees. The absence of autonomy creates melancholy (Stets, 1995) and frustration which results towards misbehavior and felony (Agnew, 1984) creating serious problems for the organization. Although employees are hardworking and take seriously on their work, but still they seems to less satisfied and lack of passion which cause them to be less committed to the organization. These problems happened as employees feel restricted from working freely and be a part in decision making regarding their own work by themselves. (Naqvi, Ishtiaq, Kanwal&Mohsin Ali, 2013). In handling with the issue organizational cynicism, the job autonomy is one of the necessary weapons to reduce negative attitude. This is because autonomy gives individuals the liberty to control the rate of work and to establish work assessment procedures (Dee, Henkin&Chen , 2000). Furthermore employee will not face strict controls (Meyer, 1987). Although job autonomy has been found to negatively related with organizational cynicism (Avey, Hughes, Norman and Luthans ,2008), there are some inconsistencies found in the past research which seems difficult to confirm the relationship of these two variables, especially between the need and actual practices of job autonomy (Dee et al., 2000; Agnew, 1984). This can be due to the reality that job autonomy is considered as a risky option. Many organizations are not willing to empower their employees because autonomy is difficult to handle and it also places a higher responsibility and trust on the empowered individual with minimum supervision (Langfred,2004). With such inconsistencies found, it is relevant to discover more on the relationship between job autonomy and organizational cynicism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

OrganizationalCynicism

Organizational cynicism refers to the negative feelings among individuals, which is believed to have a negative impact on organization such as dissatisfaction, disturbance, hopelessness about the organization and also the colleagues in the workplaces (Ozler and. Ceren, 2011/ (Özler et al., 2010). Andersson (1996) viewed organizational cynicism as general or specific attitude characterized with anger, disappointment, and also a tendency to distrust individuals, groups, ideologies, social abilities

or institutions (Andersson, 1996). This kind of attitude mostly experienced among employees who believe that their organization is lack of honesty. Research has indicated that organizational cynicism is resulted from the employee's perception in terms of morality, integrity and justice are being despoiled (Ozler et.al 2010)

An early definition of organizational cynicism was introduced by Brooks and Vance (1991) who conceptualized it as to acknowledge that this issue could be solved but it would not be last to other's inability and failure to address the problems. As an addition these scholars have introduced the elements of a shared climate of cynicism. These elements consist of three components which is improbability, hindrance and a cynical climate that surrounds the organizational cynicism new construct.

Ferris et al. (1998) consider organizational cynicism is something that associated with employees's perceptions of self-centeredness, misuse, exploitation , partiality and nepotism at work. This can be disastrous to the entire organization and hinder the organization to reach its goal (Nafei, 2013). On the other hand Eaton (2001) described the cynical employees as the employee who have gave up on their hope. With such cynicism towards the organization, this will cause anger among employees and this may influence their action to act on their frustration can be disastrous to the entire organization and hinder the organization to reach its goal (Nafei, 2013).

Wanous, Reichers and Austin (1994) have specifically described organizational cynicism as “encompassing pessimism about the success of future organizational changes based on the belief that change agents are incompetent, lazy or both” (p.269) In the context of organizational change management perspective, Ince&Turan (2011) viewed organizational cynicism as an attitude that arise in the workplaces due to the mis-managed of change efforts and it is believed that organizational change is considered as one the major factors of organizational cynicism (Nafei,2013). As the people in an organization is important to its performance and the quality of work, it is necessary for the top management managers or leaders to take into consideration the impact of organizational cynicism on the employees (Rainey, 2003).

Defining Job Autonomy

Autonomy refers to the extent of power that employees have to delegate their own task and other job activities. It is specifically concerns on the voluntary power and freedom towards the work goals, task elements arrangement and determining the process and the pace of task that are conducted (e.g. Kwakman, 2003; Xanthopoulou, Demerouti, Bakker,&Schaufeli, 2007).

Job autonomy is considered as a main characteristic of work and has been most extensively studied by researchers in job design characteristic (Smith, Kot&Leat, 2003) . It has

been defined as “the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and to determine the procedures to be used and carried out (Hackman & Oldham 1975; Dysvik and Kuvaas 2011) . It is also related with the choice and freedom that exist in the job to perform variety of task (Brey,1999). On the other hand, it is specifically refers to employee's self rule and independence in terms of decision making (Hackman &Oldham, 1976,1980).

The other important benefit of Autonomy, it gives employee the authority and enable them to find out solutions personally (Wang &Netemeyer, 2002). It is also considered to be a worthy choice if employees can make a knowledgeable decisions(Shemesh, 2005). Job autonomy is also believed to reduce the strictness controls that have to be faced by employees (Meyer, 1987), which provides employees to establish work and assessment procedures (Dee, Henkin& Chen, 2000).

The self-determination theory posits that job autonomy is an essential weapon which fosters satisfaction while need for autonomy is important in finding out the employees' outcomes (Deci and Ryan 2000; Gagne and Deci 2005). In the service sector, job autonomy is important in discovering the degree of how employees of the service sector can adapt to the changes (Iqbal 2013). Therefore, job autonomy is useful to be regarded as one of the most important sources in a service sector employees like the Immigration officers to increase their motivation, fulfilling their job satisfaction and also reduce cynicism.

Background and Theoretical Development

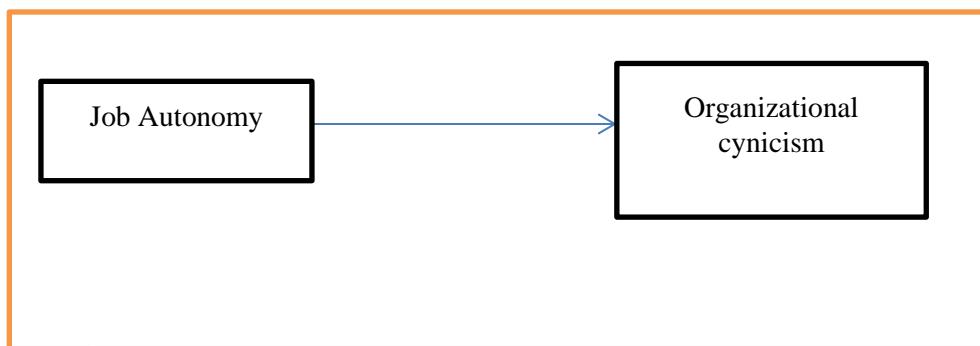


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Job Autonomy and Organizational Cynicism Relationship

Autonomy refers to a characteristic of task that has a huge impact on employees psychological states, for example, a feeling of responsibility for job satisfaction and the work outcomes (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Podsakoff et al., 2000). Every individual has the ability to seek the opportunities towards growth and development. It is not matter whether they are fail or success, but it depends on the features of the context, which they may looking forward as an opportunity that will help to develop themselves (Jarrod Haarand Roche 2010).

Autonomy also may act as a factor to enhance employees motivation to give more effort into their work (Chen and Chiu,2009). It is because, Employees who are given the autonomy will have more liberty to control and regulate the pace of work and its processes and also be able to evaluate the procedures of work. (Naqvi et.al, 2013) .Job autonomy also contributes to improve job performance for employees who are well equipped with skills and creativity to accomplish their work (Saragih,2011; Çekmecelioglu & Günsel,2011). By given the job autonomy, it enables organization to explore more how its service sector employees can be adapted to the changes (Iqbal,2013)

It is found that the high level of job autonomy brings employees to feel well adapted with the situational factors compared with other employees who experience less autonomy (Gellatly & Irving, 2001). In comparison with those who have little job autonomy, those who have more job autonomy will show more satisfaction with variation aspects of the work context (Oldham & Hackman, 1981), positive affect, self confidence and internal motivation (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Besides, it enables employee to expand their creativity (Oldman & Cummings, 1996) and less emotional dissonance (Abraham, 2000). Having jobs with adequate autonomy in the organization could equip employees to experience more engagement as autonomy helps to decrease emotional dissonance

(Karatape, 2012). On the other hand, as job autonomy is important towards employee wellbeing, it gives employees more opportunities to adapt themselves with stressful situation and assist them to make decisions on how and when to respond to job demands. With such benefits, employee will face less burnout (Bakker and Demerouti ,2007).

Research has also indicated that job autonomy has a huge impact in influencing employees work attitude (Naus et.al,2007). Employee who are empowered to control over their work will be able to meet the job demand and adapt with ambiguity that placed on them. This may reduce the role ambiguity that they have faced. In addition,Çekmecelioğlu et.al (2011)on their previous research has also demonstrated that job autonomy affecting in reducing the role ambiguity(. On the other hand, they also found that job autonomy may leads to a higher level of employee creativity and performance. It is because, job autonomy provides freedom and discretion. So that, employees become more independent to carry out their task. Therefore, it may boost employees' self confidence level. As other benefits, autonomy may give employees more opportunity to show their extra role behaviour such as OCB (Runhaar ,Konermann& Sanders,2013)

The importance of job autonomy is very useful to sustain and improving employees contribution to the organization (Holz-Clause, Koundinya, Franz&Borich, 2012). It is also one of the useful sources to discover the degree of how employess of the service sector accustomed to the changes (Iqbal,2013). Kroth and Peutz,(2011) in their research stated that, job autonomy is one of the important requirement factors that helps to foster a supportive work environment. When employee's need of autonomy is fulfilled, many of the positive outcomes will occur (Gillet, Colombat, Michinov, Pronost, & Fouquereau2013). On the other hand, according to Gillet et al,2013 in their research, these positive outcomes has been found to increase well being, (e.g. Panaccio&Vandenbergh2009, Brien , Forest , Mageau, Boudrias, Desrumaux, Brunet .& Morin 2012), organizational commitment (e.g. Tremblay et al. 2010, Meyer et al. 2012) and work engagement (e.g. Van den Broeck et al. 2010, Zacher& Winter 2011).

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we attempt to posit a framework to explain possible relationship between job autonomy and organizational cynicism. This is an issue that future research should focus on in determining the relationship between the two variables. In fact, this paper aims in striving for the direction at this stage of research. With this temporary conclusion, it can be properly described as whatRunkel and Runkel (1984) called "Interim struggles" .

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