



IMPACT OF AGENTIC WORK BEHAVIORS ON JOB SATISFACTION AND LIFE SATISFACTION: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF TEACHERS IN HEI OF BALOCHISTAN

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Abstract

The main objective of this study is to determine the impact of two agentic work behaviors (task focus and heedful relating) on job and life satisfaction among a sample of 210 full time employed university teachers in the public and private sector universities of Balochistan.

Data for the present study were gathered by distributing self-administered questionnaire among the participants. The results were analyzed by using SPSS 20 software. Pearson correlation coefficient and Multiple Linear Regression were applied to determine the impact of independent variables on dependent variables. Correlations results indicated the positive significant relationship among task focus, heedful relating, job satisfaction and life satisfaction. Moreover, the Linear Regression analysis showed that both task focus and heedful relating work behaviours have their positive impact on job and life satisfaction. These findings imply that organizations should reconstruct their policies in such a manner that must endeavor and encourage the employees to practice agentic work behaviors at workplace so that they are both physically and mentally healthy.

Keywords: *Agentic Work Behavior, Task Focus, Heedful Relating, Job Satisfaction, Life Satisfaction.*

1. Introduction and Background

The notion of “agentic work behavior” has recently gained a lot of attention in positive psychology and behavioral scholarships. This transition in research is due to the fact that over the years there has been a great shift in the thinking about workplace and working procedures. Maintaining and enhancing the capacity of the employees to be more autonomous and effective in their work is now considered to be the most important goals of the organizations. This

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transformation has led to the concept of agency to take its part at workplace. By applying agentic work behaviors at workplace individuals become more intentional and attain more self-control over line of actions they choose themselves in achieving their task. According to Spreitzer and Porath (2013), individuals practicing agentic behaviors at work are more open to learning as they do not only do what they are asked to do and find new ways and directions to achieve their task and fulfill their responsibilities.

There are three basic agentic work behaviors that have been identified in previous researches: Task focus, heedful relating, and exploration. However, Niessen, Sonnentag, and Sach, (2012) mainly focused on task focus and heedful relating. Similarly, Paterson, Jeung and Luthans (2014) studied task focus and heedful relating as two agentic work behaviors. Therefore, we will also carry these two behaviors in this study.

While adopting any behavior at work, the major outcome that is most required by the organizations and the employees is the job satisfaction level. It is one of the important aspects that has been highlighted in both organizational and positive psychology research, because it places many positive effects on human and organizational well-being. Therefore, it has become important to study its relationship with agentic work behavior so that it can be easily portrayed that how certain positive behaviors result into an increased level of an individual's job satisfaction. Other than job satisfaction, the positive psychology research has also given importance to life satisfaction. It appears to be the strong indicator of one's quality of life. Hence, it has become increasingly important to analyse how some behaviors increase or decrease the level of one's life satisfaction. Therefore, this study will also focus on the impact of two agentic work behaviors (heedful relating and task focus) on life satisfaction.

This study is the first of its kind that is going to study the impact of task focus and heedful relating on job satisfaction and life satisfaction among teachers in public and private sector universities of Balochistan.

2. Agentic Work Behavior

The term agentic work behavior has been coined by Bandura (2001); he viewed it as an individual's act to be purposeful and to display self-directed behaviors. According to Spreitzer and Porath (2013), individuals who practice autonomy and are being agentic at their workplace are more capable of developing and maintaining a learning environment at the work place.



Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein and Grant (2005) determined two types of agentic work behaviors: (i) task focus; and (ii) heedful relating. Task focus refers to the degree to which an employee is focused and vigilant while performing some work related tasks (Goffman, 1961). Task focus mainly highlights those moments when an individual is purposefully and voluntarily engaged in the task assigned by placing all his/her particular vitality into that task (Kahn, 1990). Moreover, task focus is an individual based agentic work behavior, whereas, heedful relating has more orientation towards groups and team phenomenon. Heedful relating is referred to as the successful collaboration with other people and coworker support at work. It consists of three characteristics of team such as: subordination, representation and coordination (Weick, 2003).

2.1 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a term coined by Hoppock (1935). According to him, “any combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental circumstances that makes a person say truthfully, ‘I am satisfied with my job’ (p. 47). It is assumed to show ones’ success and achievement at work. According to Locke (1976), job satisfaction is the measure of an employee’s negative or positive feeling generated from his/her experience at work. Moreover, it is defined as a person’s effective and positive response towards numerous features of his/ her job (Kreitner&Kinicki, 1995). All the definitions discussed above highlight the positive or pleasurable feelings of an individual toward his/her job.

Job satisfaction is considered to be an important construct in the field of management and organizational behavior. It provides extensive information relevant to job, employee’s behavior and psychology, and work environment, which further helps in decision making and redirecting organizational policies. Therefore, it has been the most researched job related outcome and has been studied with various work related and psychological variables. Several scholars have studied the connection between personality and job satisfaction and have found a positive association between the two variables (Patrick, 2010; Ijaz& Khan, 2015; Judge, Heller, & Mount 2002; Rothman &Coetzer, 2002). Williams and Anderson (1991) studied the relationship between organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and job satisfaction. They concluded that job satisfaction is believed to be an important antecedent of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Vanderberg and Lance (1992) studied the job satisfaction level in 100 professionals and found a strong relationship between job satisfaction and job loyalty. Job satisfaction has been studied by several scholars to understand its relationship with organizational effectiveness and

commitment towards work (Menon & Athanasoula-Reppa, 2011). Scholarships have also determined a positive relationship between Psychological capital (PsyCap) and job satisfaction (Hansen, Buitendach&Kanengoni, 2015; Martin, O'Donohue & Dawkins, 2011).

Numerous studies have also highlighted the factors affecting job satisfaction. According to Hackman and Oldham (1976) job's intrinsic motivating aspects such as task uniqueness, task importance, self-sufficiency, skill diversity, and feedback system determines the level of an individual's measures of job satisfaction. Judge and Klinger (2008) strengthened the view of Hackman and Oldham by stating that "jobs that are enriched to provide these core characteristics are likely to be more satisfying and motivating than jobs that do not provide these characteristics" (p. 399). Similarly, Steijin (2004) found in his study that individual characteristics play a negligible role in determining the level of one's satisfaction with his/her job, whereas characteristics associated with organization and job itself plays the vital role as the major antecedents of job satisfaction. Moreover, Taylor and Westover (2011) identified autonomy, constructive relationship with supervisors and coworkers support as the main job aspects that result in greater levels of employee's job satisfaction.

2.2 Life Satisfaction

Over the period of time, life satisfaction has gained enormous attention of researchers mainly due to its usefulness as the measure of happiness in life. It is considered as one of the cognitive mechanisms of subjective well-being, and thus holds great importance to determine the mental health of individuals. Shin and Johnson (1978) described satisfaction with life as a "global assessment of a person's quality of life according to his chosen criteria" (p. 478). Moreover, Veenhoven(1996) portray edit as a "degree to which a person positively evaluates the overall quality of his/her life as-a-whole" (p.11).

Life satisfaction is the widely investigated construct in organizational behavior studies. Therefore, numerous studies have also highlighted its antecedents. According to Diaz and Arroyo (2013), the antecedents of life satisfaction are classified into three categories: (i) life circumstances, (ii) intentional activities, and (iii) stable differences. Life circumstances include all the events occurring in life and demographic profile of people. In their study, Lucas, Clark, Georgellis, and Diener (2003) found a positive association between marriage (life event) and life satisfaction. Furthermore, Salinas-Jiménez, Salinas-Jiménez and Artés (2011) determined that both education and income have a positive effect on life satisfaction. Moreover, studies have



found a negative association between unemployment and life satisfaction (Clark, Diener, Georgellis & Lucas, 2008).

The second antecedent is intentional activities; and is the chief factor of life satisfaction and mainly depicts a positive impact on it. Sheldon and Lyubormirsky (2006) discussed that intentional activities involve adopting and achieving new goals and activities.

The third category is stable differences and it primarily includes personality and cognitive factors. Lucas and Diener (1999) demonstrated the effect of big five personality traits on life satisfaction. They found strong associations of extraversion and neuroticism traits with life satisfaction. Moreover, numerous studies have also found an impact of hope, optimism, and levels of accessibility to pleasant information on life satisfaction (Scheier & Carver, 1993; Robinson & Kirkeby, 2005).

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The extensive literature reviewed shows that no previous research has been done to find the influence of task focus on job satisfaction. However, intrinsic job factors such as task identity, task significance and work autonomy were found to be the major factors effecting job satisfaction (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: Task focus has a positive impact on job satisfaction.

No prior research has studied the relationship amid heedful relating and job satisfaction. However, studies have found the positive association between coworker and supervisors support and job satisfaction (Taylor & Westover, 2011; Paterson et al., 2014). Since, these terms are very much in close relation with heedful relating; therefore, we can hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2: Heedful relating has a positive impact on job satisfaction.

As discussed earlier that intentional activities (developing and adopting goals and activities) influence the level of life satisfaction. Similarly, it can be hypothesized that:

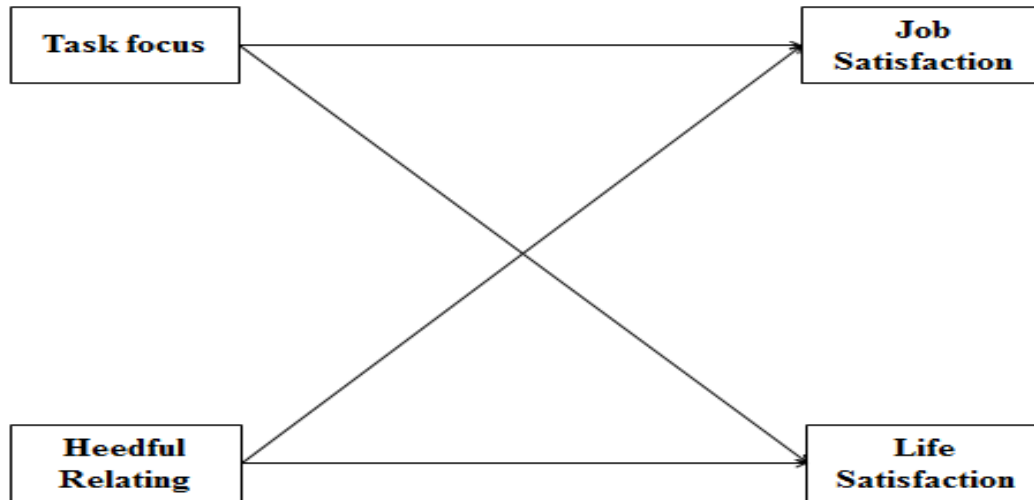
Hypothesis 3: Task focus has a positive impact on life satisfaction.

In his study, Chou (2015) highlighted the importance of social support at workplace on an employee's overall happiness and level of satisfaction. He is also of the view that perceived supervisor and coworker support increases the level of happiness in general and life satisfaction in specific. Similarly, Yperen and Hagedoorn (2003) posited that coworkers' support develops the feeling of being valued and being cared for in an individual; thereby, making the work environment more conducive and rewarding. Moreover, empirical findings suggest that

supportive and constructive relationship with the coworkers results in to higher level subjective well-being and life satisfaction (Howard & Frink, 1996). The above discussion shows that coworkers' support results into higher subjective well-being (SWB). Therefore, we may hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 4: Heedful relating has a positive impact on life satisfaction.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Research designs:

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the influence of task focus and heedful relating on job satisfaction and life satisfaction. Thus this study tends to be exploratory in nature.

Participants:

To attain data for the study, convenience sampling method was used for distributing a self-reported research questionnaire among university teachers of Baluchistan. The instrument was distributed among 250 individuals out of whom only 210 responded and returned the instrument. Therefore, the response rate was 84%. This sample of 210 participants included 52.9 % (111) males and 47.1% (99) females.

Instruments:



Agentic Work Behavior Measures:

Agentic Work Behavior of the respondents was measured by using two different scales derived from its two dimensions: task focus and heedful relating.

Task Focus Measure:

Respondents answered four items of the attention at work scale developed by Rothbard (2001) to report their task focus level. The example item of the scale is *"I pay a lot of attention to my work"*. The alpha value for the scale was ($\alpha = .87$).

Heedful Relating Measure:

The scale established by Bijlsma-Frankema, Rosendaal, and van de Bunt (2005) was used in this study to record the heedful relating dimension of agentic work behavior. It is a five item 7 point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The sample item of the scale is *"I encourage the members of my work unit to do a good job."* The Cronbach's alpha reliability of the scale was ($\alpha = .87$).

Job Satisfaction Survey:

Price and Mueller (1981) developed and validated the job satisfaction survey scale. It is a self-reported 3 item scale to report the participant's level of satisfaction with job. To record the responses this instrument makes use of 7 item Likert scale (1= strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree). The item example of the scale is *"most days I am enthusiastic about my job"*. The alpha reliability value of this instrument was ($\alpha = .87$).

Life Satisfaction:

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) is used to record the level of participant's life satisfaction. It is a self-reported 5 items subjective scale. Based on their intensity of agreement and disagreement a 7 item Likert scale is used to record responses. Sample item is *"if I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing (I would prefer to live the same way)."* The alpha value of SWLS was ($\alpha = .83$).

Results:

Table 5.2 : Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation.

Variables	Mean	S.D	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3	4
1. Task focus	5.623	1.194	-1.130	1.002	.87)			
2. Heedful relating	5.608	1.034	-1.391	2.878	.592**	(.87)		
3. Job satisfaction	5.552	1.503	-1.133	.663	.487**	.495**	(.92)	
4. Life satisfaction	4.944	1.203	-.733	.281	.326**	.394**	.492**	(.83)

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Note: Cronbach's Alpha on diagonal

The table (5.2) displays descriptive statistics, Pearson Correlation and Cronbach's alpha of the variables under study. The rule of thumb applied for skewness and kurtosis suggests that if the values of variables lie between -2 to +2 then the data are considered normally distributed. The results show that all the variables are normally distributed except heedful relating (Kurt = 2.878).

The table also shows that task focus is positively and significantly correlated with heedful relating ($r = .59, p < .01$), job satisfaction ($r = .48, p < .01$), and life satisfaction ($r = .32, p < .01$). Moreover, heedful relating is also found to have a significant positive association with job satisfaction ($r = .49, p < .01$), and life satisfaction ($r = .39, p < .01$).

The internal reliability of the scales used in this study was measured using Cronbach's alpha. The scale is said to be reliable if the value of " α " is equal to or greater than the value of ".70". The table thus shows that all the instruments used in this study were reliable measures of the variables.

Hypotheses Testing:

Multiple regressions were applied to test the association between agentic work behaviors (heedful relating and task focus) and job satisfaction. Results showed that both task focus and heedful relating were positively and significantly related to job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.29, t = 4.15, p < 0.01$) and ($\beta = 0.31, t = 4.04, p < 0.01$), respectively. Moreover, both agentic work behaviors significantly accounted about 30% of the variance in job satisfaction, $F_{(2, 207)} = 44.95, p < .01$.



Second set of hypotheses (H3 and H4) concerned the relationship between agentic work behaviors (task focus and heedful relating) and life satisfaction. Results showed that both task focus and heedful relating were positively and significantly related to life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.16$, $t = 1.98$, $p < 0.05$) and ($\beta = 0.30$, $t = 3.93$, $p < 0.01$), respectively. Moreover, both agentic work behaviors significantly accounted about 16% of the variance in life satisfaction, $F_{(2, 207)} = 20.95$, $p < .01$).

Discussion:

This study focuses in providing a better understanding of agentic work behavior and its connection with job satisfaction and life satisfaction. The empirical findings of this scholarship are extensively supportive of all the relationships being hypothesized.

Since, agentic work behavior has been given very less research attention in the past; therefore, the results of this study brought into light numerous theoretical and practical implications. This study focused on two major agentic work behaviors i.e. task focus and heedful relating as suggested by Spreitzer et al., (2005). This study delivers the empirical proof that task focus and heedful relating results into increasing job satisfaction levels in employees. This is the very first research that empirically proved the impact of task focus and heedful relating on job satisfaction. Since agentic work behavior and job satisfaction are both positive work related constructs and highly recognized, therefore, it is one of the major implication of this study. Moreover, the results of study are in line with view of Oldham (1976), as they suggested that intrinsic job factor mainly relating to task characteristics are the major predictors of job satisfaction. Also, the acceptance of second hypothes is that heedful relating has positive impact on job satisfaction is in line with the findings of Taylor and Westover, (2011) and Patterson et al., (2014) as they suggested that coworker support and team orientation increases the level of job satisfaction.

This study also highlighted the impact of task focus and heedful relating on life satisfaction. Both the third and fourth hypotheses of the present study are accepted. This study shows that agentic work behaviors result into increased level of life satisfaction. Again this is the first study of its kind that studied the impact of agentic work behavior on life satisfaction. However, previous researches suggest that coworker support and

collaborative relationship with them results into happiness and higher degree of life satisfaction (Howard & Frink, 1996; Chou, 2015).

Future implications:

The findings of this study will help in the theory building of agentic work behavior and its relationship with other work related constructs. This will contribute in the expansion of the agentic work behavior concept by introducing other relevant variables. Other than theoretical implications, this study also outlines various practical implications too. Firstly, it addresses the application of agentic work behavior among university teachers. Secondly, it depicts the importance of job and life satisfaction and how they can be achieved while acting agentially. Lastly, it provides insight for the university management to develop policies in such a way that appraise agentic behaviors at work.

Limitations:

The empirical results of this study cannot be generalized to other specializations and professions as it only focuses on the university teachers of Quetta, Balochistan. Moreover, the data is gathered from only one private and two public sector universities with a sample size of 210. The data was collected by self-administered questionnaire rather than observation method, which may result in ambiguity between the responses recorded on the questionnaire and actual occurrences and behaviors.

Conclusion:

This study makes its contribution both empirically and practically by projecting more information regarding the main variables. This study also discovered those relationships that were unexplored in the previous studies, thereby, shaping guideline for the future researches. Moreover, our study explored the impact of two agentic work behaviors (task focus and heedful relating) on job and life satisfaction. Finally, we conclude that both agentic work behaviors result into high levels of job and life satisfaction.

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