

The Buffering Effect of Supervisor Support on the Relationship between Work Engagement and Behavioral Outcomes

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Abstract

The aim of the current study was to investigate the buffering effect of supervisor support on the relationship between employee work engagement and behavioral outcomes in banking industry of Pakistan. Employee work engagement was selected as independent variable. Behavioral outcomes including turnover intention and deviant behavior were dependent variables of the study. Based on Caplan Buffering hypothesis the current study checks the buffering effect of supervisor support on the relationship between work engagement and behavioral outcomes. The study found that employee work engagement is negatively and significantly related with behavioral outcomes and its dimensions turnover intention and deviant behavior. Supervisor support moderates the relationship between work engagement and behavioral outcomes. The study concluded that supervisor support act as a remedy for low level of work engagement in banking sector of Pakistan. It is recommended that organizations should provide such environment where colleagues support each other, and managers support their followers to compensate for low level of engagement.

Keywords: Employee Work Engagement, Turnover Intention, Deviant Behavior, Supervisor Support

Introduction

The eruption of technological advancement, globalization of business and high level of competitive pressures since 1980s to till date contributes to bring new changes and standards in the marketplace. Amalgamated with the current recession and slump in the economy, organizations are forced to bring the level of innovation and performance to new heights. Because of the emerging level of uncertainty in the business environment organizations are required to adopt themselves to the new changes consistently and facilitate various needs of the workforce.

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In recent economic instability, organizations are now more than ever looking for new ways to tap the underutilized capacities and talent of individuals as they started to investigate the people as an asset to utilize their skills, abilities and knowledge for withstanding the competitive advantage in the industry. New approaches and beliefs have been introduced in terms of optimal utilization of the available resources that result in the provoking the retention of intellectual capital as an important source of competitive advantage. Commitment and contribution of employees are important factors for the profitability and corroborate of the organization.

With the introduction of positive psychology, the focus of the organizational research has turned from pointing out the poor performers and obsessive issues of organization to learning the process of performance optimization both at individual and organizational level (Shantz et al., 2013). Positive organizational behavior approach and emotions of the employees are vital for the improvement of organizational performance since it comprises of the element of trust, engagement and confidence.

According to Ramsey (2006), employees' engagement to their work and commitment to their organization is crucial for achieving competitive advantage which includes increased productivity and lower employee turnover. It is necessary for the organization to polish their employees to achieve the standard performance level. It is a proven fact that desired level of performance is not achieved by the organization due to low level of motivation of their employees. However, it is one of the hardest challenge that CEOs, HRD and Business leaders have to face is that they need to ensure that every day as their employees check in, they should do it mentally as well as emotionally rather than just physically (Bothma & Roodt, 2013).

In this regard numerous studies and surveys are being conducted all over the world by a number of professionals in order to arrive at the conclusion about the elements that are responsible for affecting the engagement level of the employees. However, mix results were found from these studies (Khattak et al., 2017). The study in hand as an attempt to investigate the impact of work engagement on behavioral outcomes and to introduce such variables that may buffer the relationship between them.

Related Literature

Khattak et al., (2017) investigated the relationship between work engagement and behavioral outcomes in educational institutions of Pakistan. Their findings suggest that work engagement is negatively and

significantly associated with behavioral outcomes i.e. turnover intention and deviant behavior. They also argued that supervisor support did not moderate the relationship between the said variables. On the same way Rizwan et al., (2018) investigated the relationship between work engagement and behavior outcomes through buffering variable team work effectiveness. By selecting a sample of 246 employees from higher educational institutions (HIEs) they found that work engagement and behavioral outcomes have significant but negative relation. They also conclude that team work effectiveness buffers the relationship between the study variables.

Shantz et al., (2016) checked the buffering effect of organizational support on the relationship between work engagement and behavioral outcomes in UK based organizations. Their finding suggests a negative and significant relation. They also found that organization support may act as a remedy to increase work engagement and to reduce turnover intention and deviant behavior.

Khan, Mahmood and Kanwal, (2015) reported findings of supervisor guidance on behavioral outcomes and found that yes there is some association between them. Organization may assist their employees through tangible and intangible rewards. Similarly, Krongboonying and Lin (2015) examined the relationship between organizational politics and job pride through mediator perceived supervisor support. They found that perceived supervisor support partially mediates the relationship organizational politics and job pride.

Malik and Khalid (2016) examined the effect of psychological contract breach on team workers and turnover intention through mediator work engagement. Data were gathered from 302 employees of public and private sector banks in Lahore. There is relation among breach of contract and engagement of subordinates and turnover intention. On the same way, Akhtar and Pengil (2017) investigated the impact of work engagement on employee performance. Employee performance was measure through work behavior, OCB conduct, turnover aim, organizational dedication, counterproductive work behavior, project performance, job satisfaction and absenteeism. They found that work engagement has positive and significant relationship with project performance, job satisfaction, organizational dedication and OCB while negatively related with absenteeism, counterproductive work behavior and turnover aim.

The following hypotheses were drawn based on the cited literature and conceptual framework of the study.

H₁: Work engagement is significantly related with behavioral outcomes

H_{1a}: Work engagement is significantly related with turnover intention

H_{1b} : Work engagement is significantly related with turnover intention

H_2 : Supervisor support moderates the significant relationship between work engagement and behavioral outcomes (turnover intention, deviant behavior).

Model of the study

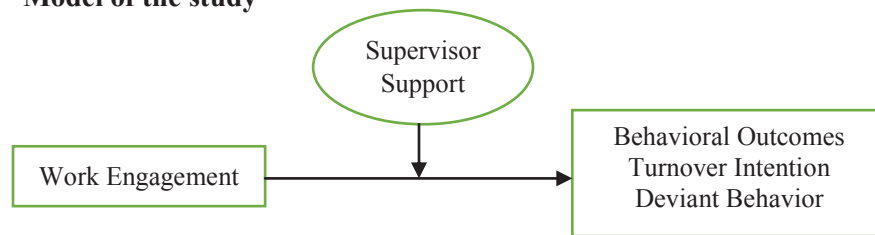


Figure 1: Model of the study

Method and Participants

The study selected managerial level employees of banking organizations operating in Pakistan. The sampling framework consists of those employees working in the banking organizations in D. I. Khan. Through purposive sampling we select 300 respondents to participate in the study. Data was gathered through survey questionnaire from the selected respondents. We received 237 usable questionnaires and was used for further analysis.

Research Instruments

Soane et al., (2012) scale was used to measure work engagement. Turnover intention was measure through Boroff and Lewin (1997) scale. Deviant behavior was measure through Bennet and Robinson (2000) scale. For supervisor support a scale developed by Saks (2006) was used. All instruments were measure trough five-point Likert scale.

Empirical Results

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
TI	237	9	15	12.08	1.99	.068	-1.33
DB	237	35	45	40.18	3.22	.018	-1.35
SS	237	9	15	12.16	1.76	-.177	-.84
EWE	237	25	40	31.66	3.47	.096	-.85
BO	237	39	60	54.33	5.33	-.801	-.28

The table highlighted above reports descriptive statistics of variables. The relevant information regarding the variables maximum and minimum value, mean and standard deviation value, and skewness

and kurtosis values are highlighted. Khattak et al., (2016) argued that the value of skewness and kurtosis should be between ± 1.96 to ± 2.85 , in a situation where the sample size is 200. However, Hair et al., (2012) recommended that the value of skewness and kurtosis should decrease when the sample size is 200 or more. The data of the current study is normally distributed as per skewness and kurtosis values.

Reliability Statistics

Table 2: Alpha Reliability of EWE

Subscale	No of Items	Alpha Coefficient	N
Employee Work Engagement	9	.92	237
Deviant Behavior	10	.93	237
Turnover Intention	4	.71	237
Supervisor Support	4	.67	237

The reliability statistics of the study variables are highlighted in the above table. As shown, the values of Cronbach alpha for all variables are above .6. Thus, the instrument used in the current study is reliable.

Regression Analysis

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.483	.233	.223	1.76	1.89

Predictor: (constant), EWE

Dependent variable: TI

Table 3 highlights the model summary of EWE and TI. The value of R^2 is .233 which shows that EWE explain 23.3% variation in TI. The last column shows DW statistics. The acceptable range of DW value is 1.5 to 2.5. In this case the value of DW is 1.89 which lie in the acceptable range, thus confirm no autocorrelation.

Table 4: Coefficient

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig
Constant	20.20		20.16	.00
EWE	-.562	-.367	-4.42	.00

Dependent Variable: TI

Regression coefficient of the study dependent variable (TI) and independent variable EWE is reported in table 4. As shown from the table, EWE have negative but significant relation with TI. a unit change in our independent variable EWE will bring a negative change of .562 units in the dependent variable TI.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.759	.576	.571	2.11	2.23

Predictor: (constant), EWE

Dependent Variable: DB

Table 5 highlights the model summary of EWE and DB. The value of R^2 is .576 which shows that EWE explain 57.6% variation in DB. The acceptable range of DW value is 1.5 to 2.5 (Khattak et al., 2016). In this case the value of DW is 2.23 which lie in the acceptable range, thus confirm no autocorrelation.

Table 6: Coefficient

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient		t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
Constant	61.23	1.201			50.96	.00
EWE	-.675	.152	-.274		-4.43	.00

Dependent Variable: DB

Regression coefficient of the study dependent variable (DB) and independent variable EWE is reported in table 6. As shown from the table, EWE have a negative and significant relationship with DB. It is clear from the regression model that EWE have negative association with BO and its dimensions namely TI and DB.

Moderation Analysis

Table 7: Coefficients

Model	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	54.5	.3	196.6	.00	54.0	55.0
SS	2.0	.2	12.3	.00	1.7	2.3
EWE	-.1	.1	-1.5	.1	-.3	.0
int_1	.1	.0	2.5	.00	.00	.2

The moderation analysis between EWE and BO with moderation supervisor support was highlighted in the table 7. As noted in the table,

SS has positive and significant relationship with BO. EWE has negative and insignificant relationship with BO. But here we focus on the p value of interaction effect. If the interaction effect (int_1) p value is significant it indicates that the moderation moderates the relationship between IV and DV. Here the p value of int_1 is significant. It means that SS moderates the relationship EWE and BO.

Discussion

The results of the current study are consistent with Shantz et al., (2016). They studied the relationship between work engagement and behavioral outcomes in the presence of moderator perceived organizational support. They found that there is a negative and significant relationship between work engagement and behavioral outcomes. They also found that POS may buffer the relationship between the variables. The study in hand also found that supervisor support and co-worker support also buffer the relationship between work engagement and behavioral outcomes. Our study results are also consistent with Shantz et al., (2013) as they found a negative association between work engagement and behavioral outcomes. They found that turnover intention may inversely affect organization performance and reputation as potential and skilled employees leave the organization. Same results were found by the study conducted by Bothma and Roodt (2013) as they also found an inverse relationship between EWE and TI. They concluded that low level of work engagement may motivate employees to think about quit. de Klerk and Stander (2014) also found the same results as they concluded that work engagement is the significant predictor of turnover intention. The findings of the current study are also in line with Ariani (2013) as he found a negative association between work engagement and organization citizenship behavior and counterproductive behavior. Same findings were found by Bhatnagar and Biswas (2010), Rich *et al.*, (2010), and Agarwal et al., (2012).

Conclusion

The results of the regression show that employee work engagement is negatively and significantly related with behavioral outcomes. The study found that supervisor support moderates the relationship between EWE and BO. Thus, based on the results of the study we concluded that organizations can use different means and sources to increase employee work engagement. Highly engaged employees positively affect organizational performance. We also concluded that supervisor support may also use as a remedial action to increase work engagement. Thus, managers of the organizations support their employees in order to

improve their work engagement. Similarly, colleagues support each other in the organization, share their work-related problems, think about solutions, bring innovation and creativity through their joint efforts and regard each other irrespective of their position. All these proactive activities are necessary for better organizational performance as well as for their individual performance.

Recommendations

Organizations should arrange training, seminars, and workshops related to employee work engagement for the purpose to improve it in their respective organizations. Organizations should facilitate fair promotion and incentives chance to their employees based on their competencies, hard work, commitment, and skills rather than on like or dislike bases that discourage employee morale and motivate them towards deviant behavior. Organizations as highlighted above should minimize all those illegal practices that discourage employees commitment and motivation. Lastly, organizations should give financial as well as social rewards also called rational rewards to their employees in order to overcome turnover intension.

Future Research Directions

Although, the study in hand gives important insights to the current literature but there are also some limitations of the study as well. First, the current study was conducted in banking sector of Pakistan. The same nature of study should be conducted in other organizations in order to further explore the phenomena. Second, the sample of the current study was comparatively small. Future researchers should select a large sample size in order to generalize the findings. Third, the study measures behavioral outcomes through two dimensions i.e. turnover intension and deviant behavior. Future researchers should select other behavioral outcomes dimension like absenteeism as well in order to further explain the situation.

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