Role of Emotional Intelligence on the Relationship between Perceived Organizational Politics Job Satisfaction and Work Engagement: Empirical Evidence from Public and Private Sector Employees

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Introduction

The workplace can be viewed as a marketplace where multiple individuals engage in many transactions, each seeking to obtain a favorable return on investment (Rusbull et al. 1996). To secure the favorable gains, the individuals may have to divert a portion of their energy, time and effort over their employers. Many studies have substantiated the pervasiveness of politics in the organizational setting (Kacmar & Baron 1999; Ferris et al. 2002). Ferris & Judge (1991) argue that politics are inherently distributive and represent the dysfunctional side of organizational behavior. Findings support the view that individual who possesses some level of control over the external environment (Ferris et. al. 1996) and understanding the underlying rational for organizational behavior (Ferris et al. 1994) are less likely to report an adverse effect. Despite these findings, various studies tried to find out the moderating effect of some personal and dispositional variables on the relationship between politics perception and work outcomes, but the influence of emotional intelligence (EI) on the relationship between politics perception and work outcomes is still unclear. Therefore, the present study attempts to identify the moderating effect of emotional intelligence (EI) on the relationship between perceived organizational politics (POP) and work outcomes: job satisfaction (JS) and work engagement (WE). The objectiveof this study is to analyze the nature of EI, POP, JS, and WE and find the role of EI on the relationship between POP, JS and WE among employees in northern region of Sri Lanka

Literature review and hypotheses development

Harold (1936) describes politics as "who gets what, when and how". This simple description of politics implies the maneuverability that takes place in the allocation of resources valued by the people. According to Pfeffer (1992), Politics is the study of power in action. However one of the most quoted definitions of politics is provided by Farrell and Petersan (1992) according to them, political behaviour in organizations "are those activities that are not required as part of one's formal role in the organization but that influence or attempt to influence, the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within the organizations". Politics are inherently disruptive and represent the dysfunctional side of organizational behavior (Ferris & Judge, 1991). Ferris et al. (1989) found that politics in organizations was related to decreased job satisfaction. Also, Drory (1993) found that perceptions of politics were negatively related to job satisfaction. He found that politics in the workplace had a potentially damaging effect on lower status employees, but no negative effect on higher status employees. In a two-study investigation, Bozeman et al. (1996) elaborated on the effect of the perception of organizational

politics on several work outcomes. The work by Parker et al. (1995) also suggests several important contributing actions related to employees' perception of organizational politics. Employee perceptions of the organization as political were associated with lower levels of overall satisfaction; believing that the organization does not value high work standards, challenging work, and integrity; evaluations of senior management as ineffective; perceiving that the organization does not support innovation; and, believing that employees are not loyal to the organization.

The Literature (e.g., Ferris et al. 2002; Kacmar & Baron 1999) suggest that politics perceptions have the capacity to predict lower levels of work engagement. In a two-study investigation, Bozeman et al. (1996) highlighted the effect of the perception of organizational politics on several work outcomes. In their study, the relationship between politics, job satisfaction, work engagement and several other work outcomes was moderated by the variable of job self-efficacy. The relationship was stronger for individuals with a high job self-efficacy than with a low one.

Employee engagement is viewed as the degree to which employees are involved in and enthusiastic about their work. Engagement is "a positive, fulfilling, affective, motivational state of work-related wellbeing that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter & Taris 2008, p. 187). Engagement is hailed as the key to a range of valuable organizational outcomes (Harter et al.2002). Unsurprisingly then, academics and HRM practitioners alike hold employee engagement in high esteem as a lead measure of business success (Bakker et al., 2008). Though there are no detail studies about perceived organizational politics and employees work engagement Bodla and Danish (2008) found the negative relationship of organizational politics with job involvement.

It has been suggested that EI plays a moderation role in aggressive behaviors and workplace stress (Slaski & Cartwright 2003). Nikolaou (2005) explored the relationship between EI, stress, and organizational commitment. Jodan and Troth (2002) found that individuals with higher levels of EI were more likely or more able to engage in collaborative conflict resolution; lower EI scores were associated with less effective strategies - handling conflict in a forceful way and avoidance behavior. Wong (2002) found that EI was positively correlated with followers' satisfaction and willingness to engage in the extra-role behavior. Further (Kelly & Caplan 1993) associated EI with individual performance. Christiansen et al. (1997: 710) asked, "Are all workers impacted by politics equally, or do organizational politics affect the attitudes of some individuals but not others?" Although not directly posited, Christiansen et al. (1997) further alluded to the fact that individual difference variables may operate in unison with perceived politics to predict a host of work outcomes. Following the review of literature, researcher developed seven hypotheses to test empirically.

H1: There is a significant difference between private sector employees and public sector employees on perceived organizational support, job satisfaction and work engagement.

H2: Perceive organizational politics negatively influence employees' job satisfaction

H3: Perceive organizational politics negatively influence employees' work engagement

H4: Emotional intelligence will moderate the relationship between perceived organizational politics and job satisfaction

H5: Emotional intelligence will moderate the relationship between perceived organizational politics and work engagement

H6: High emotional intelligence respondents will highly be satisfied than low emotional intelligence respondents in high level of perceived politics than low level of perceived politics

H7: High emotional intelligence respondents will highly be engaged in their work than low emotional intelligence respondents in a high level of perceived politics than a low level of perceived politics.

Methodology

This study was based on a survey of individuals who held a job in either private or public sector organizations. 800employees, holding managerial position, were selected as sample of this study. Equal number of employees was invited from each public and private sector organizations. Questionnaire was send to each employee with self addressed envelope. He data collection process was lasting for one-year, finally researcher received only 340 questionnaires: 162 from private sector organizations and 178 from public sector organizations.

A nine-item scale used in the previous studies (Kacmar & Ferris 1991; Kacmar & Carlson 1994; Vigoda 2000) was employed to measure perceived organizational politics. A measure developed by Brayfield and Roth (1951) called as Job Satisfaction Inventory was used to measure employees job satisfaction. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale-9 was employed to measure respondent's work engagement (UWES-9; Schaufeli & Bakker 2003). Emotional Intelligence was measured using twenty items based on Goleman (1995) Emotional Quotient (EQ) questionnaire. The construct validity of each construct was ensured (Cronbach's alpha> 0.7).Hierarchical regression analysis, t-test were performed to analysis the data and test the hypotheses. In the data collected, I obtained measures of POP, JS, WE and EI. Subsequently, I created the interaction term of politics by EI (Interactions = POP * EI)

Results and discussion

To see if there is significance differences between private and public sector organizationon POP, JS, EI and WE researcher performed t-test. The result revealed that there is no significant difference between private and public sector organization on the said research variables.The significant (negative) relationship was observed between POP and JS (-.512), but unexpectedly the relationship between POP and WE was insignificant (.122), which constraints testing the two hypotheses (H5 and H7). EI negatively related to politics (-0.05) but positively and significantly related to satisfaction (.488).

It was found that one those individuals who reported higher levels of POP reported low levels of JS and higher EI is associated with higher JS. Further, the interaction term also significantly added new variance that proves that emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between politics and satisfaction. Further analysis reported that high EI respondents will highly satisfied than low EI respondents in the high level of POP than a low level of POP.

This study provides some extensions of the current literature. Previous studies explored the moderating effect of commitment (Hochwarter et. al. 1999) self-efficacy (Bozeman et. al., 2001), political behavior (Harrell-Cook et. al. 1999) and negative and positive affect (Hochwarter & Treadway, 2003) on the relationship between politics perception and satisfaction, but this study provides empirical evidences to support the moderating effect of EI on the relationship between POP and JS. The unexpected insignificant relationship between POP and WE is inconsistent with the existing literature. This resultopens an avenue to further research to find out the influence of other variables on the relationship between POP and WE.

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