Development & Recognition, Empowerment, & Innovative Behaviour

Development & Recognition as a Moderator for the Relationship of Each Dimension of Psychological Empowerment to Innovative Behaviour

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Abstract

Innovative behaviour brings forth vibrancy in the workplace and acts as critical factor for organisational sustenance and development. Innovation requires not only motivated individuals, but also organisational support through provision of development & recognition opportunities. The current research is the output of three inter-related ideas. First, the research interest stems from the fact that there are very few studies (e.g., Spreitzer, Kizilos, & Nason, 1997) done on the linkage between individual dimensions of empowerment and outcome. Secondly since innovative behaviour requires individuals to take charge and motivate one-self as well as others it is most likely that the innovative individuals' empowerment would perceptibly be felt by fellow colleagues in the workplace. Also, in order to correct the inherent leniency bias in self-perception, it is important to consider colleagues' perception of innovative behaviour of individuals, as an outcome of empowerment. Third, a UNESCO report shows that in India (the present country context of the study), women primary school teachers outnumber male teachers in the urban areas of all major Indian states (women's representation varying between 50-95%). Despite schools being regarded as the basic building block of the society not many studies have explored the linkage of empowerment with innovative behaviour of teachers in the Indian context. Hence we have focussed on connectivity of individual dimension of empowerment with innovative behaviour and effect of development & recognition on this linkage.

Innovative behaviour has been defined as an employee's ability to promote and seek new ideas, and attempts to build support for implementation of these ideas (Scott & Bruce, 1994). Based on empowerment construct studied by earlier researchers, psychological empowerment is defined as employee experienced powerfulness. We have considered the six dimensions of empowerment mentioned in Singh & Sarkar (2009). Meaning is an individual's alignment of own value system with the work s/he does. Competence is the sense of skillfulness that an individual believes s/he has for carrying out the work. Impact is the sense of influence an individual believes s/he has on those who are affected by the work. Self determination is the scope for decision making available to an individual while carrying out the work and has two aspects: one is related to employee's ability to exercise authority and take decisions at immediate *job* level and the second is based on employee's decision-making ability at a broader *organisational* level. Control in non-work domain shows employee's ability to take decisions at household and immediate community level. Schulz, Israel, Zimmerman, &

Checkoway (1993) considered this dimension taking into account behavioural and contextual components of empowerment. Development is employee's skill enhancement opportunity and recognition is the system of appreciation, where employees can see the connectivity between their effort and its appreciation.

In this study we have first looked at the direct relation of each dimension of psychological empowerment to innovation behaviour. We have hypothesised that *employees perceiving greater meaning in their work exhibit more innovative behaviour*. Same is true for the other five dimensions. In addition to the above relationships, we also hypothesised that *development & recognition moderates the relationship between meaning and innovative behaviour. Specifically, employees having better prospects of development and recognition exhibit more innovative behaviour when they perceive greater meaning in their work.* This also applies to competence, impact, self-determination in their job and organisational context. Also, based on compensation theory (Champoux, 1978) and spillover theory (Staines, 1980), we can say that less support and opportunities at the workplace needs to be compensated through greater control in non-work domain for exhibiting more innovative behaviour. Thus we hypothesised that *employees having lower prospects of development and recognition exhibit more innovative behaviour when they perceive greater control over non-work domain.*

After pre-testing the instrument in a pilot survey of 288 respondents, the data for the main study was collected during July to December 2008. The main study was done for 401 teachers from 54 schools located in the state of West Bengal in India. Each of the 401 teachers rated their psychological empowerment individually. 54 superiors rated the development & recognition opportunities provided to individual teachers in their respective schools. Innovative behaviour was rated by the teachers' colleagues. Two to three colleagues responded for each teacher, which resulted in total 1026 colleague responses. Thus data is collected from three different rater groups to minimise common method bias.

For the dependent, independent, and the moderator variables, raters were requested to assess on a seven point scale, 1 indicating complete disagreement and 7 indicating complete agreement with the items given in the questionnaire. Prior to aggregating colleagues' responses, we checked the inter-rater agreement (IRA) via $r_{wg,}$ average deviation (AD), inter-rater reliability (IRR) and intra-class correlation coefficients (ICCs). We analysed convergent and discriminant validities of all the multi-item first-order latent variables in the study.

We used multiple regression analysis to test our hypotheses. For example, we used the following equation for the meaning dimension:

$$\textit{innovative behaviour}_i = \alpha_i + \beta_{1i}\ \textit{total experience}_i + \beta_{2i}\ \textit{education}_i + \beta_{3i}\ \textit{marital status}_i + \beta_{4i}\ \textit{meaning}_i + \beta_{5i}\ \textit{competence}_i + \beta_{6i}\ \textit{impact}_i + \beta_{7i}\ \textit{job level self-determination}_i + \beta_{8i}\ \textit{organisation level self-determination}_i + \beta_{9i}\ \textit{non-work domain control}_i + \varepsilon_i$$

where α is the constant term, βs are the coefficient terms, and ε is the error term.

The variables were entered into the regression equation in three steps. In the first step, we entered the control variables and the independent variable shown in the equation above. Then we added the moderator variable (i.e., *development & recognition*) in the next step, and finally we added the interaction terms obtained by multiplying the moderator variable by the independent variables (for example, *meaning * development & recognition*).

Aiken and West (1991) suggested using centering procedure for regression analysis using interaction terms. We used this method and found that variance inflation factors in all the equations were well within desirable limit. To test the moderation effects we also used the macro "simple-2way.sps" available with the statistical package SPSS 17. Along with the significance of the interaction terms, the output also provided information regarding the simple slopes of the dependent variable on the independent variable for three values of

moderator, i.e., high, mean, and low. The high value was taken as mean + 1 standard deviation and the low value was mean – 1 standard deviation.

We found that when employees perceive greater meaning in their work, better opinion of their competence, more impact of their work, higher level of self-determination in job and organisational context, and more control in non-work domain, they exhibit more innovative behaviour. The study shows each individual dimensions of empowerment has potential to impact creativity exhibited by individuals in the workplace. Thus the study supports the perspectives of those practitioners and action researchers who promote "human factor" as a vital element while deliberating any change initiative in the workplace. Administrators targeting to bring forth creative genre of employees in the workplace are required to make the work more meaningful, enjoyable, and aligned with individual's self interest. Employees need to be given encouragement for gaining self confidence in their skill level. More authority and responsibility in both job and organisational contexts are called for so that employees can voice their opinions and initiate changes. Organisations that are able to show employees the importance and influence of their work on customers and immediate workplace are likely to put forth conducive environment where employees are more creative. The interesting aspect of this study is that it shows that those individuals who enjoy non-work domain control act as idea generator and implementer in the workplace. Thus clearly establishing the perspective put forth by current researchers (e.g., Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000) that the boundary between work and non-work domain is gradually diminishing. Organisations targeting to engage employees with their full creative potentials need to provide support through family friendly policies so that satisfied employees in their non-work domain can in turn bring forth positive energy in the workplace.

The findings of the study indicate that when there is high development and recognition prospects, employees exhibit more innovative behaviour when they perceive higher level of self-determination in job context. This is an interesting finding since this clearly shows the "knowing"-"doing" connectivity in the workplace. Unless the immediate job context gives employees opportunities to utilise the prospective training skill, it is unlikely that employees would be able to exhibit their creativity in the workplace. The empirical implication of the current research justifies that training and development opportunity, and recognition are essential for employees to think and execute new ideas at their immediate job level. Reality remains that, primary schools in India do not provide enough training opportunities for the teachers to upgrade their skills (Dyer, 1996; Ramachandran, Pal, Jain, Shekhar, & Sharma, 2005). Also many of the teachers are not paid good remunerations (Kaushik et al., 2009) and they are often denied any appreciation for their exemplary contributions. Only when any major change occurs in the primary education system, teachers attend training camps essentially for meeting training mandates of the government. Keeping in mind long term developmental perspective of the school, it is highly recommended to ensure enough growth potentials for the teachers through training and development. Particularly, regular need-based training programmes which will be beneficial to the school in future might be initiated. We found that in many schools in spite of availability of computers, teachers (other than computer teachers) do not possess adequate computer awareness and do not possess the ability to utilise computers for effective pedagogy.

Another interesting finding is that with low development & recognition prospects, employees exhibit more innovative behaviour when they perceive higher control in non-work domain. Development & recognition system (selection of trainees, training modules, promotion opportunities, etc.) is not standardised in majority of the cases for primary school teachers in India and so they cannot depend on a formalised system to exhibit creativity in the workplace. On the other hand, powerfulness emanating from non-work domain control helps them to become innovative in the workplace. This finding is a significant contributor to the

existing theoretical development and practical application in the field of empowerment. Theoretically it shows the link between non-wok domain control and work-domain creativity. By considering intra-individual sense of powerfulness that comes from non-work domain this study sets direction for future researchers to further explore the linkage of both the domains. This dimension is of particular relevance in the present country context since women here place lot of importance to their roles as homemaker (Rajadhyaksha & Smita, 2004).

Future studies might like to test whether the same moderating relationship holds across gender between dimensions of empowerment and innovative behaviour. It might not be unjustified to project this result to other women dominated stereotypical contexts and mention that the presence of proper development & recognition opportunities provided by administrators and concerned authorities might help in connecting individual's psychology with workplace creativity.

The study has three important practical implications. First, for ensuring individual's creativity and innovation, it is essential for organisations to help individuals to be associated with meaningful jobs, encourage individuals to gain confidence in their skill and provide opportunity to be able to exercise authority at the immediate job and organisational level. Second, importance of helping employees to grow since individuals with high prospects of development & recognition and increased perception regarding self-determination in job context can bring forth change initiatives in the workplace. Third, ensure overall connectivity of non-work domain control and work domain creativity, through provision of family supportive programmes. Given that in the Indian context a large number of women are associated with the job of primary school teaching, the study has clear implications for securing psychologically empowered women employees who can bring the much needed creative energy in the workplace.

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