

The Linkage between Career Growth, Work Engagement and Organizational Citizenship Behavior: An Insight

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Abstract- Over the last decade until recent years, work engagement has captured a lot of interest among many; academician, industry, consultancy and the like for its positive impact towards work attitudes. To add compendium knowledge on the area, a lot of previous studies have made attempt to conduct work engagement studies on numerous work variables and also in different settings. Despite numerous studies, only few studies have made attempt to posit work engagement as a mediator role. Moreover, with the growing concern on the increasingly crucial aspects of work variables; career growth and organizational citizenship behavior, little is known on how work engagement can propose linkage between the two. In this article, I review sets of literature to propose possible linkage on such relationship. To offer explanatory device, I review and discuss related theories and concepts to provide direction and sense of the possible linkage.

I. INTRODUCTION

Often we heard that for the organization to best success in the home market, one has to start by engaging its employees. Employee engagement measured the extent to which an organization had captured the “hearts and minds” of its people to build and sustain strong business performance. Due to this, it is crucial for the organizations to identify and further explore engagement related issues in order for them to be attentive to the employees’ vigor, dedication and absorption.

Previous studies have shown that career growth can help one’s achieve the career success. Vazirani (2007) highlighted that not only career development will help to promote work engagement among employees and help employee retention, but it also open for them the opportunity to personal development. While a study by Ken Blanchard Companies (2009) stressed career growth must be presented if organization wishes for employee passion to take place and give maximum impact. However, their study found that this factor (career growth) is the least presented in the many companies. It shows that organizations have not given sufficient attention on employees’ career growth and how this career growth effort can generally exhibit positive behaviors (work engagement) at work. A study by Automobile Association of America (AAA) linked engagement with company financial and human resource metrics, such as having individual development plans in place and opportunities for career advancement (Attridge, 2009). Career growth, as in my view, has actually captured the future-minded of employees in which they will decide whether or not they will have a bright future with their current organization. Employees as we knew, tend to be more likely to show their loyalty towards

their individual development rather than any particular organization. The quality of this development process significantly determines the nature and quality of individuals’ lives and the kind of people they become (career growth), the sense of purpose they have (work engagement), the income at their disposal and it also determines the social and economic contribution (OCB) they make to the communities and societies of which that they are part of (Watts, 2009). This more or less, has illustrate to us how actually career growth can impact people lives in the sense of socially contribute to individual and organization as a whole, hence to perform organizational citizenship behavior (OCB).

To understand the issues that arising from OCB, let us first look at the concept of OCB in which its concept has brought about a big change in the field of organizational behavior (Ebrahimpour, Khaleghkhah & Sepehri, 2011). OCB is now considered as fifth bottom line variable in organization behavior research and practice (Singh & Singh, 2010). As Polat (2009) pointed out, OCB increases the ability of attracting and using the workforce of the organization by generating favorable feelings at work towards their organizations. As Najari, Ahmadi and Habibatbar (2011) have mentioned, organizations could not survive or prosper without their members behaving as good citizens by engaging in all sorts of positive organization-relevant behavior. They further noted that OCBs are thought to have an important impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of work teams and organizations, therefore contributing to the overall productivity of the organization. Definitely, most organizations expected that their employees to behave in certain ways that can benefits the company and the people within it. This may helps to develop a positive workplace atmosphere and motivated everyone to bring about change in working more effectively and efficiently. OCB should be encouraged more among people to put in practice, and not just another management cliché. However, to date, there is no definite answer to OCB yet, as what it is composed, what really caused it, and what are the absolute consequences from it.

This work hopes to contribute to work engagement literature generally by posing it as mediating role of the relationship between career growth and OCB. In doing so, the underlying theory of Social Exchange Theory (SET), Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) Model and Conservation of Resources (CoR) Theory aimed to provide an extensive explanation of such relationships.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

CAREER GROWTH AND WORK ENGAGEMENT

Following the work from Weng and McElroy (2012), career growth is referred to as organizational career growth to reflect the fact that it refers to one's career growth within one's current organization, rather than one's assessment of their career growth over their total career in the workforce. According to them, career growth could be captured by three factors: that are (1) *Career goal progress* or the degree to which one's present job is relevant to and provides opportunities for one to realize their career goals; (2) *Professional ability* development, or the extent to which one's present job enables them to acquire new skills and knowledge; (3) *Organizational rewards* are being measured using (a) promotion speed, an employee's perceptions of the rate and probability of being promoted; and (b) remuneration growth, or employee perceptions of the speed, amount, and likelihood of increases in compensation (pg 257).

As defined by Weer (2006), career growth can help individual workers to enhance their career advancement in organization if the organization gives opportunities such as by being offered responsibilities, challenging assignments, and learning opportunities. This may help individual worker to gain new skills and knowledge as they worked on work assignments.

Leadership Insight, (2010) the talent and career management expert, in their research found that organizations that provide career development opportunities are six times more likely to engage their employees than organizations that do not. In detail, from their report, at 63%, Canada, the United States and Denmark showed the highest engagement levels among employees who agreed or strongly agreed that their organizations provide career opportunities. The study further suggests that not only it is consider as an essential step to facilitate career discussion in order to empower employees to drive their own development and to provide career development for them, but it will also help managers to address the top engagement drivers among individual. This basically portray that organizations that provide opportunities to develop in career and gaining new knowledge and skills can help to promote high engagement level among employees .

Hulkko-Nyman et al. (2012) have highlighted that since total organizational rewards can be categorized as monetary (remuneration) and non-monetary (promotional) rewards, both should be appealing to employees because individual needs can more flexibly be met with total rewards' practices. According to Bakker and Demerouti (2007), pay (remuneration) and career opportunities (promotional) can be considered as job resources that being provided at the organization level and these resources are considered as antecedents for work engagement.

Coetzee and Villiers (2010), suggest individuals are making a choice that are related to their career self-development, individual may become more aware about the values and motive (goals) of career decision they make. Employees' intrinsic motivation (work engagement) can be improved if they perceived that their career goal can be realized by serving their current organization.

According to study done by Thiagararan (2011), all the factors of employee engagement practices (example responsibility at work, motivation, performance appraisal, and competency) are positively correlated with career development. The study conclude that even though it is not possible to expect fully engagement among employees, the organization can still encourage employee to have active participation in their job by means of proper guidance (in job, career development, performance appraisal, motivation and competency).

On the basis of JDR model, career growth can be posed as job resources, providing the definition of job resources itself, as those physical, psychological, social or organizational aspects of a job that either/or reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, are functional in achieving work goals and stimulate personal growth, learning and development (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR AND WORK ENGAGEMENT

Organizations that are excellent are generally and constantly putting forth efforts to improve positive organizational outcomes by maintaining highly motivated employees and to promote and encourage positive voluntary behavior such as OCB (Abuiyada & Chou, 2012). OCB according to Ariani (2013, pg 46) is individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly and explicitly recognized by the formal reward system and also promotes the efficient and affective functioning of the organization as well as employee performance.

To relate OCB with work engagement, the work form Ahmed, Rasheed & Jehanzeb (2011) stressed that work engagement may leads to OCB as it focuses on other positive outcomes at work which are voluntary and lies outside the given parameters of any organization. They further suggest that the more employees are engaged with their work, the more likely they are to displayed and performed OCB. Similarly, as found by Mansoor, Aslam, Javad, Ashraf & Shabbir (2012), the more actively an employee is engaged in his or her work, the higher likelihood for them to exhibit citizenship behavior.

Now that there are gaining efforts and research in work engagement field, researchers are also interested to study the outcomes of work engagement toward specific OCB (Matamala, 2011). Williams and Anderson (1991) in their findings have highlighted that OCB can be categorized into two dimensions in which OCB directed towards individual (OCBI) and OCB directed towards organization (OCBO). OCBI is behaviors that can be beneficial to particular individuals (employees) and through this, it indirectly contribute to the organization (i.e. helps others who have been absent, takes a personal interest in other employees), and OCBO – behaviors that beneficial to the organization as in general (i.e. gives advance notice when unable to come to work, adheres to informal rules devised to maintain order) (Huang & You, 2011).

Following the suggestion from Williams and Anderson (1991), this study is designed to highlight the dimensions of OCB; that is OCBO rather than OCBI and to examine how OCBO is the outcome of work engagement. Mohammad, Habib and Alias (2011) noted that OCBO is more likely to be the outcome of work engagement as the employees perceived that

they are obligated to balance social exchange towards the organization that they serve since organization has provided them with desirable job resources (career growth) and it seems like employees who perform OCB are expected to have higher level of job motivation (work engagement).

THE MEDIATING ROLE OF WORK ENGAGEMENT AS INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

In the current study, I perceive work engagement as an indicator of intrinsic motivation at work. To identify such engaged employees, their characteristic can be shown by the readiness and willingness to direct personal energies into physical, cognitive, and emotional expressions associated with fulfilling required and discretionary work roles (Thomas, 2007). Similarly, as mentioned by Seijts and Crim (2006), an engaged employee is a person who is fully involved in, and enthusiastic about, his or her work.

To explain the concept of work engagement as intrinsic motivation in association with motivation theory, Social Exchange Theory (SET) is widely used among researchers. The central tenet of SET is that people make social decisions based on perceived costs and benefits (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). According to Saks (2006), a good way for employees to repay their organization is through their level of engagement. Employees will choose whether or not to engage themselves in relation to the resources (i.e career growth) they get from their organization. Employee engagement involves emotional and psychological relationship between employees and their organization that can be transmuted into negative or positive behaviors which employees display at their workplace (Andrew and Sofian, 2012). In my view, these negative or positive behaviors as in the current study could be perceived as OCB. This can be supported by a study from Lin, Cheng and Wu (2004) in which they mentioned that SET views interpersonal interactions from a cost benefits perspective, much akin to an economic exchange, excepts that a social exchange deals with the exchange of intangible social costs and benefits (such as respect, honor, friendship, and

To understand the mediating role better, here I also adapted Job Demand-Resources Model (JD-R) to look into how this mediating effect of work engagement is possible. The JD-R model can be the basis model to predict employee well-being, work engagement and burnout, since its application can be used to assess regardless what type of job (De Brained & Roodt, 2011). As mentioned above, in the motivational process, as mentioned by Hakanen, Schaufeli and Ahola (2008), job resources also can influence employee well being by motivating them internally since job resources are assumed to increase work engagement which, in turn, is associated with positive outcomes, (i.e. OCB). They further noted that this is possible through the fostering of employee growth, learning and development, or by helping employees to achieve their goals. According to Bakker and Demerouti (2007, pg 312), job resources may be located at the level of the organization at large (e.g. pay, career opportunities, job security), the interpersonal and social relations (e.g. supervisor and co-worker support, team climate), the organization of work (e.g. role clarity, participation in decision making), and at the level of the task (e.g. skill variety, task

identity, task significance, autonomy, performance feedback). This in my view, shows to us that career growth as job resources is considered at the organizational level, in which the ones provided by the organizations to employees. Having to received much from the organizations in term of career benefits (i.e. career goals, professional ability, organizational rewards), in turn, employees are likely to display a positive work outcomes, by performing OCB.

Another condition for this intrinsic motivation of work engagement to take effect is that, the benefits/resources that employees received from the organization must be something that they truly valued. Having to say this, here I also adapted the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory as the basis of my assumption. This theory is a relevant theory for us to understand how career growth as job resources are something that employees valued and worked for, and they would do just about anything to protect whatever things that they perceived as valuable. As Hobfoll (2001) highlighted, COR theory is basis on assumptions that people would strive to protect and retain (by engaging in OCB) what they value (career growth). He further noted that the things that individual values are called as resources, in which are not individually determined.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

IV. CONCLUSION

On the whole, this study provides insight on the relationships between career growth, work engagement and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Based on the presented previous studies and literatures on work engagement, career growth and OCB, it is clear to us that the relationships of all the mentioned areas of studies are still lacking in term of widely agreed concepts. Currently, work engagement is being studied in different perspectives, in which no longer being posited as positive aspect of employee well being. A lot of researchers are now looking into its negative perspectives. This might be interesting though, however positive side of work engagement is still in need for better findings and extensive literature. Thus, there is more to learn about this concept and work engagement literature will need to be extended and calling for more researches in future are necessary which looking at the concept in different perspectives, conditions, settings, etc to form a solid foundation of such area. In the end, I hope to that this study will helps in term of providing wider insight in work engagement scope. According to Bakker et al. (2008), a focus on employee engagement may not only be beneficial to individual worker, but can also become as source of competitive advantage for the

companies. HRD practitioners also are in need to understand and provide a useful guidance for work engagement; and to be doing just that, research must provide theoretically supported constructs for how this concept can be measured, fostered, and related to organizational outcomes (Zigarmi et al., 2009).

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