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PERSONALITY TRAITS EFFECTS ON JOB SATISFACTION: THE ROLE OF GOAL COMMITMENT

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ABSTRACT

The present research investigates the effects of personality traits, self-efficacy and locus of control, on job satisfaction. It also examines the mediating impact of goal commitment on relationships between personality and job satisfaction. The results indicate that self-efficacy and locus of control are positively related to goal commitment. Goal commitment is positively associated with job satisfaction. In addition, locus of control is found positively related to job satisfaction while self-efficacy does not have such relationship with job satisfaction.

Keywords: Personality, Goal Commitment, Job Satisfaction, Self-efficacy, Locus of Control

INTRODUCTION

Prior studies of the employees' attitudes such as job satisfaction mostly focus on the measures of attitudes about work environment (i.e. job itself, supervisors, promotion, payment, and coworkers). In recent years increasing attention has been given to the factors of individual characteristics on the employees' attitudes. These factors, called personality traits, also are suggested to affect job satisfaction. Empirical support for the personality traits with respect to job satisfaction is also provided by researchers [17] [20]. As Krishnan et al. [26] note in their review of personality traits literature, affective disposition is only one of many traits that can and should be studied. Chiu and Francesco [12] present a cognitive model that explores the effects of positive affectivity and negative affectivity on work motivation and the mediating effects of perceptions of pay and job satisfaction on this relationship.

Different from previous studies, this study chooses self-efficacy and locus of control as the independent variables, which shed light on personality traits in the hopes of finding the best measures that predict job satisfaction. Further, this study extends the research by correlating job satisfaction and personality traits with goal commitment. One's personality has been linked to job satisfaction [20] [22] [7] and organizational commitment [1] [47]. This study investigates personality traits of self-efficacy and locus of control. Additionally, this study examines the impact of self-efficacy and locus of control on goal commitment and job satisfaction.

The organization of the study is as follows: the next section contains a literature review of the constructs of self-efficacy, locus of control, goal commitment, and job satisfaction. The relationships among the variables are discussed and a conceptual model is proposed based on the

discussion. It is followed by the discussion of research methodology applied in this study and finally, results are presented and interpretations of the findings are discussed.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

Both goal commitment and job satisfaction are two attitudes in this study. Research has found that both goal commitment and job satisfaction are related to a person's disposition such as self-efficacy and locus of control [6] [13] [45]. The more involved the individuals, the more committed they are. Additionally, job satisfaction and goal commitment are interrelated. The greater efforts individuals committed into their goal, the greater positive impact on job performance, which leads to higher job satisfaction [13]. Therefore, I expect that self-efficacy and locus of control will have positive relationship with job satisfaction and the relationships are mediated by goal commitment.

Self-efficacy, goal commitment, and job satisfaction

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in his or her capacity to mobilize the cognitive, motivational, and behavioral resources needed to meet given situational demands [6]. In this study, the general self-efficacy is used to reflect one's perceptions of one's fundamental ability to cope with life's exigencies, it represents a core self-evaluation, and is a trait-like belief in one's competence [41].

Self-efficacy includes all factors that would lead one to believe that she or he will perform well on the task. Individuals with high level self-efficacy have incentives for higher performance, and are more likely to increase their subjective estimates of the probability that they can achieve those levels of performance. It is found that self-efficacy influences an individual's initial choice of activities and tasks and his or her coping efforts while engaged in these tasks [29].

Self-efficacy is also observed strongly related to performance [24]. It is viewed as having generative capability: it influences thought patterns, emotional reactions, and the orchestration of performance thought the adroit use of subskills, ingenuity, resourcefulness, and so forth. Those who have high self-efficacy and believe that they can meet their goals are more likely to work harder toward setting goal, and achieve higher achievement, therefore, will have higher level of job satisfaction.

H1a: Self-efficacy is positively associated with goal commitment.

H1b: Self-efficacy is positively associated with job satisfaction.

Locus of control, goal commitment, and job satisfaction

Locus of control is the degree to which people believe that their actions influence what happens to them [48]. Internals believe that what happens to them, good or bad, is largely a result of their choices and actions. Externals, on the other hand, believe that what happens to them is caused by external forces outside of their control. Compared with self-efficacy, which is more emphasize on confidence with respect to actions or behaviors, locus of control more focus on confidence in being able to control outcomes.

Locus of control represents a belief in oneself relative to one's environment. Internals believe that their outcomes depend on their actions and believe that their words and actions typically will have great effect on their outcomes, therefore, will put more efforts in their job [28]. Lim and Teo [30] find that internals tend to have higher level of organizational commitment than externals. In general, internals are more likely to adopt proactive, problem-solving means to change the environment, and more likely to engage in goal-directed activities [3] [19]. Thus, it would be expected that internals would have higher goal commitment.

Previous studies also show that locus of control is strongly related to job satisfaction [30] [28] [46]. Internals are found have a strong belief that outcomes such as rewards are under their control [46]. The main reason why internals are more satisfied with their jobs is that they have the ability to control situations.

H2a: Locus of control is positively associated with goal commitment.

H2b: Locus of control is positively associated with job satisfaction.

Goal commitment and job satisfaction

Goal commitment is defined by Locke & Latham [32] as one's determination to reach a goal. Studies on goals normally treat goals as predictors of performance. Steers [43] suggests that goal commitment may be predictable from the degree to which attainment of the goal is perceived to be instrumental in the acquisition of various other attractive outcomes. This is in line with Lock & Latham's argument. Oklham's [37] finding of the positive relationship between goal attainment and goal commitment also reinforces this position.

Goal commitment and job satisfaction have been found to be significantly related to each other. Although both goal commitment and job satisfaction are attitudes, they are regarded as two separate constructs. Individual in a state of high goal commitment is more likely to invest personal resources to promote the goal, and less likely to search for job alternatives outside the organization [9]. High commitment expresses willingness to contribute to the environment as part of a belief in common values and goals [15]. Studies also find that an employee who feels committed to the organization's goals may have an easier time managing conflicting demands [18], therefore, will have a better performance which finally leads to satisfaction.

There is ongoing debate about the direction of the relationship between goal commitment and job satisfaction. Some researchers argue that satisfaction is an antecedent of commitment [44] [49]. Some claim that commitment is the cause of satisfaction [9] [18]. Still a third position regards the relationship as a reciprocal one [27] 38]. However, according to literature review, goal commitment is found more strongly related to personalities. Both self-efficacy and locus of control are directly and positively relate to goal commitment [29] [13], and self-efficacy is indirectly relate to job satisfaction [26]. Therefore, I expected that personalities' effects on job satisfaction are mediated by goal commitment.

H3: Goal commitment is positively associated with job satisfaction.

METHOD

Sample

The sample consisted of 224 students in a university in the southwest United States. A total of 219 usable responses were obtained. The response rate is 98%. The sample distribution was as follows: 62% of participants were male, 38% were female. 61.3% were senior, 19.8% were junior, 11.7% were sophomore, 5.9% were freshman and 1.4% were graduate students. 79.7% were below 25 years of age, 14.9% were between 25 and 30, and 5.4% were above 30 year of age. 37.8% had working experience range from 1-3 years, 38.2% had experience for 3-12 years, 17.8% totally had no working experience, and 6.2% had experience less than one year or longer than 12 years.

Measurement

All measures used in the survey were collected with a five-point Likert type scale ranging from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree. Content validity is examined based on the logic and theory to make sure that the domains of content were reflected. Measurement items were adapted from established measures. A literature review provided a pool of items for measuring self-efficacy, locus of control, goal commitment, and job satisfaction. A pilot study was employed to improve content validity and clarity.

Self-efficacy was measured with items adapted from Chen et al. [21]. The new instrument is demonstrated internally consistent and stable. Participants were told that self-efficacy relates to one's estimate of one's overall ability to perform successfully in a wide variety of achievement situations, or to how confident one is that she or he can perform effectively across different tasks and situations. (e.g. "Compare to other people, I can do most tasks very well." "I believe I can succeed at most any endeavor to which set my mind.") Cronbach's alpha for self-efficacy scale was 0.841.

Locus of control was measured with items adapted from Spector [46]. The scale assesses the generalized expectancy that rewards, reinforcements or outcomes in life are controlled by one's own actions (internality) or by other forces (externality). Participants were asked to respond to statements such as "Getting the job you want is mostly a matter of luck", "People who perform their jobs well generally get rewarded for it." Cronbach's alpha for locus of control was 0.766.

Goal commitment was measured with items adapted from Klein et al. [25]. Goal commitment was typically left unmeasured or measured with a single item. This new scale pulls together previously used single item measures of goal commitment, and the results suggest that this scale is a psychometrically sound, construct relevant, robust, and widely generalizable measure of one's determination to reach a goal. Participants were asked to response statements about the overall goal in their work such as "It's hard to take this goal seriously," "It wouldn't take much to make me abandon this goal." Cronbach's alpha for goal commitment was 0.723.

Job satisfaction was measured with five items taken from Brayfield-Rothe's [8] model of overall job satisfaction. These five items were "I fell fairly well satisfied with my present job," "Most

days I am enthusiastic about my work,” “Each day of work seems like it will never end”(reverse scored), “ I find real enjoyment in my work,” and “I consider my job rather unpleasant’ (reverse scored). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was 0.849.

Statistical analysis

I use SEM approach to validate the research model. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to examine the reliability and validity of the measurement model, and the structural model was analyzed to test the associations hypothesized in the research model. I first conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to clean the factor loading. As a conservative heuristic, items with factor loading below 0.40 were eliminated.[16].

Then, to examine construct reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity, I conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) since CFA provides more rigorous interpretation of reliability, validity and unidimensionality than does EFA [36]. I use coefficient alpha for the questions of each construct to assess the internal consistency reliability of the instrument. The Cronbach’s alpha values were tested for each construct [35]. I also used LISREL 8.72 to construct the measurement and structural equation models.

RESULTS

Assessing reliability and validity

First, I use exploratory factor analysis to determine which items should contribute to self-efficacy and locus of control. The results demonstrate that the questions comprising the test are internally consistent. I use Cronbach’s alpha to test the reliability. All the scales have alphas greater than the suggested cutoff of 0.7 [46] with the lowest reliability being 0.723 for goal commitment.

Test for discriminant validity were conducted at the item-level and the result shows that item loadings on their relevant factor are generally higher than their loadings on the other different factors. The correlations for a particular item and any other item within the factor are higher than the correlations of that item and all items outside the factor.

The correlations for each factor are high and are significant at $p < 0.01$ indicating good convergence. The significance of this correlations also partially support the hypotheses in this study since the correlations is significant between self-efficacy and goal commitment, locus of control and goal commitment, locus of control and job satisfaction, and goal commitment and job satisfaction.

The results also suggest that all indicators provide good measures of their respective constructs. The results of goodness-of-fit indices for exogenous constructs are: RMSEA =0.066, NFI = 0.94, CFI = 0.97, GFI = 0.94, PNFI = 0.73, and AGFI = 0.90. The results of goodness-of-fit indices for endogenous constructs are: RMSEA =0.096, NFI = 0.93, CFI = 0.95, GFI = 0.94, PNFI = 0.63, and AGFI = 0.89.

Testing the structural model

The overall model fit statistics indicate that the sample data fit the hypothesized model well. The observed normed χ^2 (the ratio between χ^2 and the degree of freedom) was 1.86 ($\chi^2 = 271.40$, $df = 146$), which is smaller than three recommended by Bagozzi and Yi [4]. Other fit indices also show good fit for the structural model. The goodness-of-fit index is 0.89, which exceeded the recommended cutoff level of 0.8 [10]. The comparative fit index is 0.95 and normed fit index is 0.90, which also exceeded the recommended cutoff level of 0.9 [34]. Additionally, the root mean square error of approximation is 0.048, which is below the cutoff level of 0.08 recommended by Browne and Cudeck [10] and Mulaik, et al. [34]. Different from χ^2 that is sensitive to the sample size (χ^2 value usually is significant when sample size exceeds 200), RMSEA is not dependent on sample size. This value verified the good fit. In summary, the hypothesized research model exhibited a fairly good fit with the data collected.

Hypotheses 1a and 1b suggest that self-efficacy is positively associated with goal commitment and job satisfaction. The test result supports H1a ($\gamma = 0.63$, $p < 0.01$) and H1b is not supported ($\gamma = 0.15$, $p > 0.01$). Hypotheses 2a and 2b state that locus of control is positively related to goal commitment and job satisfaction. Both hypotheses are supported as estimated, which indicates that locus of control is an overall driver of goal commitment ($\gamma = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$) and job satisfaction ($\gamma = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$). Hypothesis 3 is supported also. The results show that goal commitment is positively related to job satisfaction ($\gamma = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$).

Overall, the results indicate that self-efficacy and locus of control are positively related to goal commitment. Goal commitment is positively associated with job satisfaction. In addition, locus of control is found positively related to job satisfaction while self-efficacy does not have such relationship with job satisfaction. The results confirm the mediating effect of goal commitment.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present research confirms the relationship between goal commitment and job satisfaction. Obviously, employees committed to organization's overall goal tend to be satisfied. Further, there is a relationship between the self-efficacy and goal commitment. The more individuals believe that they will perform well on the task, the more efforts they will put in the goal and to accomplish that goal. Compared with externals, internals are more confident about their actions and believe the more efforts they put, the greater outcomes they will achieve. This study confirms that internals are more committed to goals than externals. Besides, this study supports that one's personality is related to job satisfaction.

Overall, the personality variables should not be overlooked among employees. Given that certain personality traits are related to the individuals' feeling about their job and commitment, companies can use personality tests in selection of individuals. Certainly, this information is very helpful for companies to narrow down or recruit new employees.

(References available upon request from Wai Kwan Lau at 940-565-3166)