



Short Review Paper

Sustaining employees through reducing employee cynical Behavior: developing a conceptual framework

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Available online at: www.isca.in, www.isca.me

Received 28th March 2020, revised 16th October 2021, accepted 2nd February 2022

Abstract

The main objective of the study is to construct a framework for sustaining employees through reducing cynicism. This study will help to determine how employees' cynical behavior can be mitigated through employee mentoring and by providing positive organizational environment to employees. The paper uses a three- step approach: First, it describes the entire concept of employee sustainability through reviewing current literature. Second, this model explains buffering moderating effect of employee mentoring and positive organizational environment on direct relationship between employee cynicism and employee sustainability. Third, this paper uses Social Exchange theory to develop a framework for sustaining effective employees. Through considering existing literature, a framework is developed on employee sustainability. Organizational changes have increased demands from employees and in return organizations do not meet employee expectations. It generates cynicism and mistrust between organization and employees. Due to cynicism, employee sustainability has become more challenging for the organizations. Therefore this article describes that how through employee mentoring and by giving positive organizational environment to employees; organizations can decrease employee cynical behavior & can enhance employee sustainability.

Keywords: Cynicism, Employee Mentoring, Sustainability, Organizational Environment.

Introduction

Cynicism is the main area of research in social sciences and in organizational environment field and the concept of cynicism is basically rooted in ancient Greece¹. Cynicism has been mainly classified into following types: Personality cynicism, employee cynicism, social/institutional cynicism, vocational cynicism and organizational change cynicism which are widely described in literature. Among these, employee cynicism has now become important area of research in the field of organizational behavior².

Employee cynicism means negative feelings or attitude of employees towards their organization. These negative feelings include anger, disappointment, distress and dissatisfaction and these feelings are generated in employees when their expectations are not met^{3,4}. Literature has identified different factors that increase employee cynicism in organizations such as biasness or favoritism, lack of communication between employee & organization and violation of psychological contract. Employee cynicism increases burnout which leads to lower employee motivation and satisfaction level². It also increases employee turnover rate and makes employee sustainability difficult for the organizations⁵.

Employees are now considered as asset of organization because it is the people who make the organization. Employee

sustainability has become very challenging for organizations now even for multinationals because organizations are experiencing cynical behavior of employees. After attack of terrorists on 11 September employee turnover rate has increased to 1.3 percent⁶. So employee cynical behavior is the major reason that makes employee sustainability difficult for the organizations.

Social exchange theory explains that employee's performance and satisfaction level will increase if employee perceives that he will be rewarded by the organization and rewards will be fair. It also depends on employee perception that organization is fulfilling his expectations. So, organization itself generates attitudes of employees whether positive or negative. Negative or cynical behavior is generated in employees due to unfair or biased practices of the organizations and it leads to higher turnover rate. On the other hand, organizations can generate positive attitude in employees by providing them positive organizational environment and by employee mentoring which helps them in sustaining employees.

This study mainly describes that how organizations can reduce employee turnover rate and can enhance sustainability. Now employee sustainability is highly challenging for the organizations due to global competition. The study also clarifies effect of employee cynicism on employee sustainability (ES).

The moderating impact of employee mentoring and positive organizational environment is also investigated in the study that how these moderators help to reduce the employee cynical behavior and enhance employee sustainability.

Due to globalization and advancement in technology, it has become more difficult for organizations to maintain and sustain the competitive advantage. Organizations are trying to gain competitive advantage by attaining higher economic value which means they are trying to give greater value to customers at the lowest cost⁷.

But all these ways of attaining competitive advantage are easily copied by the competitors. So, organizations are giving great importance to its employees now because skillful and talented employees are the way to gain competitive advantage which cannot be easily imitated. Organizations are now giving value to employees and trying to improve employee sustainability which is only way of attaining sustainable competitive advantage⁸.

Due to these advancements, organizations have also changed their structures, re-engineered them and have become knowledge driven. Organizations have now high demands from employees and in return are unable to meet employee's expectations. So due to this employee are now cynical rather than being motivated and creative.

Mostly employees have negative attitude towards their organizations and that's the reason of higher turnover rate. Organizations have to reduce this employee cynicism for employee sustainability and for their survival as well. Through proper employee mentoring and through providing positive environment to employees, organizations can enhance employee sustainability. Employee mentoring and positive organizational environment reduces employee cynical behavior by ensuring them that they are valued and organization is giving them fair rewards based on their performance.

So employee sustainability is the main focus of all organizations and they are trying to identify the factors that are barriers to employee sustainability and also identifying the factors which help in employee sustainability. Employee cynical behavior is one of the main barriers toward employee sustainability and this cynical behavior can be minimized through mentoring and positive organizational environment which decreases communication gap between employee and organization and creates positive image of organization.

Social exchange theory also clarifies that organizations must meet employee expectations in return of high performance to enhance employee sustainability. Social exchange theory explains that relationship between employee and employing organization should be mutually beneficial. Employees should try to meet the increasing demands of organization and in return organization should also satisfy employee's expectations.

Literature Review

Organizations are adopting change now mainly due to globalization and high international competition. So organizations are doing mergers and acquisitions and downsizings as well for their survival. Such organizational changing's have negative influence on employees in form of high turnover rate, less job certainty and high ambiguity⁹. Organizations expect a lot from employees now that they will work longer time, with greater responsibility and will also accept the change. Employees in return also expect good pay packages, higher performance based rewards and positive organizational environment¹⁰. Organizations sometimes break this psychological contract which means that they do not meet employee's expectations. So this violation of contract generates employee cynical behavior and reduces employee's trust on the organization¹¹.

Employee cynicism refers to the employees' negative feelings towards their organization¹². It basically includes two elements: First, employees show negative attitude towards the organization. Secondly, employee's belief that organization is lacking trustworthiness or integrity¹³. The concept of employee cynicism is related with burnout which is basically a syndrome in which employee stress level increases and employee does not perform well¹⁴. Employees show cynical or negative behavior when organizations perform activities that are different from stated policies and rules. Sometimes lack of communication between employees & organization, unfair and biased performance based rewards also cause employee cynical behavior⁹. Employee cynical behavior decreases satisfaction level of employees and thus employee sustainability becomes difficult for the organizations.

Due to high global competition, employee sustainability has become difficult for all sorts of organizations. Employee sustainability is important for the organizations because organizations have to tolerate higher costs if employee turnover rate is higher¹⁵. Now day's employee sustainability is more challenging because: First, organizations do not describe job position accurately to employees at start. Second, organizations do not mention required attitudes and behaviors along with job related skills. Third, organizations do not give fair pays and promotions on the basis of performance¹⁶.

Through employee mentoring and by providing positive organizational environment to employees, organizations can get rid of all these issues. The main purpose of employee mentoring is to enhance skill level of employees, prepare them for future jobs and helps organizations in employee sustainability. Organizations must arrange mentoring programs for employees because these programs enhance employee's performance level¹⁷. Mentor helps employees in three ways: First, mentor helps them to increase their self-confidence by enhancing their skill level to perform current job. Second, mentor provides them clear description of job and organization. Third, mentor prepares

them for the future jobs as well. So the most important benefits of mentoring programs to organization are that these programs enhance motivation level of employees, increases their performance level, increases employee sustainability and also helps employees to understand culture of organization. These programs reduce employee cynical behavior by ensuring that organization is giving them value¹⁸.

Positive organizational environment also helps organizations in employee sustainability. Positive organizational environment means that employees are given fair rewards based on their performance, employees are treated with equality without favoritism, organization environment is learning and organization fulfills employee's expectations. If employee's attitude and behavior along with skills matches his job position then person-environment fit is obtained. Organizations can easily retain its employees if person "fit" in the environment¹⁶.

This entire concept is rooted in social exchange theory which was introduced by George Homans in 1958¹⁹. Social exchange theory also describes that to strengthen relationship with employees and to get their desired output organizations have to: First, organization should give rewards to employees because the exchange relationship between employee and organization should be mutually beneficial. Second, organization should give fair rewards to employees without biasness. So through ensuring employees that organization is giving them fair performance based rewards, employee's motivation level can be enhanced. Third, this exchange relationship between employee and organization should be based on justice. Both parties should be fair with each other. Forth, both organization and employees want to reduce their cost and increase their returns. Such as employees want to get rewards from organization in return of their performance. Similarly organization also wants to get maximum output from employees in return of salaries and incentives that they give to employees. Fifth, Employees should be motivated and should be free to perform tasks. So this theory clarifies that relationship between employee and organization should be mutually beneficial.

The study aims at examining the buffering moderating effect of employee mentoring and positive organizational environment on direct relationship between employee cynicism & employee sustainability (ES).

Cynicism is related with attitude of employees that is shaped by the organizations. The cynical behavior is generated in employees when their expectations are not fulfilled, when employees feel that they are not rewarded with fairness & honesty and organization is not giving them value⁵. Cynical behavior of employees has adverse impact on the employing organization and also it is also inversely related with job satisfaction and employee commitment. When employees have negative feelings about the organization then their satisfaction level decreases and employee will be less committed and less sincere with the organization. Employee cynical behavior has

greater impact on employee's turnover intentions because when employees will be less satisfied with organization then it will be difficult to retain them. So the cynical behavior of employees leads towards higher turnover rate²⁰.

Organizations themselves are responsible for generating negative feelings in employees by doing unfairness and inequality. Employee sustainability is now a challenging task for the organizations because of greater competition among organizations. It's the priority of organizations to retain their skillful and trained employees. Organizations have to increase satisfaction level of employees and reduce cynicism by giving employees value, to enhance employee sustainability²¹.

Employee mentoring reduces negative feelings in employees regarding organization and increases employee sustainability through proper guidance of employee. The mentor is basically an agent of organization who helps employees in their career development and also enhances their skills and knowledge to perform the current job as well. Employee mentoring programs include training and development of employees which not only helps them to perform current job but also prepares them for future jobs. Mentor ensures employees that organization gives them value and at the same time organization is also not violating psychological contract that it made with employee. Mentoring also shows that organization is more concerned about them and employees are important for organization¹⁸.

Conclusion

This positive relationship between mentors and mentees eliminates negative feelings in employees regarding organization and increases employee satisfaction level. Then it becomes easier for organizations to sustain their employees. Through mentoring process positive relationship is not only established between mentors and mentees rather positive relationship is created between mentees and entire organization as well. So, direct relationship between employee cynicism and employee sustainability (ES) will be moderated by mentoring. The moderator has buffering effect which means that moderator will decrease impact of independent variable (employee cynical behavior) on dependent variable (employee sustainability). On the basis of literature review, following model can be developed.

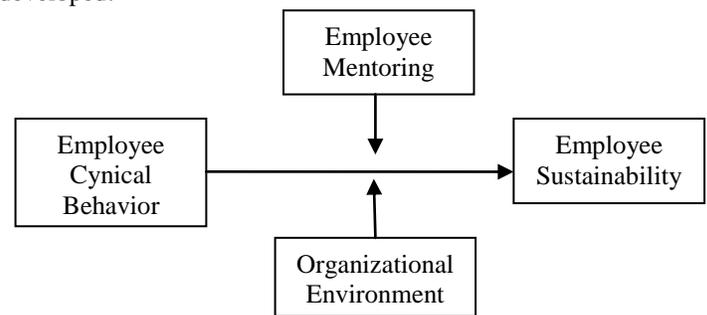


Figure-1: Theoretical Model.

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