Fighting Cynicism In Organizations:The Role Of Job Autonomy

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Abstract

This research examined the role of job autonomy in influencing the level of organizational cynicism. By using a survey method through the questionnaires distribution, 504 dataset was utilised for the analysis.Several statistical techniques such as factor analysis, reliability test, correlation analysis, and regression analysis were conducted in this research. Through the data analysis, this research indicates a negative relationship between and organizational cynicism. With based on the analysis result, this research suggests that job autonomy could be favourabletowards decreasing the level of organizational cynicism.

1. Introduction

Some of the research on positive workplace attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment have gained numerous attention by scholars for decades. Recently it is shown that researchers have increased interest towards paying attention on a negative workplace attitude such as organizational cynicism (Bashir et.al,2011). The issue relating to organizational cynicism has become the topic of interest for researchers more the past several years ago.

Organizational cynicism is believed as one of a big problem that organizations have to deal with, which should be taken into account and serious

consideration by the organizations. However, despite the existence of this problem, it is important for the researchers to investigate what factors that lead towards the development of organizational cynicism This issue is something that cannot be ignored, as it could bring a continuous negative effect on employees and organizational efficiency. (Tekin, &Bedük, 2015). With this regards, it is important for every organizations to find better solutions in reducing this phenomenon which may hinder organizational and employees success.

The lack of job autonomy given is believed to be one of the major factors that influencing organizational cynicism among the employees. It is suggested that more studies on organizational practices need to be further investigated whether it can reduce organizational cynicism among employees (Chiaburu et.al, 2013). In viewing the level of job autonomy and its

influence on organizational cynicism, it is believed that low autonomy could influence the level of organizational cynicism. For example, as cited in Bashir (2011), a lack of autonomy creates melancholy (Stets, 1995) and frustration which results towards misbehaviour and felony (Agnew, 1984) creating serious problems for the organization. Although employees are hardworking and take seriously on their work, but still they seems to less satisfied and lack of passion which cause them to be less committed to the organization. These problems happened as employees feel restricted from working freely and be a part in decision making regarding their own work by themselves. (Naqvi, Ishtiaq, Kanwal&Mohsin Ali, 2013). In handling with the issue of organizational cynicism, job autonomy is believed to be one of the necessary weapons to reduce negative attitude, as employees will not be strictly controlled in their job (Meyer,1987).

Furthermore, autonomy also will enable employees to have more freedom in terms of controlling their work and to form procedures on work assessment (Dee,Henkin& Chen,2000).

Although job autonomy has been found to negatively related with organizational cynicism (Avey, Hughes, Norman and Luthans ,2008), there are some inconsistencies found in the past research which seems difficult to confirm the association of these two variables. This can be due to the understanding that job autonomy sometimes is considered as a risky option and this is why not every employees are willing to be empowered with autonomy (Bashir; 2011). For example, job autonomy is somehow becoming quite difficult to handle as it requires a high level of trust and accountability on the individuals. It was found that if a high level of trust is required, autonomy turns out to be risky especially when there is least supervision takes place (Langfred,2004). On the other hand, job autonomy may cause employees to be more vulnerable to emotional exhaustion. This is happened if the workload exceed employees' capacities, where employees will feel trapped and emotionally distressed (Fernet, Austin, Trépanier, &Dussault, 2013). Based on the inconsistencies found, it is relevant for the present study to continuously investigate and discover the influence of job autonomy on organizational cynicism.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Some of the research on positive workplace attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment have gained numerous attention by scholars for decades. Recently it is shown that researchers have increased interest towards paying attention on a

negative workplace attitude such as organizational cynicism (Bashir et.al,2011). The issue relating to organizational cynicism has become the topic of interest for researchers more the past several years ago.

Organizational cynicism is viewed a as general or specific attitude characterized with anger, disappointment, and also a tendency to distrust individuals, groups, ideologies, social abilities or institutions (Andersson ,1996). This kind of attitude mostly experienced among employees who believe that their organization is lack of honesty.

Wanous, Reichers and Austin (1994) have specifically described organizational cynicism as "encompassing pessimism about the success of future organizational changes based on the belief that change agents are incompetent, lazy or both" (p.269). In the context of organizational change management

perspective, Ince&Turan (2011) viewed organizational cynicism as an attitude that arise in the workplaces due to the mis-managed of change efforts and it is believed that organizational change is considered as one the major factors of organizational cynicism (Nafei,2013).

Dean et.al (1998) define organizational as " a negative attitude toward one's employing organization, which involves a 'belief' that organization lacks of integrity and negative affect toward the organization which has tendencies to disparaging critical behaviors toward the organization that are consistent with these beliefs and affect" (p.345). The term of organizational cynicism which defined by Dean et.al (1998) is known as the most commonly cited in the literature and it is conceived as representing an attitude rather than an enduring trait. It is because, organizational cynicism is known as a state variable which may change

depends on the experience faced by employees.

Job autonomy is the extent of power that employees have to delegate their own task and other job activities, which specifically concerns on the voluntary power and freedom towards the work goals, task elements arrangement and determining the process and the pace of task that are conducted (e.g. Kwakman, 2003; Xanthopoulou, Demerouti, Bakker,&Schaufeli, 2007). It has been generally defined it as "the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and to determine the procedures to be used and carried out (Hackman & Oldham 1975; Marchese & Ryan, 2001; Morgeson, Delaney-Klinger &Hemingway, 2005; Parker, Axtell & Turner,2001; Dysvik and Kuvaas 2011; Humphrey, Nahrgang, &Morgeson, 2007). On the other hand, it

is also specifically refers to employee's self rule and independence in terms of decision making (Hackman &Oldham, 1976)

2.1 Job Autonomy and Organizational Cynicism

It is found that the high level of job autonomy brings employees to feel well adapted with the situational factors compared with other employees who experience less autonomy (Gellatly& Irving, 2001). In comparison with those who have little job autonomy, those who with more job autonomy will show more satisfaction with variation aspects of the work context (Oldham & Hackman, 1981), positive affect, self confidence and internal motivation (Hackman & Oldham,1976).

Besides, it enables employee to expand their creativity (Oldman & Cummings,1996) and less emotional dissonance (Abraham 2000). Having jobs

with adequate autonomy in the organization could equip employees to experience more engagement as autonomy helps to decrease emotional dissonance (Karatape, 2011). On the other hand, as job autonomy is important towards employee wellbeing, it gives employees more opportunities to adapt themselves with stressful situation and assist them to make decisions on how and when to respond to job demands. With such benefits, employee will face less burnout (Bakker and Demerouti ,2007).

Research has also indicated that job autonomy has a huge impact in influencing employees work attitude (Naus et.al,2007). This is because employee who are

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empowered to control over their work will be able to meet the job demand and adapt with ambiguity that placed on them which also may reduce the role ambiguity that they have faced (Çekmecelioğluet.al, 2011). On the other hand, Çekmecelioğlu et al, (2011) also found that job autonomy helps to build the level of employee self confidence, creativity and performance. This may encourage employees becoming more independent to carry out their task. As other benefits, autonomy may give employees more opportunity to show their extra role behaviour such as OCB (Runhaar ,Konermann& Sanders,2013)

H1: There is negative relationship between job autonomy and organizational cynicism

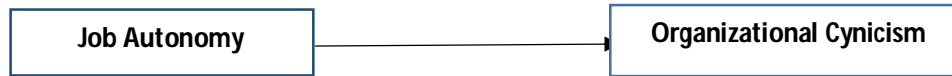**The hypothesized relationships are illustrated in Figure 1**

Figure 1. Research model

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This section discussedthe sample of the study, scales of variables and process of analysing the obtained data. Finally, discussion of the findings, conclusions and suggestions of the future research are made in the light of the findings.

3.1 The sample population

The survey based on a disproportionate stratified random sampling technique was carried out, as it could reduce the sampling error due to the imbalance of population in certain groups

Table 1: Overview of Sample Selection

(Babbie,1995;&Butcher,1973). The samples for this study were chosen based on the selection of the immigration officers (uniform based employees) of the Immigration Department of Malaysia (IDM), who work under the security and defence group, ranging from the upper position of employees scheme grade, KP 48 to the lowest KP17 (as shown in Table 1). About 800 questionnaires have been distributed to four selected Immigration states offices and 504 usable data (63% of response rate) were chosen in this study for the analysis.

Position Grade:	Population	Percentage	Minimum Sample (Proportionate)	Questionnaire distribution (Disproportionate)
KP48	9	0.31	0	9
KP44	30	1.03	1	27
KP41/42	91	3.13	3	27
KP38	77	2.65	3	40
KP32	235	8.10	8	50
KP32/KP38	7	0.24	0	7
KP27/KP32	446	15.4	15	30
KP27/KP32	17	0.59	1	10
KP26	344	11.50	12	100
KP22	1607	55.35	55	150
KP17/22	8024	276.4	276	350
Total	**10887**	**375**	**374**	**800**

Data Source: *The Immigration Department of Malaysia*, October, 2014

3.2   Measures

The data was collected using a questionnaire survey. The first section contains demographic information such as age, gender, qualification, experience and more. The second section is about organizational cynicism which consist of 14 items adopted from Dean et.al,(1998). The alpha reliability for this variable was 0.868, and sample items included such as "I believe my organization says one thing and does another", "My organization's policies, goals, and practices seem to have little in common", "When my organization says it's going to do something, I wonder if it will really happen", "My organization expects one thing of its employees, but rewards another". "I see little similarity between what my organization says it will do and what it actually does". "When I think about my organization, I experience aggravation.", "When I think about my organization I get angry.", "When I think

about my organization, I get tension.", "When I think about my organization, I feel a sense of anxiety", "I complain about what is happening in the work to my friends beyond my institution.", "We look at each other in a meaningful way with my colleagues when my organization and its employees are mentioned", "I often talk to others about the ways things are run in my organization", "I criticize my organization practices and policies with others", "I find myself mocking my organization's slogans and initiatives". How ever, after the Factor Analysis has been conducted, the item number 11 was removed due to high crossloading. Therefore, only 13 items were proceed for the next stage of analysis.

The third section relates to job autonomy, adopted from Karasek, (1979), and the alpha reliability was found to be at 0.735. The job autonomy items included "My job requires high level of skills", "My job requires me to learn new things", "My

job requires non repetitive jobs" and "My job requires creativity", "My job allows me freedom to decide how to organize my work", "My job allow me to make decisions on my own", "My colleagues are helpful in assisting in one's own decisions", and "I am allowed to say over what had happened".

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 Results

This section presenting the results based on the data analysis such a correlation and regression

Table 3

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Correlation of variables (N=504)

Variable	1
1. Job Autonomy	
2. Organizational Cynicism	-0.121

Note: *$p<0.05$; **$p<0.01$

Table 4

4.3 Regression Analysis

Variables	R^2	F	Beta	Sig
Job Autonomy	0.233	37.859	0.101	0.022

Based on the correlation analysis depicted in Table 3, job autonomy was shown to be negatively correlated with organizational cynicism (r = -0.106 , p < 0.01). Based on the results, the negative relationship indicates that high job autonomy is more likely to reduce organizational cynicism than with lower job autonomy.

Meanwhile, the regression results shown in Table 4 indicates that job autonomy has a significant influence upon organizational cynicism (b=0.101, p =0.001; Sig = 0.022 p<0.05). Therefore, this finding confirms that organizational cynicism could be overcome when job autonomy is given focus attention.

5.   Discussion

The hypothesisresult of this research is accepted, where job autonomy is negatively significant in influencing organisational cynicism. As expected, Job autonomy is functioning as an important role to hinder organizational cynicism. This is consistent with the previous research finding that job autonomy are likely to result in positive outcomes such as increase in job satisfaction and commitment (Naus et.al,2007). Relevant and as demonstrated by the present study, job autonomy would help to prevent the possibility of employees from easily developing a cynical attitude, where employees feel more trusted by the organization to carry out tasks. Hence, the presence of job autonomy could result in a higher level of employees' intrinsic motivation and more committed employees will be. This finding supported the previous study which showed increase in job autonomy was significantly allied with an upsurges in job commitment (Khamisabadi,2013).

The finding of the present research that depicted a significantly negative influence of job autonomy and

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organizational cynicism was also evidenced in previous research where it supported that employees who have more autonomy in their job shows more positive feelings, and self confidence (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), less mental stress (Karasek, 1979), and less emotional dissonance (Abraham,2000). Additionally, as been captured by Naus et.al, (2007), the restriction in terms of autonomy could hinder employees self expressive behaviours, which it will potentially evoke opposition and resistance that could lead to negative attitudes and behaviours such as cynicism towards the organization. This problem occurs when there is a very strict structural controls in terms of rules and procedures and tight organizational control that impede employees capabilities, work competency and ideas to perform the job. This might cause negative feelings among the employees where they feeling forced to follow all those overly strict procedures which limit their freedom in contributing their ideas and decisions.

Based on the findings that have been obtained, this study therefore confirms that, job autonomy is negatively significant in influencing organizational cynicism, where employees who perceive lack of job autonomy will feel more frustrated with their role and career, which it will ultimately affect their level of commitment and satisfaction level. In the mean time, the absence of job autonomy cause employees to develop a negative belief about their organization that they are not valued and appreciated, this in turn may also result towards negative emotions and behaviour among the employees.

5.1 Limitations and Direction For The Future Research

There are few limitations of the research that should be acknowledged. First, since all the measurement scale used in this

study was adopted from the past studies, factor analysis showed that one item from the dependent variable was not permanent due high crossloading. How ever, the scale showed satisfactory reliability in this study.

Second, this research is mainly quantitative in nature, where quantitative research is generally little is known about "why" and "how" regarding the antecedents and consequences of the relationship among the variables. Nevertheless, this approach still does not jeopardize the whole findings of the present research as quantitative research could help in generalizing the result by using a large sample size.

Since this study has significant implications for both theoretical and practical contributions, future researchers also should consider to expand the organizational cynicism research by adding organizational culture as a

moderating variable. This is to test whether organizational culture could moderate the relationship between the independent and dependant variable. Furthermore, to investigate if there is any type of organizational culture that could weaken or strengthen the relationship between job autonomy and organizational cynicism.

Another useful extension for the future researchers to highlight is to conduct more research into investigating the consequences of organizational cynicism For example, by examining whether organizational cynicism could influence the level of employees engagement, employee deviant behaviour and employees' union commitment. . This can be examined by having organizational cynicism as a mediating variable.

5.2   Conclusion

This research summarizes that job autonomy is negatively related with

organizational cynicism, where organizational cynicism may reduce if job autonomy is high and given focus attention. Additionally, it gives an important indication that job autonomy appears to be something that is need to be highlighted in organizational cynicism research context, whether it is beneficial or risky to the employees. With these findings, this research contributes a new knowledge in the organizational cynicism research.

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