The impact of personal resources on organizational attitudes: Job satisfaction and trust in organization

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Abstract

Objectives. The aim of the current study is to identify and assess the relations between personal resources (life satisfaction, dispositional optimism and resilience) involved in maintaining and developing certain organizational attitudes and to establish the relevant predictors for the criterion. Methodology. The study was conducted on a sample that included 114 participants, selected from different organizational environments. Life satisfaction and optimism, as variables, through their one-dimensional nature, were considered as independent variables, while job satisfaction and organizational trust were recognized as dependent variables. Results. Resilience is a factor that mediates the relations between personal resources and organizational attitudes.

Keywords: organizational attitudes, personal resources, life satisfaction, life orientation, resilience.

1. Job satisfaction

Generally, job satisfaction is defined as a positive frame of mind that is reflected by the employee’s opinion regarding work or the climate of his workplace. In a trial for finding the most representative definitions for this concept, Koys (2003) defines job satisfaction as the way the employee perceives and evaluates his own job and Bernhardt, Donthu, and Kennett (2000) claim that job satisfaction is more of a personal evaluation of their workplace conditions, as well as their results obtained through their work. Also, there are some authors who describe job satisfaction through the relation between one’s desires regarding their workplace and what one actually is offered at their workplace (Wangenheim, Evanschitzky, and Wunderlich, 2007).

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While discussing the content of the psychological mechanisms involved in the generation and expression of job satisfaction, it is fundamental to highlight job satisfaction approach through the perspective of the cognitive, affective and evaluation components’ assessment. The evaluation constituent refers to a general agreement or disagreement response towards the organization; this component gathers the individual perceptions, opinions, beliefs and expectancies regarding the organization. The affective component is represented by the emotions and feelings evoked by the organization. The importance of the employee is confirmed when he feels that he is accepted as a valuable member of the organization and his competences and values are acknowledged. Due to the fact that job satisfactions involves employee’s emotions, it influences personal and organizational well-being, following a positive impact on life satisfaction, increasing productivity, decreasing absenteeism, as well as significantly lowering the resignation rate (Sempane, Rieger and Roodt, 2002; Spector, 2008).

Over time, profession satisfaction led to different viewpoints due to the great variety of concept approach. The central theories offered for explaining career satisfaction, focused on the nature of the work or on the organization’s features, on processing the information coming from the social environment and on predispositions as factors that influence it in a decisive way. According to Herzberg (1959), satisfaction is attained through the nature of the work (e.g., interesting, pleasant work), while dissatisfaction is due to extrinsic factors as, for example, salary (apud Conte & Landy, 2010). Nevertheless, it was revealed that satisfaction may be altered by elements from both categories. Thus, different studies suggested that organizational justice, as an extrinsic job characteristic, correlates with employees’ satisfaction (Bakhshi, Kumar, & Rani, 2009; Lawson, Noblet, & Rodwell, 2009). As reported by Martins and Coetzee (2007), employees’ motivation and organizational culture are shaped by how employees’ needs and objectives are integrated with organization’s needs and objective, as well as through the balance between work and personal life and individual’s well-being and the physical traits of the work environment.

2. Organizational trust

Organizational trust is approached as a dependent variable in our study and is considered a valid indicator of organizational health. The studies regarding organizational trust, approach this concept as a general organizing principle: the foundation of a general governing system of the contractual relations which may be invoked in order to control opportunism, transactional costs cut and alleviating monitoring problems in organizations. How can trust as a psychological state to produce a general organizing principle? Which are the mechanisms that make this phenomenon possible? How can trust as a general organizing principle be trustworthy? (Gambetta, 2000). In order to find satisfying answers to these questions, it is mandatory to analyze two important tendencies regarding the organizing character of the organizational trust. A main tendency – founded in social psychology – is regarding trust as a mass of psychological states influenced by motivational and volitional components (Mayer et al, 1995). The second tendency – with roots in organizational psychology – consists in an analysis involving trust as a general organizing principle or as a solution for solving the interdependency problem and the uncertainty in organizations (McEvily, 2003). Following this perspective, trust is frequently viewed as an efficient comparative governing and as a control mechanism for economic transactions, as well as for social relations (Bradach and Eccles, 1989).

3. Life satisfaction

Life satisfaction as a personal resource, is assessed by the way one evaluates his personal life in general, but also in particular contexts. Life satisfaction invokes cognitive elements regarding employees’ subjective well-being (Rode, 2004), being a way of measuring life in general (Graves, Ohlott, and Ruderman, 2007). Judge and colab. (2011) define life satisfaction as a conscious and cognitive assessment of one’s life quality. Life satisfaction may be described as an emotional reaction to life, by considering the time reserved for work activities, free time and life satisfaction self expression (Heller, Judge, and Watson, 2002). Resilience or adjustment abilities, as well as the perceived positive stress are positively associated with life satisfaction (Abolghasemi and Varaniyab, 2010). This fact proves that life satisfaction rises at the same time with resilience and decreases once with the rising of stress. Other conditions that alter life satisfaction include demographic, environment and interpersonal factors (Kooshar and Bonab, 2011). Saari and Judge (2004) have a great contribution by enlarging the content of the life satisfaction concept by adding a few relevant factors like: pleasure in life, finding a purpose in life, coherence regarding
obtaining life satisfaction, individual positive identity, physical well-being, economic and social relations safety as indicators of life satisfactions. Resilience as well as perceived positive stress are positively correlated with life satisfaction (Abolghasemi and Varaniyab, 2010). This fact argues that life satisfaction rises at the same time with resilience and decreases at the same time with the increase of stress.

4. Resilience

Resilience is the ability to adapt to perilous environment conditions, while maintaining a sense, equilibrium and mental and physical well-being (Sergeant & Laws-Chapman, 2012). Resilience is not only one’s endurance in the face of adversity, but it is mostly the ability to rise and develop in rough conditions, by covering every area of personal competencies (emotional, cognitive and social). Scientific literature comprises at least three main aspects of resilience: the ability to obtain positive results in risk situations, the ability to function efficiently in stress situations and the capacity to recover. Resilience is defined by: challenge (perceiving changes in life as normal and natural and also as opportunities to achieve personal development), involvement (finding a purpose in one’s own actions and will to active participation) and control (the belief that one’s actions can have a great impact on one’s existence).

Resilience as the capacity of positive adjustment is positively linked to life satisfaction, as Cohn et al. (2009) claimed in a study cultivating resilience variations which influence the links between positive emotions and life satisfaction and life orientation, as Abolghasemi and Varaniyab (2010) proved in their studies, that this relation is mediated by coping responses.

5. Dispositional optimism

Optimism may be defined as the general wait for positive occurrences in a greater amount than for negative happenings and it is linked to a higher possibility to achieve good results, higher performances, and also, to a higher probability to attain expected results, a superior physical and mental well-being. In contrast to optimism, pessimism serves as an individual’s feature that creates a predisposition to perceive different circumstances in a detrimental manner, which increases the lack of trust in others and in the belonging organization.

Optimism and pessimism are essential psychological constructs that also predict the way people react to stressful events. Regarding optimism, some researchers consider this concept as one-dimensional, where optimism is to be found at one pole and pessimism at the opposite pole. From a practical point of view, there is a difference between proximal and distal causes of the results achieved by an individual. Considering the results of the past studies, the answering manners should be conceptualized as distal causes, while optimism and pessimism should be regarded as proximal causes.

6. Method

The general hypotheses of the study are as follows: a) the links between personal resources and organizational attitudes are mediated by resilience; b) personal resources are consistent predictors for job satisfaction and organizational trust. The participants for this study were 114 employees in different organizations, with ages between 18 and 60 years old (49.1% women and 50.9% men).

Job satisfaction was measured using the job satisfaction inventory (Job Descriptive Index, Smith, Kendall and Hulin, 1969) with an internal Alpha Cronbach consistency between 0.70 and 0.80 for the entire questionnaire. Organizational trust was assessed using Organizational Trust Profile (Ellis and Schockley-Zalabag, 2001) with Alpha Cronbach between 0.85-0.90. Life satisfaction was measured using the scale created by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin (1985). Optimism was assessed using LOT-R – Life Orientation Scale (Carver, C. S., Scheier, M. F. and Segerstrom, 2010). Resilience was measured using Evaluation of The Brief Resilient Coping Scale – Sinclair and Wallston (2004) with an Alpha Cronbach of 0.72.
7. Results

According to the statistical procedures that were applied, the analysis of the correlation coefficients proved the mediation effect that resilience enforces over the links between the predictor variables and criterion variables. Thus, dispositional optimism positively correlates with the total score obtained for organizational trust ($r = 0.391; p < 0.0; r^2 = 0.15$) in zero-order correlation conditions. The partial correlation, achieved through constant maintenance of the resilience variable, indicates a lower value for the correlation between dispositional optimism and the organizational trust slightly decreases ($r = 0.306; p < 0.01; r^2 = 0.09$), which shows a mediation effect imposed by resilience in the relation between the predictor variable and criterion variable. The positive correlation between dispositional optimism and identification accounts a value of $r = 0.460; p < 0.001; r^2 = 0.21$ and, under the influences of the mediation effect imposed by resilience, a correlation of $r = 0.337; p < 0.001 (r^2 = 0.11)$. The semipartial correlation ($r = 0.315$) reveals the fact that dispositional optimism explains 31% of the identification variable variation. What is more, optimism argues a consistent premise for the employee’s feeling of safety inside the organization ($r = 0.395; p < 0.01; r^2 = 0.15$); the mediation effect wielded by resilience is reflected in the positive correlation coefficient $r = 0.344; p < 0.01; r^2 = 0.11$, and the semipartial correlation ($r = 0.336$) assists the conclusion according to which dispositional optimism explains 33% of the safety variable variance.

Life satisfaction, as an essential personal resource positively correlates with organizational trust (total score). Thus, the correlations between the two variables is $r = 0.357; p < 0.01; r^2 = 0.12$. When constantly maintaining the resilience variable, the correlation turns into $r = 0.320; p < 0.001; r^2 = 0.10$, which demonstrates once again the presence of the mediation effect of resilience in the case of the mentioned correlation. The partial correlation shows that 29.5% of the organizational trust variable variance is explained by employee’s life satisfaction. The correlation between life satisfaction and competence (one of the subscales presented in the organization trust questionnaire) is $r = 0.435; p < 0.001; r^2 = 0.12$ and $r = 0.418; p < 0.001; r^2 = 0.17$ after controlling the resilience variable. The mediating effect of resilience is also active in the case of the correlation between life satisfaction and safety variable from $r = 0.318; p < 0.001; r^2 = 0.10$ to $r = 0.288; p < 0.05; r^2 = 0.8$. It is of great relevance to mention the fact that the value of the partial correlation ($r = 0.413$) is one of the most significant throughout the general relations between the variables that the current study explored. In other words, life satisfaction explains 41.3% of the criterion variable variance.

The mediation effect enforced by resilience in the links between personal resources and organizational attitudes are reflected in the values of the obtained correlations. Thus, life satisfaction positively correlates with job satisfaction (total score), $r = 0.223; p < 0.01; r^2 = 0.04$, a rather low value in comparison to the values of the correlations with the subscales of this instrument. Life satisfaction and promotion opportunities positively correlate $r = 0.382; p < 0.02; r^2 = 0.14$ before measuring the partial correlation. The constant maintenance of resilience proves that resilience has a mediating effect upon the correlation value ($r = 0.368; r^2 = 0.13$). Once again, we can encounter an effect with a positive influence in the case of the correlation between life satisfaction and the nature of the work ($r = 0.315; p < 0.01; r^2 = 0.09$) even after measuring the partial correlation ($r = 0.292; p < 0.02; r^2 = 0.08$).

8. Conclusions

First of all, it must be highlighted the fact that the current study’s results showed statistically significant positive correlation between predictor variables (life satisfaction and dispositional optimism) and some of the criterion variables (job satisfaction and organizational trust). It was emphasized the essential role that dispositional optimism and life satisfaction play in developing certain positive attitudes towards the belonging organization. Last but not least, we must acknowledge that in both regression models performed, demographic variables, gender and organization type did not turn out to act as predictors for organizational attitudes. Therefore, gender and organization type (private or public) do not influence job satisfaction and organizational trust level.
References


