

Affective Commitment as a Mediator between Psychological Climate and Job Involvement

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The psychological climate of the workplace is viewed as one of the most important environmental factor affecting an individual's workplace attitudes. At the same time, a favourable climate in the absence of commitment can be a source of misuse of workplace freedom by individuals. The present paper attempts to study the mediating role played by affective commitment between psychological climate and job involvement. Data for the present study were collected from manufacturing as well as service sector organizations all over India. The results and their theoretical and practical implications are discussed in detail.

Keywords: Affective Commitment, Psychological Climate, Job Involvement

Introduction

The increasing global spread of business and the greater participation of multi-national corporations (MNCs) in developing markets, calls for focusing attention towards management practices in different parts of the world (Budhwar, 2003; Napier & Vu, 1998). In this context, it is worth mentioning that among the rapidly expanding economies of the world, India holds a position of prominence (Biswas, Giri, & Srivastava, 2006; Budhwar & Boyne, 2004). It is evident therefore, that global changes have had a significant impact on the Indian economy too.

Moreover, Chauhan, Dhar, and Pathak (2005) observed that change *per se* is a routine affair in the contemporary business scenario; what is more important is a recognition of the fact that managerial efficacy need to keep pace with such rapid transformations. Furthermore, it appears that in the era following the South East Asian financial crisis of 1997-98 (World Bank, 2001) and in accordance with the report published by Goldman Sachs investment bank (2003), India along with Brazil, Russia, and China is poised to be a major player in the world business scenario.

Culture and Behavioural Aspects of Business

In continuation with the discussion about swiftly evolving economies such as India, it is necessary to examine the cultural factors that affect behavioural features of managerial

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effectiveness in the organizational context (Biswas, 2006). This viewpoint is further corroborated by an earlier study by Zucher (1968) wherein it is mentioned that in a cross-cultural context it is necessary to study behavioural constructs especially with the continuous growth of worldwide commercial operations.

With reference to India in particular, it has been observed that its national culture has a rich heritage which is helpful in clarifying different human actions. It is further understood that these cultural facets are deeply ingrained in the individual psyche and are relevant in positive cognition and affect of individuals at the workplace (Rao & Abraham, 2003). At the same time, the indigenous culture of India has been quick to accept alien customs and mores while preserving its distinctive values and rules (Biswas *et al.*, 2006). This has established the Indian social order as a classic example of the oriental world. In terms of crossvergent socio-cultural ethos therefore, India stands as a leader in establishing the norms and practices that dominate managerial practices in the contemporary borderless business environment (Ralston, Holt, Terpstra, & Kai-Cheng, 1997). In a cross-cultural framework, the above discussion indicates that the stature of India is quite elevated in the global socio-economic map. So much so that Varma, Budhwar, Biswas, and Toh (2005) noted that India's traditional cultural systems are acting as fulcrum of the South East Asian business environment.

To continue, England and Lee (1974) noted that during periods of environmental turmoil, societies in emergent economies such as, India tend to follow a path that leads to stability. This further implies that in a bid to maintain internal homogeneity and acclimatize to the external changes, society focuses on retaining certain behavioural aspects that are indigenous and at the same time give way to a certain level of novelty. Given that organizations operate within the domain of societal norms and values, it is evident that behavioural aspects of managing organizations call for further study. Based on this supposition, the objective of the current study was formulated wherein the interrelationship between four behavioural constructs were examined namely, psychological climate, affective commitment, and job involvement. More specifically, the present study investigates the causal impact of psychological climate on job involvement through affective commitment which acts as the mediator. The following section reviews literature related to the key variables.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Psychological Climate (PC)

Before the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1991, the Indian business environment was discernible through the dominance of firms in the manufacturing sector. These firms, whether public or private, were usually large organizations and were marked by mechanistic processes and rigid practices (Biswas & Varma, 2007). In fact, firms belonging to the service sector such as, educational institutions, healthcare organizations, and media and communications were basically owned by the state. This was a direct consequence of Nehruvian welfare philosophy that emphasized pluralistic utilitarianism. The fall out of such a socio-political arrangement was the lack of emphasis on individual behavioural aspirations (c.f. Varma, *et al.*, 2005). Thus, till the privatization of the Indian economy in the early 1990s, Indian organizations were extremely bureaucratic and were

characterized by one-way flow of decision making from the top to the bottom. Indeed, Hofstede (2001) observed that such managerial philosophies and practices are not uncommon in social cultures that are dominated by collectivism and high power distance norms.

However, with the liberalization of the Indian business environment, managerial practices especially those related to cognitive and affective facets of individual employees at the workplace underwent major alterations. Furthermore, human resource (HR) practices in Indian firms have experienced a sea change, as contemporary HR policies and practices are designed in a manner that promotes individual involvement on-the-job and encourages extra-role behaviour in addition to the in-role behaviour of employees (Biswas, 2006; Budhwar & Khatri, 2001; Pattnaik & Biswas, 2005). As Biswas and Varma (2007; p.666) observed that “HR practices in India are increasingly geared towards improving the way individual employees perceive their day-to-day working environment, or the way they perceive the *psychological climate* [italics added] in the workplace”.

Thus, to understand the group of actions in relation to the administration of members of an organization, the appropriate literature recommends an investigation of those variables that are related to an individual’s acuity a propos their immediate workplace atmosphere based on their everyday experiences (Schneider, 1975; Strutton, Pelton, & Lumpkin, 1993). In this regard, it is worth noting that the relevant literature recommend the examination of psychological climate as a primary antecedent of a variety of individual-level outcomes such as affective commitment, job involvement, and organizational citizenship behaviour (James, James, & Ashe, 1990; Parker, Baltes, Young, Huff, Altmann, Lacost, & Roberts, 2003; Woodard, Cassill, & Herr, 1994). This article seeks to empirically inspect these theoretical suggestions in the context of the Indian management scenario.

Affective Commitment

Commitment of a person at the place of work is revealed in a variety of behaviour such as obligation to his/her organization, to his/her immediate workgroup, or to another individual at office (Meyer & Allen, 1997). The current study conceptualizes affective commitment as an attitude borne out of an individual’s awareness about his or her daily work settings and the extent to which he/she is devoted to his/her employing organization (Blau & Boal, 1987; Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974). In fact, affective commitment is one of the three factors along with normative and continuance commitment that makes up the higher-order construct of organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Affective commitment has been stated in literature to be linked with variables that pertain to individual character of employees such as, attachment to job and other role-related issues like, job characteristics, professional behaviour, and work experiences (Hrebiank & Alutto, 1972; Koch & Steers, 1978; Morris & Koch, 1979; Steers, 1977; Welsh & Le Van, 1981). However, of all the frequent consequences of affective commitment, job involvement and organizational citizenship behaviour have received extensive consideration in the relevant literature (Hom, Katerberg, & Hulin, 1979; Ibrahim & Rue,

1994; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1986; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983; Tett & Meyer, 1993; Williams & Anderson, 1991).

Job Involvement

According to literature, job involvement is a construct that arises out of interactions between individual disparity of sensitivity about the work settings and personality traits (Ruh, White, & Wood, 1975; Sandler, 1974; Schein, 1983). According to Lodahl and Kejner (1965), job involvement affect people for whom his or her job constitutes the most important portion of life. Thus, job involvement can be conceptualized as “the degree to which a person identifies psychologically with his work or the importance of work in his total self image” (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965; p. 24). Hence, job involvement appears to be a construct that follows directly from the way individuals are affected by their immediate work environment and interpersonal relationships (Ruh *et al.*, 1975).

On the basis of the above discussion, the following hypotheses were tested (Figure 1 presents the conjectured model):

H1: An individual's perception of the PC will have a significant and positive influence on his/her affective commitment towards his/her employing organization.

H2: The level of an individual's affective commitment will significantly and positively affect an individual's job involvement.

Figure 1 The Conceptual Model



METHOD

Data Collection Procedure

The respondents involved in the study were executives/managerial cadre employees from different organizations. Data were collected from a total of 357 participants through a survey questionnaire. A covering letter describing the reason of the study was attached with each questionnaire. This letter gave details about the voluntary and anonymous nature of the study. Furthermore, participants were assured that the responses would be used only for research purpose. The questionnaires, when completed, were returned to the researcher via mail, in pre-stamped envelopes which were made available with the questionnaires.

Sample

Of the 357 participants, 180 (i.e. 50.42 per cent) belonged to the manufacturing sector companies, while 177 (i.e. 49.58 per cent) belonged to service sector organizations. Moreover, 83.9 per cent of the survey participants were males, while 16.1 per cent were females. The average age of participants was 36.9 years. The average weekly hour spent by the participants at work was 52.4, and their average years of work experience was 10.7. Finally, 7.3 per cent of those surveyed belonged to senior management, 35.6 per cent were from middle management, and 57.1 per cent reported working at junior management levels.

Measures

Psychological climate was calculated using the Psychological Climate Measure as reported by Brown and Leigh (1996). This scale comprised six factors of PC namely, supportive management, role clarity, contribution, recognition, self-expression, and challenge and included 21 items. The reliability measure of this scale was found to be .90.

Affective commitment was measured using the eight items reported by Meyer and Allen (1997). The reliability coefficient of this scale was .82.

Job involvement was measured using 4 items of the Job Attitude Scale as developed and reported by Lawler and Hall (1970). This scale measured the affective attachment of individuals with their job. The value of the Cronbach's alpha representing the scale reliability was .82.

Data Analysis Technique

The Statistical Package for Social Science version 10.0 (SPSS 10.0) and the Analysis of Moments Structure (AMOS 4.0) were used to analyze the data. The statistical analyses that were conducted included a measurement and a structural equation model (SEM). The path model based on the hypotheses emerging out of the review of literature was subjected to structural equation analysis and fit tests. Apart from the regression analysis, a variety of statistics including the normed Chi-square ($\chi^2/d.f.$), goodness-of-fit, centrality parameters, and normed-fit-indices as provided by AMOS 4.0 (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999) were utilized to achieve the results.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliability indices for the key variables of this study. It may be noted that the key variables were significantly correlated; psychological climate and affective commitment ($r = .38, p \leq .01$); and affective commitment and job involvement ($r = .28, p \leq .01$).

Table 1 Descriptive statistics and Correlation Matrix (N=357)

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3
1. Psychological climate	3.65	.53	(.90)		
2. Affective commitment	3.52	.64	.38*	(.82)	
3. Job Involvement	3.52	.60	.48*	.28*	(.82)

*p≤.01

Values in parentheses are reliability indices (Cronbach's alpha)

In order to examine the causal linkages, multiple regression analyses were conducted on the variables included in this study. Table 2 shows the standardized regression estimates between the key constructs. As shown in the following table, affective commitment was significantly influenced by psychological climate (standardized $\beta = .64$, $p \leq .01$). Moreover, affective commitment significantly and positively influenced job involvement (standardized $\beta = .53$, $p \leq .01$)

Table 2 Regression Estimates

	Standardized β	C.R.	Remarks
Psychological climate \rightarrow affective commitment	.64*	7.90	H1 accepted
Affective commitment \rightarrow job involvement	.53*	7.34	H2 accepted

* p≤.01

In order to calculate the fit indices that explained the relationships between the hypothesized paths among the latent constructs, AMOS 4.0 SEM procedures (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999) was used. The present study used the maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) algorithm to determine the fit indices. Accordingly, the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) were reported as the absolute fit measures. According to Byrne (2001), absolute fit measures should be used for comparison between the hypothesized model and an absence of any other model. The other measures which were also reported were the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI). These indices indicated a comparison between the hypothesized model and the model with maximum constraints. Finally, the normed chi-square value was also used as an acceptable measure of fit.

Table 3 shows the fit measures of the proposed model. For the model as depicted in Figure 1, the normed χ^2 value is 2.59. The GFI is .87. The TLI is equal to .86, the NFI value is .82, and the CFI value is .88. With the threshold value of RMSEA being 0.07, the value of RMSEA for the proposed model is 0.07. Finally, the AGFI and the PGFI values are equal to .83 and .69 respectively, thus confirming a good fit of the model.

Table 3
Fit Indices

	Normed χ^2	GFI	TLI	NFI	CFI	AGFI	PGFI	RMSEA
Proposed Model	2.59	.87	.86	.82	.88	.83	.69	.07
Independent Model	12.67	.37	.00	.00	.00	.31	.34	.18

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results established the relationships between psychological climate as antecedent of job involvement mediated by affective commitment. As conceptualized, psychological climate refers to the way in affective commitment system being the transmitter of psychological climate also assumes significant relevance.

Further, the results demonstrated that a positive psychological climate leads to an individual experiencing psychological empowerment, which is reflected in positive attitudinal change towards the execution of their jobs. This explains the role of psychological climate in positively influencing employees' affective, normative, and continuance commitment to their organization. Thus, a favourable psychological climate makes it possible for individuals to widen their activity-domain and enhance their dedication to their organization. This process is reflected in the results related to the first hypothesis, which predicted a positive impact of psychological climate on employees' affective commitment.

The results of the present study establish a positive causal link emanating from the affective commitment construct leading to the job involvement construct. This implies that components of commitment lead to a greater attachment of individual with his/her organization. Given that, affective commitment and job involvement are both affect related components of an individual's attitude, acceptance of the second hypothesis of this study serve as an empirical support for such a theoretical conjecture. Moreover, as an individual's work lies within the broader framework of organizational activities, the acceptance of the second hypothesis further corroborates the theoretical presumption that an individual's attachment to his/her workplace as reflected by his/her level of affective commitment will complementarily influence the degree to which he/she is involved in his/her job.

The results of this study are not without implications for the practicing managers especially those who are concerned with the human resource functions in an organization. Firstly, managers should note that they should provide such a daily working environment to their employees that the latter does not feel cognitively or affectively cramped in discharging his/her duties. This can be done providing ample scope for individuals to express themselves at their workplace.

Secondly, managers should also observe whether the provision of an encouraging psychological climate is contributing to an individual's affective commitment. In the

absence of a transformation of a positive psychological climate into a greater affective commitment, there exists a possibility of misuse of workplace freedom by the employees.

Finally, managers should understand that for an employee who is committed to his/her organization, it is important that his/her immediate work settings are valuable to him/her to the extent that it reduces his/her cognitive and affective dissonance. Reduction of cognitive dissonance will lead to higher levels of job involvement.

Future Research Scope

Three areas of future research emerged out of this study. Firstly, one may examine the role of identification as a second-order mediator between psychological climate and job involvement. Secondly, the current study focused on data related to a single culture, namely that of India. Future researchers may highlight the cross cultural validity of the study model. Finally, researchers may also carry out longitudinal studies on whether affective commitment continues to act as the mediator variable between psychological climate on the one hand and job involvement on the other.

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