

The Impact of Psychological Empowerment on Innovative Work Behavior Moderating by Quality Culture

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of psychological empowerment on innovative work behavior moderating by quality culture in Iraqi Higher Education. Therefore, psychological empowerment and quality culture play an important role in stimulation of innovative work behavior among employees in the organization. Higher Education sector of any country acts as a backbone for that country as it provides a skilled human resource. The Higher Education in Iraq faces many challenges, such as employee morale, brain drain in the sector, the ranking of universities in the world. In the academic context, the academic empowerment has a critical role in achieving success. However, the researcher concluded that there are relationships between the psychological empowerment and quality culture with innovative work behavior. Thus, the study contributes to the existing pool of knowledge on the impact of psychological empowerment and quality culture on innovative work behavior. Different aspects of these variables were studied, so as to provide a wider and more comprehensive lead to the understanding of the factors or elements that affect academic staff in Iraqi Higher Education. This study suggestsexamining these variables empirically.

Keywords: Psychological Empowerment, Innovative Work Behavior, Quality Culture, Higher Education.

1. Introduction

In today's working environment, innovative work behavior is one of the important factors for organizational growth and development in both private and public sectors (Al-husseini, 2014). However, In spite of the importance of innovation, the level of innovation is still low e.g in Arab countries, Malaysia and in Iraq (Nour, 2013; Tan & Nasurdin, 2010; Kheng, Junel & Mahmood 2013; Mahmud, 2013). However, the Higher Education (HE) sector suffers from constant technological change in the world (Mathew, 2010). HEs in other countries are similar to Iraq, in that, they are also facing fast-changing challenges (Herbst, & Conradie, 2011). Hence, many researchers have shown interest and deal with innovation for facing to above challenges (Al-Husseini & Elbeltagi 2015; Faylee 2013; Hussain, Talib, Shah, 2014; Kheng, et al., 2013).

Nevertheless, Iraq's, with 8,000 years of registered history, was once a leader among Arab countries in the quality of its social programs and education (Mahmud, 2013). In the previous decades, the level of HE in Iraq was progressive and developed, making it better compared to countries in the Middle East and the Arab Gulf (Al-Husseini, 2014). Iraq won the award of UNESCO for its educational effort to free Iraq from illiteracy in 1982, as a result of the government rules that motivate the students to join the educational fields at schools and universities freely (UNESCO, 2004). In prior years, Iraq faced sequence of conflicts which led to a fast deterioration of basic social services and infrastructure. Since 1980 when the Iraq-Iran war began and continued for eight years, Iraqi citizens lost a lot of lives and billions of dollars in liability (Mahmud, 2013). In addition, Iraq has suffered many years of UNSanctions that isolated Iraq from global developments led to many administrative problems, such as routine, poor performance, obstacles in its intellectual infrastructure, quality, weakness in the innovative and environment problems (Amara, 2010). These problems and circumstances lead to a lot of Iraqi's thinkers, scientists and engineers to leave the country. As a result, most of the HE and research institutions of Iraq are not in working capacity (UNESCO, 2014). Moreover, the HE sector in Iraq has declined and become outdated due to the social and political events of the last years (Faylee, 2013). The low level of innovation in Iraq is the result of the migration of scientists and researchers out of the country and lack of scientific research leaders (Alfathel, 1999).

Nevertheless, there is a lack of studies that explores the relationships between psychological empowerment and innovative work behavior (Cekmecelioglu, & Ozbag, 2014). Compounding the need for more research, Spreitzer (1995) claims that psychological empowerment is a significant forecaster of innovative behavior. Additionally, Knol and Linge's (2009) study on nurses likewise confirms that structural and psychological empowerment results of innovative behavior. Similarly, Zhang and Bartol (2010) reported a significant connection between psychological authorization and innovation. In the same context, there has been rich theoretical work emphasizing that quality is generated by a quality culture (Wu, Zhang & Schroeder, 2011; Noronha, 2002), however, up until the present time, there has been little examination on the influence of quality culture (Flynn & Saladin, 2006; Naor, Goldstein, Linderman, & Schroeder, 2008). Also, as quality culture becomes accepted and embedded in employees' value systems the employees are more empowered to take the lead to discover quality problems and generate innovative ideas to solve them (Wu, et al., 2011). In addition, social cognitive theory is focused on the role played by cognitive processes in the functioning of individuals. The

theory expounds on the behavior of individuals as they are formed and modified by conditions in a three-way dynamic interaction made up of the environment, the cognitive state of the individual and the behavior of the individual (Bandura, 1986).

Therefore, intensive studies are required in this area in order to improve the quality of education, research and development capabilities and the innovation of the academic staff. Given the importance of innovative work behavior in the HE sector, mainly learning environments like universities, it is significant to improve and boost the innovation within them. Also, it is possible to enhance the level of knowledge linking to the courses of education and to improve the employees' capabilities of organization problem-solving (Al-Husseini, 2014).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Innovative Work Behavior IWB

Innovation work behavior is characterized as containing the determination of alternatives and the production of novel ideas, and it may also consist of behaviors that are focused on the application of change, new knowledge or enhancing methods catering to individual or business performance (Farr & Ford, 1990). However, the IWB concept is relatively new, and visions of creativity literature are often used to develop assumptions about relations with IWB (De Spiegelaere, 2014). More importantly, according to the innovation theory, innovation is more extensive than creativity, and entails ideas application (King & Anderson, 2002). Towards this end, it becomes pertinent to stress on the overlapping aspect of creativity and innovation. The majority of studies in literature stressed on the creativity of employees, particularly on the early innovation process steps. Several authors have urged for the expansion of the construct and to view the ideas application in a more scientific way (e.g. Rajaei, Jalili, Abadi, & Azizkhani, 2015; Mumford, 2003). Additionally, De Jong and Hartgog (2008) stated that innovative work behavior is aligned with the idea generation, and it also requires behaviors to conduct ideas that ultimately achieve improvement in business performance (Dzulkifli & Md Noor, 2012). Therefore innovative work behavior is an important factor for private and public sectors (Al Hasany, 2014).

However, in the public sector, innovation is particularly important in the HE sector, where encouragement is a must to develop and diffuse innovation (Borins, 2001). Generally speaking, organizations are faced with considerable challenges stemming from the external environment owing to its dynamic changes. The main factor that enables organizations to support any innovation type is their human capital as it brings about the shift to the natural behavior of the workforce that reinforces the organizational activities (Hormiga, Hancock & Pasola, 2013).

2.2 psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment refers to a group of psychological conditions required for workers to perceive a sense of control over the task at hand. As opposed to focusing on managerial practices sharing power with employees of all levels, this perspective focuses on the way employees carry out their work. It refers to empowerment as the workers' perspectives concerning their role relative to the organization (Spreitzer, 2008). In this regard, Spreitzer (1995) described psychological empowerment as a psychological perception advocating the match between employee's job and his values – it is the notion that employee possesses enough knowledge and skills to do his job effectively in a way that makes a positive difference in the organization. Spreitzer (1995) also conducted an empirical test to create a psychological empowerment construct, and defined it in a more expansive manner reflected in four cognitions namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. These four cognitions are a reflection of the individual's work orientation.

Furthermore, psychological empowerment can be understood through the above four dimensions to determine a sufficient set of cognitions (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). The integration of the four dimensions into one construct to offer a deeper understanding and insight into the construct could engender a complete understanding of the psychological empowerment concept (Koberg, Boss, Senjem & Goodman, 1999). This could also lead to the generation of a dynamic empowerment aspect (Spreitzer, De Janasz & Quinn, 1999), where the lack of a single dimension would decrease the overall level of the perception of empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

2.3 quality culture

A review of literature shows that several definitions have been proposed for quality culture, with each having its own distinct variance according to the study focus. For instance, Mabawonku (2003) referred to culture as decisive, dynamic objectives and mechanisms (i.e. rules, values, ethics, and knowledge systems) that are created for the achievement of many aims. The most current and extensive quality culture definition describes it as the pattern of arrangement (physical or behavioral) that has been acknowledged by the company, group or team as a method to use to resolve issues (Mahmood et al., 2006). According to Kujala and Lillrank (2004), from the perspective of culture, quality is described as a sub-system of the organization. In regards to this Cameron and

Sine (1999) culture is unique based on its beliefs, practices and values, where values are ongoing aims that help in guiding people's lives and are described as indicated or implied formulations of the distinct culture that influences the individual's actions (Akata, Thurau, & Bauckhage 2011). On the other hand, practices refer to methods and behaviors that are observed in the institute (Asreen, Zain & Razalli, 2010) and lastly, beliefs refer to the shared assumptions why individuals in the firm feel about their environment and how they are directed towards the course of action in certain circumstances (Kujala & Lillrank, 2004).

However, quality management has recently entered the modern era of Higher Education sector (Ehlers, 2009). It is evident that a movement approaching quality is going on to reach an understanding of quality development in Higher Education growth. Such movement is based on the following; essential capabilities, new competencies and shared values (Wolff, 2004). The conceptualization of quality management and quality control are frequently viewed as technocratic methods that frequently face failure, particularly in HE (Sursock, 2004). Quality culture rather than quality criteria is of significance in HE as it provides the platform in understanding quality based on an extensive point of view, with the inclusion of all the elements that influence quality, like attitudes and skills of instructors and the learner's capabilities and stimulus, the background of the organization, environments and values and the instructions in the form of legislation, rules, and regulations (Ehlers, 2009).

3. Discussion

3.1 *Psychological Empowerment and Innovation Work Behavior*

The pioneer Spreitzer (1995) defines —psychological empowerment as a motivational construct that is manifested in four cognitions, which are meaning, competence, self-determination and impact where such dimensions display an active, orientation to a work role. Additionally, the meaning cognition from psychological empowerment is evident when the mission and goals of the organization match its value system, and when employees perceive that their work is important and that they are focused on their work as they care about the outcome (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995). Also, when an individual perseveres in playing a role and expending efforts on knowing the issue from different sides, and searching for solutions through diverse alternatives by linking information sources (Zhang & Bartol, 2010), this may be linked to the production of novel ideas and in turn, with innovative work behavior. Also, the competence cognition stemming from psychological empowerment is a reflection of the self-efficacy related to work; for instance, the employees' capability to achieve job actions with the required knowledge and skills (Spreitzer, 1995). To this end, the greater the degree of job-related competence, the more the roles are extended, and this leads to the production of novel ideas and innovation, and learning concerning the present methods that could enhance jobs and roles (Morgeson, Klinger & Hemingway, 2005).

Moreover, self-determination cognition materializes in decision making, specifically one that relates to aspects of procedure, time and effort, and work methods (Spreitzer, 1995). Hence, a leader who empowers his followers has to be able to provide them with autonomy and control along with positive and effective feedback, to establish significant goals, and to bring about the development of individual's skills to motivate feelings of self-determination and creativity. This in turn maximizes the attention levels in work tasks and improves innovative work behavior (Oldham & Cummings, 1996). Finally, the impact cognition is the level to which an employee is convinced that he influences the strategic output, management and workplace operation (Spreitzer, 1995). In instances where staffs feel that they can influence the organizational procedures, they are more inclined to expend effort in the generation, promotion and realization of innovative ideas for innovation than otherwise (Janssen, 2005). Also, Social cognitive theory is focused on the role played by cognitive processes in the functioning of individuals (Bandura, 1986).

3.2 *Psychological Empowerment and Innovation Work Behavior Moderating by Quality Culture*

In regards to this, quality culture is considered to be a part of the culture in the organization that contributes to bringing about innovation behavior (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby & Herron 1996; Hemlin, Allwood & Martin, 2008). Moreover, several prior studies supported innovation's positive relationship to team innovation (e.g. Agrell & Gustafson, 1994; Hulsheger, Anderson & Salgado, 2009; Pirola-Merlo, 2000). In addition, individuals who perceive support are more inclined to examine novel ideas and methods to achieve their goals and tasks or to solve the job problems (Pirola-Merlo, Bain & Mann, 2005). Furthermore, Kausar (2014) defined organizational culture as a system of concerns, shared values, norms and common beliefs that are extensively acknowledged and shared among the employees. According to the organization theory, culture affects the beliefs of employees continuously and it indirectly affects the organizational practices (Nahm, Vonderembse & Koufteros, 2004). Quality culture is, on the other hand, the pattern of beliefs, and behavior in light of quality. In order to achieve quality, the company goals require a positive quality culture to support it. A quality culture needs clear values and beliefs, as this would bring about total quality behavior (Linkow, 1989). It therefore comes to reason that organizations that are desirous of managing quality programs within their organization need to focus on the development of an appropriate quality culture (Dellana & Hauser, 1999). However, the concept

of quality culture has not been thoroughly examined in literature (Mahmood et al., 2006).

However, organizational culture affects the perceptions, behavior and effectiveness of its members (Mintu-Wimsatt, 2002; Miron, Erez & Navah, 2004). More specifically, cultural context plays a moderating role on the personality (psychological empowerment) – behavior (innovative work behavior) relationship (Mintu-Wimsatt, 2002). More than that, organization culture (quality culture) can be a moderator as suggested by Cui, & Hu, (2012), because the culture is usually used as moderator. Also, Jib Li, (2001) do a research to examine how the culture moderates the relationship between the behavior and performance. As evidenced by Abdullah, Uli, and Tari (2009), quality culture is a fundamental element in such research model (Alotaibi, 2014), and based on a thorough review of literature, there is lack of studies investigating the role of quality culture as a moderating variable between psychological empowerment and innovative work behavior in HE in Iraq. According to the social cognitive theory quality culture is environment to which the employee learning on the job by imitating behavior stemming from an action. Such ability can be reflected via self-efficacy in light of goals completion (Locke & Latham, 2002). It is hence plausible that innovative work behavior could positively impact his situation specifically in the context of Higher Education.

4. Conclusions

This study concludes that employees are an important source of innovative ideas. Psychological empowerment is a motivational construct that is manifested in four cognitions, which are meaning, competence, self-determination and impact where such dimensions display an active, orientation to a work role. In addition, social cognitive theory state that individual's show of positive work behavior may call for him to provide exert extra effort or risk and therefore the cognitive state may have a key role in motivating such an individual towards displaying positive behavior. Quality culture is on the other hand, the pattern of beliefs, and behavior in light of quality. In order to achieve quality, the company goals require a positive quality culture to support it. A quality culture needs clear values and beliefs, as this would bring about total quality behavior. It therefore comes to reason that organizations that are desirous of managing quality programs within their organization need to focus on the development of an appropriate quality culture. It is hence plausible that innovative work behavior could positively impact his situation specifically in the context of Higher Education.

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