Information Technology Employees Perception of Psychological Empowerment and its Influence on Work Engagement

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Abstract - Today organisations are looking from strategic view point on the influence of psychological empowerment in creating higher level of work engagement among the employees. Psychological empowerment and work engagement are significant factors to be considered for enhancing both individual and organisational performance, while the focus has always remained on work engagement. This study aims to investigate how employees of information technology organisation perceive their experience of psychological empowerment and work engagement due to immediate supervisor's positive behaviour. To explore the perception of psychological empowerment (i.e., meaning, competence, self-determination and impact) and its relationship on work engagement. A cross sectional study was conducted using a set of standard questionnaires on psychological empowerment and work engagement. The sample consisted of 203 employees from information technology organisation (MNC's). A significant positive correlation was found between employee's perception of psychological empowerment and work engagement. Employees perceived that due to their immediate supervisor's positive behaviour they experienced empowerment, which leads to higher level of work engagement. Implications of the study are discussed in the context of Indian service industry for possible organisational development interventions to enhance more psychological empowerment towards employee work engagement.

Keywords: Competence, Impact, Information Technology Organisation, Meaning, Organisational Behaviour, Psychological Empowerment, Self-Determination, Work Engagement

I. INTRODUCTION

The information technology sector has been the important player in the Indian economic transformation and changed global perception about Indian economy. The growth of India's service sector, its contribution to GDP, and its increasing share in trade and investment has been quite successful in drawing global attention. The human resource function has gone through a radical change and due to fast changes in technology and emergence of global economy. This has led to globalisation, workforce diversity, technological advances due to changes in political, legal environment and changes in information technology. All these factors are posing challenges on human resource professionals to attract, retain, develop and nurture talented workforce through work engagement. Workforce diversity, attracting and retaining talent, cultural fit, promote adaptability, resilience and agility, skill enhancement, career development factors like managing flexi working hours and work life balance can support individuals turn into more productive and not expected to burnout (Sunil and Patrick, 2018). So it's

important from organisational leader's perspective to look at interventions like psychological empowerment, healthier workplace towards creating higher level of work engagement for employee flourishing. A good work life balance impacts the workforce and organisation to enhance the longevity of the employees and productivity. As pay is always not a criterion for retaining employees. So when organisations are facing these challenges. The current study investigates employee's perception of psychological empowerment and its influence on work engagement in the information technology organisation.

II. FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The current study was directed by the conceptualisations of two factors psychological empowerment and work engagement with reference to employee's experiences in the information technology sector based on immediate supervisor's behaviour. The following section discusses them in detail.

III. PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT

Psychological empowerment is as a process through which individuals gain control and comprises of the individual's interaction with their environment and intrapersonal perception of empowerment. It reflects employee's on-going flow of perceptions and attitudes about their work environment in relationship to themselves. Kanter (1977) familiarised it with the notion of employee empowerment. Socio structural approaches regarded empowerment as a set of structures, policies, and practices. It was primarily designed to decentralise power and authority at workplace and enable employees across to take decision. Later, Conger and Kanungo (1988) introduced psychological perspective on empowerment, which determines employee's positive outcomes at workplace. Empowerment was allocated into three dimensions, structural, motivational and leadership (Menon 2001, p. 155). Due to the competitive global market and organisational changes, there has been alarming interest in psychological empowerment due to employee initiatives and innovation, Drucker, (1988). At the same time management practices are state of affairs that may empower employees but not necessary to do also.

Psychological empowerment is a pattern of process, understanding the experience of sub dimensional psychological state consisting of meaning, competence, impact and self-determination (Thomas and Velthouse 1990: Conger and Kanungo 1988: Spreitzer 1995). It is an individual's subjective experience of empowerment based on cognitions about oneself in relation to his work role characterised by these sub-dimensions. These are intrinsic task motivation were proposed to emerge only when all four cognitions were high. This involves intrapersonal, interactional and behavioural empowerment. Together these four dimensions reveal one's active (an orientation in which the individual wishes and feels able to form his or her work role and environment), rather than inactive orientation to a work role (Spreitzer, 1995). It is used to measure and understand the four sub-dimensions of empowerment and this has proved to be seminal to research on psychological empowerment.

Organisational culture can have a substantial influence on the psychological empowerment since it relates to the link between factors of contextual and employees' work behaviour. Which enhances the positive effects of transformational leadership (Bridger, D., Brown, V., Fuller, J B., Jones, L., & Momson, R, 1999) by creating optimistic association flanked by psychological empowerment and organisational commitment (Ahmadi, 2014: Ameri., and Esmaeeli, 2011) to improve employee trust, performance and well-being (Sonja et al. 2014). Stander and Rothmann (2010) found that psychological empowerment predicts work engagement. Gregory. et al., (2010), indicated that workforce experiencing

psychological empowerment sense that their contributions are meaningful and confident about their ability to shape the workplace. The present study is designed to find out the influence sub-dimensions of psychological empowerment (meaningfulness, competence, self-determination and impact) on employees' work engagement.

IV. WORK ENGAGEMENT

The role engagement has two important factors i.e., attention and absorption, that is performed in any role. Attention indicates being absorbed or immersed in the activity and talks about the intensity of one's focus on the role (Kahn, 1990: Goffman, 1961). Patrick (2014), Hewitt, the Consulting firm states "Engaged employees consistently demonstrate these three behaviour a) Consistently speak positively about the organisation to the co-workers, customers, vendors and potential workforce ,b) They aspire to be part of the establishment despite various occasions to work in other establishments and c) Give their best in terms of efforts and wits to contribute to establishment success by putting in additional period" Sunil & Patrick (2018): Schaufeli (2013).

More recent research has supported the notion that work engagement is a valid and reliable concept. It has been acknowledged as indicators towards organisational success (Ghadi, M., Fernando, M. & Caputi, P. 2010: Attridge 2009; Richman 2006). Immediate supervisors play an important role as they are directly related towards influencing work engagement (Persson. Andreas 2010). Studies reviewing the burnout literature argued that employee work engagement is a distinct construct characterised by vigor, dedication, and absorption in one's work, Schaufeli and Bakker, (2004). It is more "persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behaviour" Schaufeli, S.W.B., Salanova, M., Gonzales-Roma, V., and Bakker, A.B. (2002).

Employee work engagement comprises of three dimensions, viz. 'physical component'- (vigour) display involvement in a chore by showing vigour and an optimistic affective state. 'Emotional component' (dedication) displaying dedication and assurance through performing in one's assignment and 'Cognitive component' (absorption) being alert at work and experiencing absorption and involvement. Vigor reflects the readiness to devote effort in one's work, an exhibition of high levels of energy while working and the tendency to remain resolute in the face of task difficulty or failure (Patrick, 2014: Schaufeli, and Bakker, 2004). Dedication refers to a strong identification with one's work and encompasses feelings of enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge (Chughtai, Amir Ali, Buckley and Finian. 2008: Schaufeli, and Bakker, 2004). Absorption is characterised by being fully concentrated and happily

engrossed in one's work whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulty with detaching oneself from work (Schaufeli, and Bakker, 2004). Employee perception, attitude and optional work mannerism (Patrick,.2014: Bakker, 2011). Spreitzer (1995) advocated that outcomes of empowerment include 'effort, persistence, initiative and behavioural engagement' (Bhatnagar, 2012: Macey and Schneider 2008, pp. 10).

Therefore, the study investigates how employees of information technology organisation perceive their experience of psychological empowerment and work engagement. To explore the perception of psychological empowerment (i.e., meaning, competence, self-determination and impact) and its relationship on work engagement. We therefore propose the hypothesis: H1: Psychological empowerment does influence work engagement. The dimensions of psychological empowerment (meaningfulness, competence, choice and impact) will predict work engagement.

V. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Information technology organisations have grown rapidly due to globalisation of Indian economy and favorable government policies. It has also brought new work relationships, job security, insecurity regarding future working conditions and rapid obsolescence of skills are causes of stress. It is viewed as having very distressing work environment due to various factors such as odd working hours due to global time zones, clients in various parts of the globe. Constant pressure to deliver services efficiently, work load, nature of work and stake holders expectation etc. These factors lead to disengagement in work due to which there is low performance, high turnover rate, absenteeism. Disengagement leads to low empowered jobs and lack of interest to perform. However, experiencing empowerment has been mediating between managerial practices and expected outcomes, such as organisational commitment, and job performance. In the current study we are testing it empirically. Though this has been tested with various construct such as empowering leadership and employee creativity (Zhang and Bartol, 2010), turnover intention (Patrick, 2014), Work satisfaction (Moura., D, Orgambidez., A. and Jesus., S. 2015) Job-insecurity (Hashish. et al.,2018), well-being (Pradhan & Hati,2017).

Spreitzer (1995) positions that theoretically behaviour is a consequence of psychological empowerment and later it was observed that there is a strong linkage between psychological empowerment and engagement process. This leads to psychological empowerment being an antecedent to work engagement (Macey and Schneider 2008, p. 10). The research objective of the study was to establish an empirical linkage of psychological empowerment and work engagement. Look at the factors that positively influence empowerism, which would be

useful to identify gaps in knowledge of work engagement. Though, both work engagement and psychological empowerment symbolise intrinsic motivation, there are only a few empirical researches that examined how these two construct are related. Although, literature reviewed show that psychological empowerment and work engagement are outcome of positive work behaviour, but none has looked at the immediate supervisor behaviour influence on these constructs. Thus, this study is designed to find out the immediate supervisor's influence on the various dimensions of psychological empowerment (meaningfulness, competence, self-determination and impact) on employees' work engagement among employees of information technology organisation.

VI. RESEARCH DESIGN

Descriptive research was adopted using standardized valid scales, which was administered to the target sample of employees working in the information technology sector with a minimum of two years' experience. Most of the sample respondents were drawn from the top 10 IT organisations situated in Bangalore, the Silicon Valley of India. 500 respondents were contacted, 203 fully completed the scales with a 40.6% response rate and a final sample size of 203. The inclusion criterion for sample selection was 24 months' minimum experience and 12 months' minimum experience in the present organisation.

VII. MEASURING TOOLS

Two reliable, valid and standardised scales were adopted for the present investigation.

Spreitzer (1995) 12-items scale was used to assess psychological empowerment. The scale consists of four dimensions namely 'meaning', 'competence', 'self-determination' and 'impact'. Each dimension in turn has three items and each item is rated on a Likert type seven-point rating scale ranging from 7 = Very strongly agree to 1 = very strongly disagree. The instrument has been used in empowerment research (Degago, 2014: Thomas and Velthouse, 1990; Zimmerman, 1990). Cronbach's α for this scale was 0.84 for retail service industry. Even, the scale was found to be relevant for Indian settings (Bhatnagar and Sharma, 2004) particularly in Indian service industry (Degago, 2014).

Work & Well-being Survey (UWES), (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) was developed to measure about how you feel at work and consists of 17 items with three subscales i.e. Vigor, Absorption and Dedication. These items were answered using scale, '0' represents "Never" and '6' represents "Always" i.e., (every day) that best indicates to how repeatedly you feel that way. High scores on all three dimensions indicate high engagement (Cronbach's α of this scale was 0.93).

VIII. DATA ANALYSIS

To investigate the relationships, Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to examine the structural relationships between the constructs, as this was part of a larger study. To understand the relationship, we used regression analysis between psychological empowerment's sub-dimensions i.e., meaning (MEN), competence (COM), self-determination (SD), impact (IMP) and Work Engagement (WE).

IX. RESPONDENT PROFILE

The sample distribution consisted of 63% Male and 37% female respondents. All the respondents had minimum 24 months of work experience in the IT sector and 12 months in the same organisation.

A. Sample Distribution

In this study seven demographics were considered, Table 1 shows the distribution of sample across the various categories. Every category has a sufficient representation of respondents.

TABLE 1

Demographics variable	Categories	Frequency	percent
1.Qualification	Graduation	113	55.7%
	Post -Graduation	87	42.9%
	Post –Graduation and above	03	1.5%
2.Gender	Male	127	62.6%
	Female	76	37.4%
3.Marital Status	Married	116	57.1%
	Single	87	42.9%
4.Age	< 25 years	28	13.8%
	26-30 years	76	37.4%
	31 -40 years	71	35.0%
	41-50 years	22	10.8%
	51 years and above	06	3.0%
5. Total Work Experience	< 2 years	0	0
	2-5 years	64	31.5%
	5-10 years	84	41.4%
	11-15 years	31	15.3%
	16-20 years	08	3.9%
	21-30 years	13	6.4%
	30 years and above	3	1.47%
6. Current Work Experience	> 2 years	81	39.90%
	2-5 years	88	43.35%
	5-10 years	28	13.79%
	11-15 years	05	2.46%
	16-20 years	00	0.0%
	21-30 years	01	0.49%
	30 years and above	00	0%
7. Designation	Non-Manager	61	30.05%
	Front Line Manager	60	29.56%
	Middle Manager	58	28.57%
	Sr. Manager	08	03.94%
	Top Manager	16	07.88%

X. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between psychological empowerment and work engagement among the employees in IT organisations. Also look at the influence of sub-dimensions of psychological empowerment the

constructs of psychological empowerment and work engagement.

A. Objective 1: To measure the level of employee perception of psychological empowerment and work engagement experienced by employees in Information Technology Organisations.

The employees of IT organisations did experience psychological empowerment moderately high with mean score (5.34). They were in agreement that immediate supervisors' positive leadership behaviour influences them by motivating higher levels of performance, taking along people together towards common purpose, and empowering them to lead by creating value for stakeholders. When we compare the sub dimensions, they were also moderately high 'meaning' had the highest mean (5.73), followed by 'impact' (5.28), 'self-determination' (5.22) and 'competence' (5.11) being the least. 'Self-determination' (β=.442, p=<0.000) and 'impact' (β=.434, p=<0.006) influence was significant and 'meaning' was least insignificant at (β= - .077, p=<.0.409) Refer table 2 and chart 1.

Similarly, employees did experience work engagement 'often' with mean score (4.26). They agreed that immediate supervisor's positive leadership behaviour often influenced higher level of work engagement. When we compare the sub dimensions, 'dedication' had the highest mean (4.59), followed by 'absorption' (4.31) and 'dedication' (3.88), being the least indicating that

employees 'often' experienced work engagement. Refer chart 2. These outcomes may endorse the employees' perception and satisfaction with psychological empowerment they experience in their work environment. Similarly, Sierra et al. (2015) positive work environment, and positive leadership behaviour are factors that encouraging work engagement.

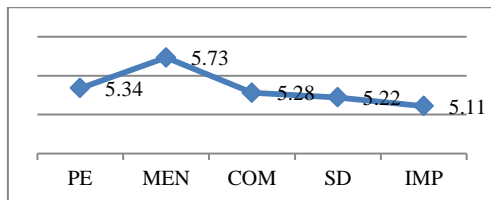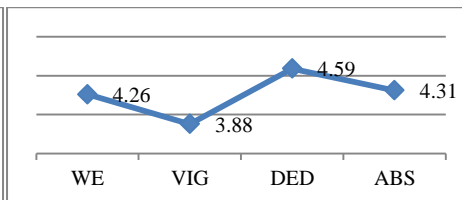**Chart 1**   **Chart 2**

Chart 1: Indicates the mean score psychological empowerment and its sub –dimensions.
Chart 2: Indicates the mean score work engagement and its sub –dimensions.

A. *Hypothesis Testing*

H1: Psychological empowerment does influence work engagement

Employees from information technology organisation 'agree 'that they experience psychological empowerment with a mean of (5.34). Also indicating the same through multiple regression analysis. Psychological empowerment significantly influences work engagement. Every unit of psychological empowerment experienced by employees predicts 23.7% increment in work engagement. (R^2=.237, F (4,202) =15.393, p< 0.000**level, Refer Table 2). Employees often experience work engagement, i.e., in a way of optimistic, rewarding, work related attitude.

This indicates that immediate supervisor's behaviour of psychologically empowering team members is adequate in influencing work engagement indicating a positive association between the independent and dependent variables in the study. The hypothesis is accepted i.e., psychological empowerment does influence work engagement.

When immediate supervisors involve in empowering team members, they are motivated, experience trust and work engagement due to strong working relationship (Patrick & Sunil, 2019). Work engagement can be improved through adopting certain healthy workplace behavioural practices that address organisational communication, job design, support system, working environment, organisational culture, positive leadership style and trust in workplace

(Patrick & Sunil, 2019: Bhatnagar, 2012). Similarly, service sectors in Kerala-India, also predicted significant relationship between psychological empowerment and employee engagement, Geetha & Mampilly (2014). Empirically psychological empowerment predicts work engagement (Stander and Rothmann, 2010).

The dimension of psychological empowerment (meaningfulness, competence, choice and impact) does significantly predict work engagement. Among the sub-dimension Self-determination' (β=.442, p=<0.000**) and 'impact' (β=.434, p=<0.006*) influence was significantly predicted work engagement. While 'meaning' (β=-.077, p=<0.409) and 'competence' (β=-.196, p=<0.107) have least influence on work engagement. Refer table 2. This indicates that psychological empowerment sub-dimensions 'self –determination and 'impact' is adequate in influencing work engagement indicating a positive association between the sub-dimensions of independent variables and dependent variables in the study. This implies that an increase in the dimensions of 'Self-determination' and 'impact' will result in increase in work engagement. When employees are empowered by their immediate supervisors they experience positivity and have higher level of engagement, Deci, Conneli and Ryan (1989). This supports the statement of (Ryan & Deci,2017: Deci, 1994) that psychological empowerment influences individuals to better engagement even in areas of less interest or monotonous work.

TABLE: 2 indicating descriptive statistics and Coefficients values for the variables

Variables	Mean	SD	R^2	F	β	t	Sig
Psychological Empowerment	5.34	.662	.237	15.393			.000**
Meaning	5.73	.833			-.063	-.828	.409
Competence	5.11	.852			-.167	-1.619	.107
Self-determination	5.22	.683			.386	4.444	.000**
Impact	5.28	.801			.304	2.755	.006

Predictors: (Constant), Impact, Meaning, Self Determination, Competence

Dependent Variable: Work Engagement

** significant at 0.01 level

XI. IMPLICATION AND LIMITATION

The findings of the present study suggest the possibility of adopting effective methods to enhance engagement among the employees of information technology organisations for achieving business excellence through psychological empowerment. When immediate supervisors demonstrate positive behaviour, employee's experiences psychological empowerment at workplace leading to higher level of work engagement. Since psychological empowerment is perhaps one of the most important aspects of empowerment. When employees are psychologically empowered, they have a sense of meaning towards life and work, develop confidence, self-efficacy, and determination and realise their impact on their professional and personal lives. It is a motivational process that promotes individual's activity through impact, meaning, self-determination and competence. Similarly, immediate supervisors in information technology organisations can measure the level of psychological empowerment experienced by their team members which leads to higher level of work engagement. By doing so they can identify the gaps if any and address them in their workplace by changing their behaviour style of functioning. Previous research in this field also suggests that the experience of positive emotions leads to a syndrome of related behavioural characteristics: The values developed in the organisation through relationship and interaction pattern with immediate supervisors and peers create happiness and flourishing in workplace (Yalden B. J. & Mccormack B. 2010). The findings of the study provide information to enrich the theoretical literature to the existing knowledge in the domain of psychological empowerment and work engagement. The relationships between the two variables important indicators of having an effective workplace which organisations need to look into seriously to achieve organisational excellence. This work will aid in designing strategies for which engaged employees may be advantageous to improving the quality of services, increasing employees' job satisfaction and well-being by empowering employees. Organisation must look at training programs and individual coaching about leadership empowering behavior takes place. These will lead to reducing the levels of job insecurity to increase organisational outcomes and effectiveness especially in the current economic scenario.

Limitations to the study: The study was conducted in the information technology organisations limiting its scope. The cross-sectional nature of the study limited the findings, the study relies on self-reports, which might increase the risk of common method variance (CMV). Harman's one-factor test, however, indicated that CMV did not significantly influence our results (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Irrespective of very useful information gathered from employees of large information technology organization (MNC's). The findings cannot be generalised across industries and organisations as they are limited only to large Indian IT organisations. The sample was scattered geographically and maximum respondents were from Bangalore. The sample location could be a bias. The sample size, among others factors, may affect sizes and the outcome of the results. The current study has used quantitative analysis as its statistical method. The future researcher may use qualitative methods such as depth-interview would have added framework and fruitfulness to the finding. Hence, further we may need to look at Indian organisations in the information technology sector and compare the data to make more strong evidence to support this study and to generalise the findings. Apart from examining this model in other contexts and at different functional levels in the organisation, as well as with different samples. There is biasness in the respondent gender sample, male 63.6% and female 37.4%. The future study should make an effort to minimise these differences. Further, with larger samples we can look at the mediating role of psychological empowerment between various constructs especially in terms of job satisfaction, flourishing, turnover intent etc. It's also important to understand the influence based on demographic and work-related characteristics on the perception of these variables.

XII. CONCLUSION

The main objective of the present study was examining the role of psychological empowerment and its sub-dimensions on employees toward work engagement in Indian information technology organisations. The study revealed that psychological empowerment positively influences work engagement. Among the sub-dimension, self-

determination and impact also positively predicted work engagement. This engages employees to have higher level of organisational commitment, satisfaction due to improvement in performance, reduces stress level and well-being at workplace. These findings have numerous implications for employees and organisations in terms training and development. Empowerment intervention programs may play a crucial role in understanding employees' adaptation in their work environment. Appropriate training modules could be designed by organisations, which is likely to enhance work engagement. This in turn may result in enhancing the level of psychological empowerment among individuals that would result in enriched and enhanced psychological potentialities of employees. Considering the relationship of work engagement are positively associated with empowerment independently; and on the other side work engagement is considered as an integral part in predicting empowerment, the current study affirms the notion that psychological empowerment influence work engagement.

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