

AN EXAMINATION OF THE CORRELATES OF ORGANIZATION-BASED SELF-ESTEEM

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ABSTRACT

One hundred and forty-one employees of a non-unionized paper mill in the Pacific Northwest completed a survey measuring organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) and several job and organizational variables. A hierarchical regression showed a significant relationship between job influence, worker autonomy, and supervisory trust; job satisfaction; and OBSE. The results suggest that perceptions of influence, worker autonomy, and managerial trust hold substantial importance in formulation and maintenance of OBSE, which in turn affects workers' job satisfaction. Implications for further research are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

In American society, many would likely consider work a determining factor of well-being. With the increasing time Americans spend completing their jobs, experiences within an organizational context understandably hold significant influence over well-being with respect to one's job. Korman [8] [9] [10] held that organizational occurrences play integral roles in employee self-esteem, a construct which he surmised considerably determined employees' attitudes and behaviors in an organizational context.

Pierce, Gardner, Cummings, and Dunham [15], furthering Korman's paradigm, introduced the concept of organization-based self-esteem (OBSE), and the construct has attracted considerable attention ever since. More specific than its global counterpart, OBSE constitutes the degree to which employees deem themselves competent and valuable within their organizations. The construct holds considerable importance in an organizational context.

At the individual level, research has shown that persons high in OBSE have greater work motivation (Pierce et al., [16] and intrinsic motivation (Hui & Lee [7], and achieve higher performance ratings (Van Dyne & Pierce [23]; Pierce et al.,[16]; and Marion-Landais,[13] than do persons low in OBSE. Concerning the organizational level, scholars have also discovered that OBSE correlates negatively with turnover intentions and with turnover (Gardner & Pierce [5] .

Despite the wealth of research illuminating OBSE, no research has yet addressed the combined effects of innovation, job autonomy, managerial trust, and job influence on OBSE and their implications for job satisfaction. Addressing this lacuna, this paper examines the effects of supervisory trust, innovation encouragement, job influence, and job autonomy on OBSE, and it investigates the predictive relationship between OBSE and job satisfaction. The paper will conclude with suggestions for direction of future research.

Trust

A trusting environment ostensibly serves as a prerequisite for OBSE. Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, and Camerer [18, p.135] defined trust as "a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another."

Following Rousseau et al.'s definition, it is plausible that an increase in OBSE would correspond with an employee's perception of his or her supervisor as trusting him or her. Supporting this contention, Elloy and Randolph [3] found that the degree to which leaders allowed their subordinates to exercise self-direction and provided their subordinates opportunities to display competence and experience success positively related to OBSE.

In a similar vein, Chattopadhyay and George [2] found a positive correlation between trust and OBSE, suggesting that working in an environment characterized by trust positively relates to one's degree of OBSE. Thus, given previous empirical support, it is believed that managerial trust of employees will predict OBSE.

Innovation

Although no study has directly assessed the relationship between encouragement of innovative behavior and OBSE, extant work provides some insight into a possible association between the two constructs. Pierce et al. [16] theorized that complex job designs lead to increases in OBSE because such designs afford people greater opportunities to express themselves in their organizational roles in such ways that benefit their organizations. Supporting such a theory, Pierce et al., Tan and Peng [21], and Lee [11] found a positive relationship between job complexity and OBSE. Furthermore, Lee discovered job complexity to weigh most heavily as a predictor of OBSE. It is therefore reasonable to expect that encouragement of innovative behavior, or behavior characterized by a high degree of self-expression, will positively correlate with OBSE. Therefore, it is posited that managerial encouragement of innovative behavior will predict OBSE.

Influence

Several studies have examined a relationship between the exercising of influence and OBSE. Kostova, Latham, Cummings, and Hollingsworth (as cited in Pierce & Gardner [15]) found that participation positively related to OBSE. Lee [11] discovered a positive relationship between employees' exercising of participatory management practices and OBSE. In a similar vein, Pierce (as cited in Pierce & Gardner, [15]) found a significant positive correlation between employees' perceptions of influence and their levels of OBSE. We expect that the present study will replicate such findings. Thus, it is hypothesized that employees' perceptions of organization influence will predict OBSE.

Job Autonomy

Several researchers have discovered positive links between job autonomy and OBSE. McAllister and Bigley [12], Vecchio [25] and Borycki, Thorn, and LeMaster [1] all discovered positive correlations between job autonomy and OBSE. Hence, we expect to replicate such findings.

Job satisfaction

Many researchers have investigated the relationship between OBSE and job satisfaction. Investigations (e.g., Gardner & Pierce, [15]; Tang & Gilbert, [21]; Ragins, Cotton & Miller, [17]) have consistently discovered a positive relationship between the two constructs; therefore, we predict that job satisfaction will be a significant related to OBSE.

METHOD

Site and Research Participants

Data were collected on site over a period of three days from employees working in a non-union paper mill located in a small rural community in the Pacific Northwest. Surveys were completed by 141 employees for a 99% response rate. The high response rate was due to the fact that employees filled out the survey at the work site before the start of their respective shifts.

MEASURES

A slightly modified version of Decotis and Koy's [3]) scales were used to measure various perceptions of the leader trust. Items were rated on a seven-point scale. Organization-Based Self-Esteem (OBSE) was measured with a 10-item survey developed by Pierce, Gardner, and Dunham [16]. Items were rated on a seven-point scale. Modifications of the instrument developed by Sims, Szilyagi, and Keller [19] were used to measure autonomy. Participants rated items on a seven-point scale. Job satisfaction was measured with 14 items from the Job Diagnostic Survey [6]. Items were rated on a seven-point scale. Job influence was measured with a four-item scale developed by the author.

RESULTS

Data were analyzed primarily by hierarchical regression. All the variables were separately regressed against OBSE, the dependent variable. The independent variables job influence, autonomy, supervisory trust and innovation were entered in step 1 and job satisfaction was entered in step 2.

Regarding the job variables, job influence, job autonomy, supervisory trust and innovation significantly predicted OBSE ($\beta = .32, .25, .19$ and $.18$, respectively; $p = .00$) and accounted for approximately half of OBSE variance ($R^2 = .52$). In addition, job satisfaction was significantly related to OBSE ($\beta = .32, p = .00$) and accounted for 57% of the variance ($R^2 = .57$).

DISCUSSION

Results showed that job influence, job autonomy, supervisory trust, innovation and job satisfaction were significantly related to OBSE. Ostensibly, then, workers who perceive that their efforts positively influence their organizations, who enjoy a high degree of autonomy in their jobs, and who believe that their supervisors perceive them as trustworthy and encourage innovation show high levels of OBSE, which then translate into higher degrees of job satisfaction.

Results also suggest that workers with high levels of OBSE enjoy greater satisfaction with their jobs. In connection with the job variables, it thus stands to reason that perceptions of influence, autonomy, and supervisory trust will lead to greater employee job satisfaction and tenure. Hence, managers may engender greater employee job satisfaction and longevity by providing feedback regarding the specific benefits employees bring about while accomplishing their work duties. Furthermore, managers may explicitly state their trusting of employees to possibly increase OBSE and thus the likelihood of worker satisfaction and tenure.

REFERENCES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST