

Psychological Correlates of Contextual Performance at Work:

An Empirical View

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ABSTRACT:

In the present corporate scenario employees' need to look beyond their assigned duties at work and adopt a holistic approach. Competitive employee tends to exceed the required role demands and goes that extra mile in order to excel in their overall performance. Contextual performance refers to this discretionary behaviour which goes beyond the boundary of assigned duties and contributes to the overall functioning of the organization. Through this study, the researcher attempts to study the relationship between contextual performance and its psychological correlates i.e. work engagement, psychological empowerment and spirit at work. A sample of 80 corporate executives was considered for the purpose of the study. Through application of correlational analysis, the hypothesized positive relationship between contextual performance and all psychological correlates was found to be significant. Further, through regression analysis psychological empowerment was found to be the strongest predictor of contextual performance among all the psychological correlates under study.

Keywords: *Contextual Performance, Empirical View*

Job performance as a multidimensional concept includes a wide array of employee' activities which are not restricted to the duties assigned but also include employees' discretionary behaviour which contributes to the overall success of the organization. Contextual performance as a construct has been originated with the intention of evaluating this social and psychological contribution of the employees' in the organization. Borman and Motowidlo (1986) defined contextual performance as "behaviours that shape the organizational, social and psychological context that serve as a catalyst for task activities and process. It includes activities which are not goal or task specific but make individuals, teams and organizations more successful and effective. It comprises of cooperative and helping behaviour of an employee including voluntary performance of extra role activities, enthusiasm and extra determination to complete assignments successfully. Employees with contextual performance behaviour defend organizations' goals and adhere to organizational policies.

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Contextual performance differs from task performance as the latter contributes to the technical core and involves work directed towards the production of goods and services i.e. job role and assigned task duties whereas the former provides support to the social and psychological environment wherein the assigned duties are performed. Also, another way to distinguish the two can be explained as job –specific behaviour are a result of certain skill set and knowledge which vary according to the job role whereas contextual behaviour relates more to the personality dimension of the individual and does not vary much across the working tenure of the individual. Moreover, when the employees find their job mundane and less meaningful, it is contextual behaviour comprising loyalty and persistence among other qualities that sets the tone and proves crucial for the overall performance of the organization.

There are various psychological factors that influence contextual performance of an employee. For an employee to think about the overall success of the organization and look beyond the task and duties assigned, a sense of attachment and feeling of oneness with the organization is of great importance. Also, feeling empowered and having a sense of control and belief in ones' ability gives courage and confidence to face challenges and take responsibility beyond the usual. This paper explores the relationship of contextual performance with its psychological correlates i.e. work engagement, spirit at work and psychological empowerment.

An engaged worker focuses on the work performed and willingly dedicates ones' self (physical, cognitive and emotional) to the work assigned. Kahn (1990) suggested that an engaged employee approaches work with a sense of self investment, passion and a lot of energy and it translates into not only high performance but high extra role behaviour as well. Engagement acts as an indicator of employee's willingness to expend discretionary effort to help the organization. Individuals who invest themselves completely in their work role are likely to carry a broader conception of the role assigned and probability of their stepping out of the formal boundaries of work assigned and facilitating the organization at large and people within is more (Rich et al, 2010).

Conger and Kanungo (1988) described empowerment as a process whereby conditions that foster powerlessness are identified and removed by providing efficacy information, thereby enhancing employees' self efficacy. Klagge (1998) recognized empowerment as an assigned responsibility and activity for the employees in order to attain their abilities for appropriate decisions at work. Individual spirit at work refers to the desire of employees to express all aspects of their being at work, to be engaged in meaningful work (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000) and to achieve their personal fulfillment through work. Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2004) stated that spirituality describes the experience of employees who are very passionate about their work and feel energized. They find meaning and purpose in their work and also feel connected to coworkers. As this construct covers beyond individual perspective and thinking, being spiritually aligned results in extra role behaviour and employees tend to go that extra mile and work beyond the assigned tasks and duties.

HYPOTHESES

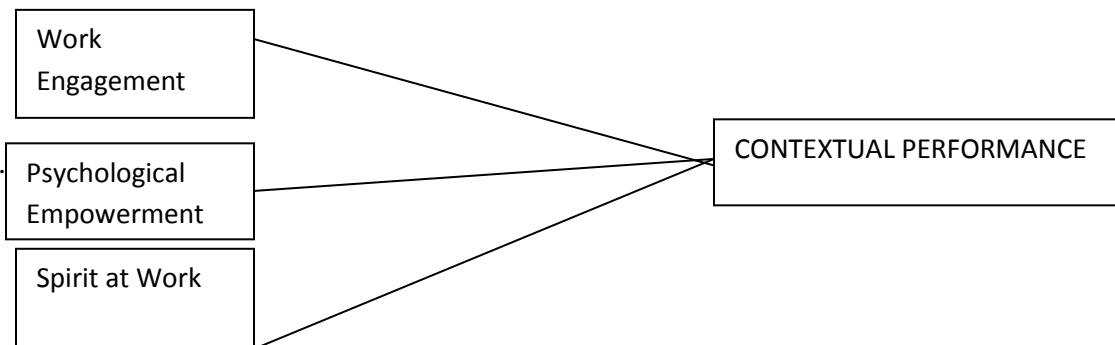
H₁ There will be a positive relationship between work engagement and contextual performance.

H₂ There will be a positive relationship between psychological empowerment and contextual performance.

H₃ There will be a positive relationship between spirit at work and contextual performance.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A correlation framework was designed for the purpose of the study.



SAMPLE

A sample of 80 corporate executives was undertaken for the purpose of the study. Criteria for inclusion comprised of employees in the middle level management with a minimum association of 3 years with the current organization. Part time and newly recruited employees were kept beyond the purview of the study. Data was analyzed through correlational analysis.

INSTRUMENTS

Scales used for the purpose of the study included:

The Utrecht work engagement scale developed by Wilmar B. Schaufeli Arnold B. Bakker in 2002. The scale comprises of seventeen items to be rated on a seven-point Likert scale. Reliability of the scale was found to be ranging between 0.68 and 0.91.

The psychological empowerment scale developed by Spreitzer in 1995. The scale consists of 12 items which are to be rated on a six-point Likert scale. Reliability of the scale was found to be 0.80.

The Spirit at Work Scale (SAWS) developed by Kinjerski and Skrypnek in 2006. The scale comprises of eighteen items which are to be rated on a six-point Likert scale. Reliability of the scale was measured to be .93.

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The contextual performance scale developed by Motowidlo and Van Scotter in 1994. The scale consists of 16-items which were rated on a five-point Likert scale.

RESULT AND ANALYSES

Table 1, Mean and Standard Deviation of Variables Under Study

(N=80)

VARIABLES	MEAN	SD
CONTEXTUAL PERFORMANCE	65.93	10.9
WORK ENGAGEMENT	71.17	20.5
PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT	60.22	13.4
SPIRIT AT WORK	66.31	15.1

Table 2, Correlational Matrix

VARIABLES	CONTEXTUAL PERFORMANCE
WORK ENGAGEMENT	.596**
PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT	.680**
SPIRIT AT WORK	.607**

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 3, Regression Table, Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.702(a)	.492	.472	7.94409

a Predictors: (Constant), SW, PE, WE

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ANOVA(b)

Mode		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4652.440	3	1550.813	24.574	.000(a)
	Residual	4796.247	76	63.109		
	Total	9448.688	79			

a Predictors: (Constant), SW, PE, WE

b Dependent Variable: CP

Coefficients(a)

Mode		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	B	Std. Error
1	(Constant)	29.037	4.609		6.300	.000
	WE	-.026	.094	-.049	-.275	.784
	PE	.424	.110	.521	3.871	.000
	SW	.199	.112	.276	1.777	.079

a Dependent Variable: CP

DISCUSSION

The present study was undertaken to investigate the relationship between Contextual performance and its psychological correlates i.e. psychological empowerment, spirit at work and work engagement. In order to examine the relationship between the variables and evaluate the results of the study a correlational framework was designed. Borman and Motowidlo (1993) defined contextual performance as behaviours that “do not support the technical core itself as much as they support the organizational, social and psychological environment in which the technical core must function”. Contextual performance has become an important variable in the field of organizational psychology, both in research as well as applied settings (Borman & Motowidlo, *et al* 1997).

The first formulated hypothesis stated a positive relationship between contextual performance and work engagement. Analysis of data revealed a positive correlation of .596 between two variables. Result indicated the fact that engaged employees’ exhibit high contextual performance. Researches for long have argued that engagement as a motivational construct

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should lead to levels of job performance (Schaufeli *et al*, 2002, Rich *et al*, 2010). On similar lines, Christian *et al* (2011) in a meta-analytic study tested the role of engagement as a mediator between antecedents and job performance and found a direct effect between work engagement and job performance (task and contextual). Engagement relates strongly to contextual performance (Gorgeivski *et al*, 2009). Work engagement is the investment of multiple dimensions (physical, cognitive and emotional) and leads to a holistic experience at work. Therefore, employees who feel connected to their work tend to go that extra mile and perform duties beyond the tasks assigned.

The second hypothesis stated a positive relationship between psychological empowerment and contextual performance. A positive correlation of .680 was found between the two variables, thus supporting the formulated hypothesis. The results indicate the fact that employees who perceive a sense of control at work and feel psychologically empowered at work also tend to adopt a holistic approach and work beyond the task assigned. They showcase voluntary behaviour and work towards the overall development of the organization. Empowered individuals perform better than relatively less empowered individuals. Also, feeling of being empowered at work gives way to proactive behaviour such as resilience, persistence and flexibility (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990). In congruence with the stated hypothesis, Tuuli *et al* (2009) study revealed similar results through their study on performance consequences of psychological empowerment.

Spirit at work was found to be positively correlated to contextual performance. The above finding supported the third formulated hypothesis which stated a positive relationship between the two variables. The correlation value was found to be .607. Finding a higher purpose at work acts as a motivating factor for employees to look beyond the task roles and indulge in extra role behaviour.

For further investigation, regression analysis was conducted. Results of which revealed that 49.2 percent of the variance in the dependent variable i.e contextual performance is accounted for by all the independent variables under the study wherein, Psychological empowerment emerged as the strongest predictor of contextual performance among all the psychological correlates with a variance of 42.4 percent. This illustrates that empowered employee who perceives a sense of control and is confident about their abilities exhibit a stronger will to contribute to the social and psychological environment which supports the technical core work of the organization.

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