

Psychological well-being and job performance relationship



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Introduction

Psychological conceptions and treatments of well-being are a prominent feature of psychological literature particularly in relation to mental health from a social-psychological point of view. The fundamental questions asked in this area are arguably concerned with the way and means of understanding the psychological reactions of individuals to the stresses and challenges of modern day life activities, (Bradburn, 1969). With work being one of the major activities of life it is reasonable to surmise work will have a significant impact on mental health and that vice versa mental health will have a significant impact on a person's performance and experience of work. With the diversity of criteria which can be used to judge mental health the psychological aspects to mental health have become increasingly important associated in human resource management literature as well organisational behaviour research because of the suggested strong relationship between an individual's psychological condition and job performance. Researchers such as David and Smeeding (1985) and more recently Wright and Cropanzano (2004) argue that psychological well-being in terms of happiness contributes to maximising both personal health as well as job performance in terms of organisational productivity.

It is reasonable to believe that such a consideration of mental health has valuable implications in managing human resources. With links to employee motivation and job performance management and from an organisational perspective the theoretical framework offered by mental health provides a useful tool in understanding an organisation's behaviour through reference to the psychological well-being of individuals within the organisational

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context. In one way then considering for example staff retention which is a key element of organisational strategies since human resources have been viewed recently as one of the most important resources for any organisation, (Torrington, Hall and Taylor (2002). Furthermore happy employees tend to be more productive and contribute more in creation and innovation activities which are crucial activities for organisations given the competitive realities of the modern business world, (Wright and Cropanzano, 2004). However currently there is no general agreement about the best way to measure, assess and/or evaluate people's psychological states. Terms such as self-esteem, self adjustment in dealing with work stress have critical influences on the level of well-being. Social support at work related to psychological well-being may be said to affect productivity of employees which itself is argued to have positive effects on job control, lower job depression and generate higher productivity. Nevertheless the extent to which social support contributes to better performance remains unclear due to the complexities of psychological reactions and the processes comprising them.

Discussion

An important perspective on well-being originates from the social-psychological perspective which focuses on viewing well-being in both an individual and social sense. One means of conceptualising well-being is in an individual psychological manner where the subject is linked with economic models in that individuals make rational responses in changing their behaviour due to changing prices and incomes. Another traditional aspect of the subjective activity of well-being focuses on the measurement of well-being for social policy purposes which historically has been concerned with <https://assignbuster.com/psychological-well-being-and-job-performance-relationship/>

tax return, pensions, use of health care resources and work environment affairs, (David & Smeeding, 1985). From this point of view there are vital implications in the sense of the psychological subject in human resource management and studies dealing with organisational behaviour since people as the essential elements performing tasks in these contexts. For example the recent broaden-and-build model has been designed to provide relevant evidence towards explaining the possible interactive role of physiological well-being (PWB) associated with job satisfaction and job performance which demonstrates significant relationships to employee performance, (Wright and Cropanzano, 2004). This is to say illustrating the strength of the correlation between the happier an employee feeling with the more productive they are in their everyday job performance.

Based on this viewpoint then human resource management approaches have aimed at building management models which draw from and benefit from PWB in order to improve an organisation's performance in terms of quality and quantity. A principal point of consideration in this then is the environment in which people are working in as detrimental work environments pose potential health risks to individuals. Health risks can be seen in terms of the physical harm done to people's bodies but also as having negative influences in a psychological manner including depression and stress which results in poor job performance and lowered productivity. Thus PWB suggests that a better and healthier working environment will be able to make employee feels more comfortable and happier through health gains in harm avoidance in the work place. In HRM literature environment not only includes physical environments such as machinery, organisational

structure but also intangible contexts like organisational culture and leadership styles and these are equally as important in terms of employee well-being. Therefore Beardwell, Holden and Claydon (2004) argue that appropriate organisational structures in terms of physical power distance as well as intangible distance such as leadership style are important in contributing to employees job performance.

Research suggests that long power distances result in staff at lower levels within an organisation feeling powerless and vulnerable with the consequences being they suffer stress at work since there is a lack of opportunity in expressing themselves within the decision making processes affecting them, (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2001). Additionally the corporate environment in terms of employment contracts themselves a process of socio-economic exchange often in national contexts is particularly crucial as it defines formalised arrangements between employee and the organisation employing, (Clark, 2004). Contracts between employee and employer determine the terms and conditions of employment like security and health issues related to the job and contractual employment rights. Clark (2004) points out that the relationship between employees and management teams not only impacts on corporate performance but also influences how successful and organisation is at retaining its workforce.

While Wright and Cropanzano (2004) concentrate on the psychological meaning of well-being in contributing to better job performance David and Smeeding (1985) propose that significant attention be paid to well-being from an economic perspective. Economic elements such as changing prices compared to incomes then are proposed as affecting people's behaviours
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and psychological reactions. For instance research has demonstrated that higher income individuals are more likely than lower income individuals to report themselves as enjoying higher levels of happiness, (David and Smeeding, 1985). It hence is unsurprising to note that traditional human resource management approaches view performance management as enhancing individual performance by assessing past performance and rewarding improvements in terms of tangible economic benefits, (Walker, 1992). Jacques (1962) claims that every employee displays strong feeling towards to the level of payment in that such payments correspond to the perceived values attached to the performance of tasks associated with the job. This economic model closely reflects psychological conceptions in that when employees feel they are underpaid job performance will suffer in terms of productivity and efficiency.

Wright and Cropanzano's model suggests that fair payment contributes to the happiness level of staff however it is vital to mention that the expectation of employee namely the subjectivity of well-being largely indicates different attitudes towards fairness. This is to say the employee who is paid comparably higher than others due to higher levels of education and vocational skill might feel unhappy because the pay level is still lower than the expected level. This is similar with subjective accounts of poverty of the unemployed being more a negative experience than poverty as a student dependent on their ability to adjust the reality of situations with their expectations. This corresponds with David and Smeeding's (1985) framework on the subjectivity of well-being as a personalised experience. Recent research carried out by Gregg and Wadsworth (1999) illustrated that a good

number of employee departures was due to either poorly managed expectations or ineffective inductions into positions. This is an important point in considering psychological well-being and individual productivity as well as organisational performance illustrating that tangible economic benefits or objective conditions attached to jobs may be perceived in many different ways as a result of individual subjectivity.

Wright and Hobfoll's (2004) work linked with Wright and Cropanzano's (2004) research in demonstrating that psychological well-being has both positive and negative influences on job performance. One such concept is that of employee burnout which refers to emotional and/or physical exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment amongst sufferers.

Employees tend to feel dissatisfied due to poor task completion and personal achievement in turn. Past experiences of failure in dealing with customers for example is suggested as being one prime means of reducing motivational attitudes towards work. With people being considered as the most important resource in contributing to organisational performance then human resource management has itself been put in a critical position in strategic decision making processes. Aspects of managing human resources have become involved in a wide range of issues such as recruitment and retention related to development, reward and relationship management of employees are arguably the basic HRM functions. The process of retention of workforces lays the foundation for obtaining suitably qualified employees in order to contribute in the most effective manner to achieving corporate goals in a cost-effective manner, (Foot & Hook, 1999). The relationship to these HR principles of the thesis of psychological well-being in one ways shows clearly

that motivation in the employee retention process as well as better performance is a principal factor determining organisational success in these areas. Also from an individual's perspective burnout as suggested by research tends to result in ineffectiveness and failure in job performance due to a lack of energy levels in an emotional and physical sense. This leads to stress which in turn can cause ill-health both physical and mental. Similarly from the organisation's perspective innovation levels tends to decrease which as has been argued is important in maintaining competitive position for companies operating in intensively competitive industries, (Maslach & Jackson, 1986; Lee & Ashforth, 1996).

Based on this analysis and discussion of psychological well being it would appear that a useful measure is to examine the various approaches used to improve job performance and productivity at personal and organisational levels. People are motivated by different things dependent on different individual value systems and expectations. As such in order to increase well being levels among employees organisations attempt to create better working environments relying on supportive corporate cultures, effective leadership styles and the provision of accessible communication channels. An awareness that motivation does not necessarily flow from positive salary arrangements alone is necessary as often such is considered as the most effective tool in rewarding and motivating employees. Instead potential career development opportunities for employees, employee friendly working environments and supportive management methods exert strong influences on feelings of well-being among employees.

For example positive rewards in a tangible way and intangible confirmations related to good performance should encourage employees to repeat the same activities since the rewarding of successful behaviour contributes to employee's levels of self esteem. In many ways then it is fair to say that psychological processes and subjective feelings and experiences remain complex phenomena and would seem to be influenced by a range of factors such as national cultures and the effects of reference groups like families and peer groups in for example expected income levels and job status, (Mullins, 2005). The measurement of psychological well-being contributing to better performance is conditionally true yet it must be acknowledged that the methods used in research such as by Wright and Cropanzano's (2004) exhibit and are limited by the potential problems related to subjective reactions and perceptions of job performance by employees.

Conclusion

Models and theories of psychological well-being are established topics in Psychology which is held as being closely linked with conceptualisations of mental health and the mental well being of individuals. The variety of psychological reactions of individuals to stress and daily life can all result in feeling of happiness, mental health or illness depending on situational factors which has effects on people's performance at work. As a result then psychological conceptions of well-being are widely used in considering the relationship between well-being and job performance in an organisational context. Studies have demonstrated the positive effects of employee well-being on their job performance in terms of better productivity yet due to the complex psychological processes which are involved in the condition of well-being

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being there is still a lack of definitive evidence in demonstrating to what extent psychological well-being contributes to better job performance. Such evidence is difficult to produce for example bearing in mind complicated human behavioural patterns and experiences in relation to work. Linked to this definitions of happiness remain unclear and is an area which requires further research along with further explorations of the reasons feeling of satisfaction and happiness with work increases productivity. However it is fair to say that better health levels in terms of psychological well being influences people in terms of motivation and attitudes toward work as well as their capacity and ability to work. The reduction of employee sickness whether major or minor due to poor working conditions and the impact this has on organisational performance is one aspect any organisation should seek to reduce and minimise as a strategic goal.

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