THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK ENGAGEMENT, ORGANIZATIONAL CYNISM AND JOB SATISFACTION IN A ROMANIA PRIVATE COMPANY

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Abstract: We all have the desire, impulse or motivation to change the issues which we consider does not going very well for us, neither we consider it is wrong or contrary to our ethics and personal values. In many cases, we instantly realize that our goals are not possible to happen, or we are not the most appropriate peoples to fix all the problems, or we are not allowed to intervene in such problems as well. Often, we can easily find in organizations the completely committed employees, eager to "give it all" or even to give more than it is required from them; contrary, we find the opposite employee: driven by pessimistic ideas, selfishness, with lack of interest; he is the element which spoils the balance of the organizational frame in which he/she activates; also he/she is driven by a skeptical, negative, detached, behavior towards his/her organization. In order to achieve their goals, it is extremely important for all the organizations to have trained, reliable, dedicated and committed employees. This study intend to identify the relationship between the organizational cynicism, work engagement, age and seniority of the employees from a Romanian private company

Keywords: organizational cynicism, work engagement, job satisfaction, JEL CODECS: O 15

Introduction

As organizations attempt to cope with a progressively more turbulent economic, technological, and social environment, they rely increasingly on their employees to adapt to change. However, employees often resist change and there are many potential reasons for this resistance, but one that has received increased attention recently is employee cynicism.

What is organizational cynicism?

After extensively revising the field literature that analyzes the concept of cynicism, Andersson (1996) and Dean (1998) defined it as a negative attitude with a wide and specific at the same time frame, which contains cognitive, emotional, and behavioral elements. To put it more precisely, cynicism is the "belief in the lack of integrity of an organization" accompanied by feelings of "shame, contempt, and major stress" and contributing to "tendencies towards a negative behavior". Organizational cynicism is: a negative attitude towards the organization the employee is part of; it is consisting of three dimensions: (1) a belief that the organization has no integrity; (2) negative feelings towards the organization and (3) tendencies to have discreditable and critical behaviors towards the organization, which correspond to such beliefs and feelings of the individual (Dean, Brandes, and Dharwadkar, 1998, p. 345). Unfulfilled or broken promises, the non-fulfillment of the psychological contract (Abraham, 2000), organizational politics where ambition and power battles come before the integrity of the organization (Davis, 2004), the feeling of being left out by the organization, and the feeling of not being treated with dignity and respect (Fleming, 2005), the lack of significance of the applied work (Cartwright, 2006), a history of failed attempts to change things, or management incompetence (Stanley, 2005), all these become pre-elements of the organizational cynicism.

Cynicism has been associated with a series of negative aspects, such as apathy, resignation, alienation, despair, lack of trust in other people, suspicion, contempt, disillusionment, as well as with poor results in performance, inter-personal conflicts, absenteeism, turn-over, and exhaustion at work (Andersson, 1996; Dean et al., 1998). Cynicism could also be perceived as a form of self-defense for the employees, a way of coping with un-comprehended or disappointing events (Reichers, 1997).

In the process of cynicism development, the situational characteristics of the organization interact with the dispositional characteristics of the employees. Employees who value work ethics and other similar concepts tend to work harder and consequently they will expect for their employer to repay them with respect and dignity, and to be fair to the others as well.

The failure of the organization in doing so, in fulfilling these expectations will cause disappointment and disillusionment, determining the employees to be suspected of a cynical attitude. On the other hand, those who care less or not at all

about the lack of honesty or sincerity, or those who have learned in time to cope with such an environment, will most probably not become cynical, as a result of their past experiences.

Organizational cynicism may bring along confusion, irascibility/moodiness, or antagonism among those who do not manage to perceive cynicism as something that can emerge in the context of the work applied by each employee. Organizational cynicism is a bi-faceted phenomenon. First, it has been debated that cynicism has a negative connotation generally regarded as an undesired attitude or an emotion, and second it is considered an adaptive reaction, sometimes even positive reaction (Reichers, 1997).

As consequences of cynicism, we can mention the decrease in organizational commitment, motivation, or satisfaction regarding the job (Abraham, 2000), a higher level of suspicion, mistrust, and contempt towards the organization and other forms of lack of commitment and psychological detachment.

Fleming (2005) shows that cynicism is connected in time to a lower level of self-esteem. Pugh *et al*. (2003) assert that even new employees can sense the cynicism among the other employees, as a result of the negative attitudes of the former employer.

Assessments based on studies conducted in the United States indicate that approximately 50% of the employees display an attitude of cynicism towards their employer (Reichers, Wanous, and Austin, 1997).

Lynn Andersson considered that "unlike the other aspects of labour, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, cynicism is generally perceived as negative aspect and therefore it represents a sensitive issue/topic for managers and organizations. For this reason, negative attitudes as the organizational practices they conduct were specifically left out of the scientific research" (Andersson, 1996, p. 1401).

As Mirvis and Kanter explain (1989, *apud* Nair, 2010), due to the nature of their behavior, cynics are often perceived as the "dark side" of the organization. Therefore, on the long term, they are not likely to succeed within that organization. And this is, of course, regarded by cynics as manipulation and injustice caused by the management of the organization, which leads to the creating of a loop.

The negative consequences/impact on the employee, especially health problems and exhaustion indicate that cynicism is not a pleasant state – in order for the employees to become cynical there has to exist a relevant aspect to determine such state!

What is work engagement?

Together with the concept of "cynicism" presented above, this study approaches the concept of "work engagement", more specifically the connection and the way the two concepts relate to one another. The construct of "work engagement" is mentioned for the first time by Khan (1990, *apud* Paveloni, 2013),

the first author introducing this concept and the one who considers that work engagement is the development and exploitation of every member of the organization and their contribution, specifying that the committed employees express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally where performance is concerned.

Scahufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, and Bakker (2002) define work engagement as a positive emotional-motivational state of fulfillment. A special trait of this state is the fact that it is not temporary and specific to a certain context but it is represented by a persistent emotional-mental combination with no particular target (it does not imply an event, a behavior, or individual) (Virga, Sulea, Zaborila & Maricutoiu, 2009 *apud* Arnold *et al*. 2010). Within the model of job demands and resources, engagement holds a very special role (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005).

Work engagement is a positive state in relation to work, characterized through vitality/energy, dedication, and absorption (Virga, 2009, *apud* Schaufeli *et al*. 2006). The energy dimension (Virga, 2009) of work engagement is characterized by a high level of energy, and it refers to investing a high level of effort, to working capacity which helps the employee not to become tired easily, to the capacity to cope with any difficulties.

The commitment dimension refers to a solid work engagement, doubled by enthusiasm, the feeling of a strong meaningfulness of the work that is being done, inspiration, pride, challenge. The absorption dimension is characterized by work focusing, a feeling of a fast time passing, a difficulty for the employee to detach himself/herself from work. The consequences of work engagement are connected to positive attitudes towards the job, the employees' state of health; extra-role/position behaviors such as: a participative civic behavior or a high level of performance, a high level of commitment to the organization, a positive environment (Shimazu, Schaufeli, Miyanaka, & Iwata, 2010).

In a study conducted on 116 employees, Paveloni (2013) analyze the impact of cynicism (as a personality trait), in organization and ethical intentions on work engagement, job satisfaction and the participative civic behaviors.

What is job satisfaction?

The issue of job satisfaction has been given a lot of attention in literature as it is a subject that affects both the employee as well as the organization.

Job satisfaction reflects how content employees are with the job and their reactions towards their work experiences, emotional state or reactions towards the job, aspects of their job, work situations. Organizations measure job satisfaction because it is indicative of work behavior such as absenteeism, turnover, and productivity. Studies indicate a number of dimensions that have a strong relation with employee's overall experience of job satisfaction.

Locke and Latham (1990) give a comprehensive definition of job satisfaction as 'pleasurable or positive emotional state" resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experience. Job satisfaction is generally defined as an employee's affective reactions to a job based on comparing current outcomes with desired outcomes. (Cranny, Smith & Stone, 1992; Fields, 2002). It is generally recognized as a multifaceted construct that includes employee feelings about a variety of both intrinsic and extrinsic job elements (Howard & Frink, 1996; Fields, 2002). A qualitative study (Bussing, Bissels, Fuchs, Perrar, 1999, Fuchs, 2002) suggests that job satisfaction is developed through assessment of the match among expectations, needs, motives and work situation. Job satisfaction is a result of employees' perception of how well their job provides those things that are viewed as important. It is generally recognized in the field of organizational behavior that job satisfaction is the most important and frequently studied attitude.

Reichers (1997) mentions the fact that the efforts of the organizational changes are the best target for cynicism. To be more specific, he describes cynicism as an attitude determined by the uselessness of change, cynicism being in this case a potential barrier agent in the organizational change. He also suggests some ways to avoid organizational cynicism, among which he mentions the involvement of employees in making decisions that concern them, the consolidation of management credibility, and the avoidance of making unexpected changes. He conceptualized cynicism towards organizational change as a combination of pessimism concerning the possibility of an organizational change, pessimism caused by people responsible for the change, people believed to be incompetent or lazy – an approach which captures both the change itself and the leaders of this change.

Methodology

This paper sets as its goal the identification and assessment of the relationship between organizational cynicism, work engagement, and job satisfaction of the employees in a private company.

Hypothesis:

H 1: Employees' organizational cynicism will be negatively correlated to their work engagement.

H 2: Employees' organizational cynicism will be negatively correlated to their job satisfaction.

H 3: Employees' work engagement will be positively correlated to their job satisfaction.

H 4: Age and seniority are significant predictors for work engagement and organizational cynicism.

The research group contains 92 employees from a private company. The

subjects are aged between 21 and 59. From a total number of 92 participants, 48 are women and 44 are men.

For the assessment of the organizational cynicism construct we used the Eaton and Struthers Questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed by Eaton and Struthers (2000). For the work engagement construct we used the Work Engagement Scale (UWES), the Utrecht scale of measurement for work engagement, and the UWES instrument respectively, created by Schaufeli, Martinez, Marques-Pinto, Salanova, and Bakker (2002), instrument structured on three dimensions as stated by the authors: energy, dedication, and absorption. In Romania the scale was adapted by Virga, Zaborila, Sulea, and Maricutoiu (2009). For the measurement of job satisfaction we used the JDI. The Job Descriptive Index (JDI) was originally developed by Smith, Kendall, and Hulin, 1969 to measure job satisfaction defined as 'the feelings a worker has about his job'. This instrument has been revised in 1985, 1997, and most recently in 2009.

Results and discussions

For the processing of the data obtained from the 92 participants in the survey, statistical methods operating in SPSS 23 were used, where we introduced all the raw data to be processed. Tables 1 and 2 present the mean, standard deviation and correlations between the variables.

Table 1. *Mean, standard deviation, correlation coefficients between cynicism and work engagement*

Variabile	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1.Organizational cynicism	20.11	8.15					
2. Work engagement	33.71	9.91	-.341[**]				
3. Energy	8.82	3.91	-.432[**]	.835[**]			
4. Dedication	11.57	3.95	-.415[**]	.871[**]	.580[**]		
5. Absorption	13.72	3.58	-.039[*]	.833[**]	.479[**]	.730[**]	
6. Age	32.62	9.17					
7. Seniority	10.22	9.54					

N=92, **p<.001, [*]p<.05

From data analysis we observe a negative correlation between organizational cynicism and two of the three dimensions of work engagement, respectively energy (r = - .43, p < 0.001) and dedication (r = - .41, p < 0.001). For the study group, the organizational cynicism have a significant negative correlation

with work engagement (r =-.34, p < 0.001) and it can be asserted that the higher level of organizational cynicism, the lower level of work engagement it should be. Also for the employees, the more feel the need to dedicate themselves to the others, the higher level of their engagement tends to get. Hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2 are confirmed.

Table 2. *Mean, standard deviation, correlation coefficients between the cynicism, work engagement and job satisfaction variables.*

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.Organizational cynicism	20.11	8.15							
2. Work engagement	33.71	9.91	-.341**						
3. JDI current work	38.87	10.9	-.353**	-.433**					
4. JDI salary	16.89	7.11	-.487**	.221**	.539**				
5. JDI promotion	14.74	8.61	-.433**	.311**	.597*	.572**			
6. JDI /manager boss	40.20	12.56	-.606**	.271**	.405*	.432**	.487**		
7. JDI co-workers	39.92	13.43	-.559**	.160**	.495**	.502**	.305**	.643	
8. JDI job general	42.16	11.21	-.244**	.231**	.430*	.334**	.227*	.396*	.548**

N=92, **p<.001,

Analyzing the mean on the job satisfaction scale we can assert that employees are satisfied with their job (M = 42,16), with their boss (M = 40,20), with their co-workers (M = 39,93), and with the work they are currently performing (M = 38,87). The employees are less satisfied with their current salary m = 16,89 and with their promotion opportunities m = 14,74.
Organizational cynicism has a negative correlation with all the job satisfaction scales, meaning current work scale (r = -.35, p < .001), salary (r = -.48, p < .001), promotion opportunities (r = -.43, p < .001), boss (r = -.60, p < .001), co-workers (r = -.55, p < .001), job in general (r = -.24, p < .001).
A significant negative correlation was found between organizational cynicism and job satisfaction scales which measure the level of satisfaction in the relationship between employees and their boss (r = -.60, p < .001) and the relationship between them and their co-workers (r = -.55, p < .001). Hypothesis 3 is confirmed.
In the same time, we intend to identify whether age and seniority are

predictors for work engagement an organizational cynicism.

In the study we ran regression analyzes where work engagement (both as a global construct and independent of its three dimensions) along with organizational cynicism were dependent variable and age and seniority were independent variables.

Such demographic variables, age is not a significant predictor of any organizational work engagement, not for cynicism (F= 2.898; sig. 0.06). Also, the seniority is not a significant predictor for organizational cynicism (ß = .597; sig. 0.070) and neither for work engagement (ß = 269, sig.0.429); hypothesis no. 4 is not confirmed.

Table 3. *ANOVA[a] in regression analysis for cynism*

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	373.699	2	186.849	2.898	.060[b]
	Residual	5674.411	88	64.482		
	Total	6048.110	90			

a. Dependent Variable: Cynism

b. Predictors: (Constant), Seniority, Age

Table 4. *Coefficients Beta in regression analysis for organizational cynicism*

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	26.686	6.917		3.858	.000
	Age	-.363	.291	-.405	-1.245	.216
	Seniority	.513	.280	.597	1.834	.070

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational cynism

Table 5. *ANOVAa   in regression analysis for work engagement*

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	154.641	2	77.321	.782	.461[b]
	Residual	8798.435	89	98.859		
	Total	8953.076	91			

a. Dependent Variable: Work engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Seniority, Age

Table 6. *Coefficients Beta in regression analysis for work engagement*

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	43.386	8.516		5.094	.000
	Age	-.384	.360	-.355	-1.069	.288
	Seniority	.280	.346	.269	.809	.421

a. Dependent Variable: Work engagement

Conclusions

The results indicate negative correlations between organizational cynicism and work engagement, and between organizational cynicism and job satisfaction. The higher level of employee's organizational cynicism is, the lower his/her level of work engagement rises.

An employee with high level of work engagement is also characterized by a high level of autonomy, a higher level of control over work, and also he shows ethical behavior and dedication to the company.

The organizational cynic is suspicious, distrustful, contemptuous towards the organization and psychologically detached. The cynical employee not only develops negative emotions where the organization is concerned, but also his/her

beliefs should have negative impact on work in general, on his/her superiors and co-workers, and also on the work environment.

As already Abraham (2000) mentioned, the most frequent consequences of cynicism are the emotional or the behavioral ones, as well as a decrease in the level of organizational engagement, motivation or job satisfaction.

In our study, organizational cynicism occurs when employees consider the organization as they are part of lacks integrity. To be more specific, this lack of integrity perceived by employees may be caused by a failure to fulfill the expectations of the employees in terms of honesty and justice.

Within the organizational context a positive assessment of the organizational experiences is necessary, as well as a valorization of the employee and motivation.

Virga's survey (2013) points out that it is essential that organizations reduce the level of organizational cynicism, as it may determine the employees to develop negative emotions and behaviors against the organization and, therefore, cause a decrease in the level of job satisfaction and work engagement along with civic participative behaviors, affecting the performance of the entire organization.

Similar results with our study were obtained by Frank, Finegar, and Taylor (2004, *apud* Virga, 2013) indicating that the factors having the biggest impact on work engagement are the positive assessment of correctness and the concern for the employees together with a high level of trust in the organization, characteristics lacking in the case of cynical employees.

Although age and seniority are not significant predictors for work engagement, to be permanently involved in your work has a number of positive effects on employees' health.

As a research direction in the future, we intend to highlight the role of work engagement on physical health, mental wellness and on the ability of emotional management. Studies have shown that a high level of work engagement is associated with: positive emotions, low levels of depression and anxiety and low levels of exhaustion. As for the physical state, work engagement is associated with fitness, with a higher immunity and with a higher capacity of recovery after effort. Overall, work engagement is positively associated with a better work performance.

The management of emotions regarding different behaviors such organizational cynism must be done constructively, to obtain a better performance and increasing the work engagement, regardless the age or seniority of the employees.

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