Full Length Research Paper

An evaluation of library staff involvement programmes: A study with reference to S.D.M institutions in Dharwad, Karnataka, India

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External commitment is a psychological survival mechanism for many employees. It is a form of 'adaptive behaviour' that allows individuals to get by in most work environments. Because of the cross-sectional design of the present research study it could not assess true causality, but rather associations between the variables of interest. It may be that the direction of causality is reversed; job satisfaction, job involvement, organisational commitment or work stress may actually influence an individual's sense of involvement adversely.

Key words: Evaluation of library staff, key determinant, Karnataka, India.

INTRODUCTION

Staff involvement and empowerment are becoming increasingly popular themes in human resource development literature. The underlying philosophy of employee involvement is based on the idea that organizations should be designed from top to bottom, so that employees are in control of their destiny and able to participate in the business of the organization. Organisations are expected to create and maintain supportive organizational culture and empowerment-friendly systems for implementing innovative employee involvement programmes.

Kurt Lewin's contribution to staff involvement comes from several sources. The contribution by Lewin was his research that directly studies that impact of involvement. Lewin and his students carried out series of classic experiments comparing democratic and laissez-faire leaders of boy's groups. They found greater aggression, more discontent and less individualistic behavior in the autocratic groups (Lewin et al., 1939). In the 1980s, Lawler and his colleagues(Lawler et al 1980). began using the term "high involvement " management, founded on the ideas that employees could be trusted to make decisions about their work, that they could acquire the knowledge needed to do so, and that the organization would function more effectively. The term 'job involvement' is a more recent addition to the organizational behavior literature. While there is no complete agreement over what the term means, a workable definition states that job involvement measures the degree to which a person identifies psychologically with his/ her job and considers his/ her perceived performance level important to self- worth.

Literature review

While commenting on job performance efficiency, Siggins (1992) stated that there is relationship between job satisfaction, staff performance, and productivity. The productivity of paraprofessional is paramount in every aspect. Appreciation of their contribution could be made by giving them more opportunity for improvement.

What can easily destroy an organization is the issue of job dissatisfaction. Voclck (1995) noted that insufficient participation in organizational communication and few contingent rewards, particularly in form of sincere and positive feedback, constitute a source of job dissatisfaction for the paraprofessional staff. Records show that there are already plans set in motion for development of staff at all levels. Olorunsola and Bamijoko (2005) concluded that what is needed to uphold a system is a strong commitment to its implementation of its development plans, especially as it concerns this grade of staff. Herzberg et al. (1959) identified some

major factors they referred to as dissatisfiers. These include an institution's policy and administration, supervision, salary scale, working condition as well as interpersonal relationship. In their opinion, managing these factors may remove the issue of dissatisfaction.

Wilson (1996) studied the performance of library trainees and concluded that the range of duties they undertake can induce libraries to seek way of increasing their paraprofessional staff. This means that their presence is really recognized.

Bill (1998) saw people as the most valuable asset in the library profession only when there is willingness to share their talents and creativity which will provide needed services in a flexible manner. Still on the value of investment on human development, Ludlow and Stasbury (2002) saw the investment as a way to move the institution forward and to prepare staff for new work required in the constantly changing environment of libraries.

Smith and Burgin (1991), after their survey, came to the conclusion that personal concerns, patron services, collegiality as well as professional competence form the underlying reasons for participation in continuing education by paraprofessional.

Objective

The central purpose of this study was to evaluate library employee involvement in S.D.M Institutions of Dharwad city along with the identification of key antecedents and outcomes of library employee involvement practice. The objectives are:

1. To examine and report on the key trends in and status of library employee involvement programmes and practices.
2. To identify facilitators of and barriers to the successful implementation of employee involvement programmes.
3. To measure and assess the employees perceptions of employee involvement practices.
4. To analyse and discuss the nature of relationships between the organizational contextual factors such as organizational culture and high involvement work system and the perceptions of employee involvement practices.
5. To understand and discuss the nature of relationships between the perceptions of employee involvement and perceived levels of job satisfaction, job involvement and work stress.
6. To identify major implications for human resource development research and practice, based on the findings of this study.

METHODOLOGY

Literature search shows that not much work on the aspect of in-service training for the paraprofessional staff in SDM Institutions has been published. So a questionnaire with 12 items was designed to deduce vital information on the views of the paraprofessional staff on the utilization of in-service training opportunities. Five libraries in SDM Institutions were chosen for this survey. Fifty-two copies of the questionnaire were sent to the libraries. Only library professionals issued the questionnaires. The questionnaire was issued to only staffs that were available at the time the survey was conducted. The researcher later held interviews with some of the respondents. All the questionnaires were successfully collected. They were thereafter subjected to analysis based on percentages.

Scope and limitations

The present study included only library professionals of S.D.M Institutions in Dharwad city. The theoretical framework adopted by this study considered only two antecedents- organizational culture and high involvement work system. But, there may exist additional contextual variables such as structure, incentive practices, leadership and job design. This study concentrated only on measuring and assessing the impact of perceived levels of employee involvement on two categories of outcome variables - job attitudes and work stress.

Employee involvement programmes: Trends and status in Karnataka

The Karnataka State has been a pioneer in India with a history of encouraging Institutional development even prior to our country gaining its independence in 1947. A question was posed to the respondents as to 'who is in their institutions was originally instrumental in undertaking employee involvement initiatives'. Principal, President and Secretary of S.D.M society, Librarians as well as Human Resource Development Managers are instrumental in undertaking employee involvement practices. An attempt was made to find out the major reasons for implementing employee involvement programmes by the respondent units. Irrespective of the respondent units and nature of their main activity, the major reasons for introducing employee involvement programmes included: 'improving quality, employee motivation, employee morale, improving employee skills, etc. A significant majority of the employees reported the need to adapt future environmental changes and to enhance the reputation of the institution as major reasons responsible for implementing employee involvement. A few of the respondent units also felt that implementation of employee involvement would 'make it easier to introduce changes in how things are done' and also 'strengthen the management of the institution'. However it is surprising to note that very few respondent units implemented employee involvement programmes for 'ethical or value' reasons. From this analysis, it follows that, most of the respondent units in Karnataka were driven by several reasons for introducing employee involvement programmes.

The implementation of employee involvement can be a complex process because the objective is to change the way an organization is managed. An attempt was made to ascertain the popularity of various employee involvement schemes among the respondent units. However 'quality circles' were found in most of the institutions.

Profile of the case study organisations

The 5 case study organisations are: a) S.D.M. College of Dental Sciences and Hospital b) S.D.M. College of Medical Sciences and Hospital, c) S.D.M. College of Engineering and Technology; d) S.D.M. College of Science (PUC) and e) S.D.M. College of Physiotherapy and Nursing. The researcher visited each case study

'site' several times and held informal discussions with the HRD Managers and also library employees to become familiar with the organisational context, and employee involvement system currently existing in that case study organisation.

S.D.M. Medical College library: A medical college library is established as part of the medical college. It supports the academic and health care programmes conducted by the medical college. Large part of its collection includes information resources in medical sciences and majority of its users are from the medical college. Library consists of total 8 library professionals 6 attenders and 2 computer technicians. The library is fully automated.

S.D.M. Dental College library: It supports the academic and health care programmes conducted by the dental college. Most of its collection includes information resources in dental sciences and majority of its users are from the dental college. Library consists of 4 library professionals, 6 attenders and 1 computer technician. The library is fully automated.

S.D.M. Physiotherapy and Nursing College library: It is attached to the medical college in the same campus. The library does not have separate building. It consists of 3 library professionals and 5 attenders. It is a branch of Medical College library.

S.D.M. P.U.C College library (Science): This library is having only books pertaining to PUC Science books. Only 2 library professionals and 2 attenders are exists in the library.

S.D.M. College of Engineering and Technology library: This library is fully automated. Consists of 5 professionals, 7 attenders and 1 computer technician for browsing centre.

Employee involvement: Key determinants

This part of case study research answers the following two research questions: a) how do library professionals perceive the process and outcomes of employee involvement in organisations? b) What are the key antecedents and outcomes of the perceptions of employee involvement programmes. Total of 42.3% library professionals, 50% attenders, 7.6% technicians are the respondents. Most of the library professionals have completed their M.L.I.Sc. except Medical College librarian who has done his Ph.D.

Organisational culture

The researcher adopted 6 key elements of the organisational culture – trust, authenticity, proaction, autonomy, collaboration and experimentation.

The element of trust reflects employees confirmed faith in the organisation and its people, systems policies, procedures and outcomes. From the survey it is evident that 18.18% of library professionals experienced the presence of trust to a moderate extent, while around 17% of the library professionals perceived high degree of trust in their respective organisations.

Authenticity as a cultural value is normally exhibited in such ways a ownership of mistakes and ideas by the employees, and the presence of minimum gap between 'what people say and do'. From the survey it is found that 47% of professionals and nearly 48% of attenders experienced low degree of authenticity in their respective organisations.

A proactive organisation is one which prepares its employees well-in-advance to tackle any problem before it erupts. It is shown from the survey that most of the professionals believed that 'proaction' spirit existed in their organizations only to 'some' extent.

This trend is clearly exhibited wherein the professionals perceiving high degree of proaction in their respective organisations accounted for 49% and in contrast, nearly 44% of the attenders experienced low degree of proaction.

'Autonomy' as a cultural value represents freedom to take appropriate and timely actions. A little over 65% of the library professionals experienced high degree of autonomy, and on the contrary, around 48% of the attenders perceived low degree of autonomy in their respective organisations.

'Experimentation' as a cultural attribute in organisations, encourage the employee to try out innovative ways of solving problems, encourages employees to take a fresh look at how things are done.

Irrespective of the cadre of the respondents perceived experimentation outlook of their respective organisations only to some extent. The summary of learning culture is shown in Table 1.

Employee involvement should be viewed as a multi-dimensional construct comprising four attributes- power, information, reward and knowledge. In order to truly mirror the conceptual basis of the four attributes of employee involvement, the attributes should be considered in isolation from each other, but should be treated as a collective set of mutually re-enforcing attributes. The summary of learning culture is shown in Table 1.

As far as the four key elements of the perceived employee involvement practices are concerned, both library professionals and attenders experienced reasonably higher degree of power and information-orientation, and moderate degree of reward-orientation in their respective organizations. This is as shown in Table 2.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Most of the library professionals perceived high degree of cultural attributes such as confrontation, proaction, autonomy, and collaboration while they reported moderate presence of openness, trust and experimentation in their respective organisations.

As far as professionals were concerned, they experienced high-involvement work system in their respective organisations to a greater extent than the attenders.

With regard to the four key elements of the four key elements of the perceived employee involvement practices, both library professionals and attenders experienced reasonably higher degree of 'power and information-orientation', moderate degree of 'reward-orientation' in their respective organisations.

A little over 46% of the library professionals perceived high degree of 'self-determination' and the corresponding % in the case of attenders was just 21.5. On the other hand, nearly 52% of the attenders experienced low degree of self-determination. There existed positive correlation between organisational culture and the perceptions of employee involvement. Similarly, high involvement work system and the perceptions of employee involvement practices were positively correlated. Perception of employee involvement revealed significant positive correlations with the perceived levels of job satisfaction, job involvement and organisational commitment, but negatively correlated with the perceived levels of work stress.

Table 1. Learning culture summary.

Variables	Library professionals degree	%	Attenders degree	%
Openness	Moderate (12-18)	51.7	Low (5-11)	42.5
Confrontation	High (19-25)	56.7	Moderate (12-18)	52.8
Trust	Moderate (12-18)	41.5	High (19-25)	45.8
Authenticity	Low (5-11)	46.9	Low (5-11)	47.7
Proaction	High (19-25)	49.0	Low (5-11)	43.9
Autonomy	High (19-25)	65.3	Low (5-11)	47.7
Collaboration	High (19-25)	53.1	Low (5-11)	44.9
Experimentation	Moderate (12-18)	59.2	Low (5-11)	44.4

Table 2. Employee Involvement Practices- summary.

Key elements	Library professionals degree	%	Attenders degree	%
Power	High (27-35)	59.8	High (27-35)	42.5
Information	High (38-50)	43.5	High (38-50)	40.2
Reward	Moderate (17-26)	59.2	Moderate (17-26)	48.6
Knowledge	High (30-40)	46.9	Low (8-18)	46.3

Conclusion

The present study made an attempt to achieve six research objectives relating to the key trends and status of library employee involvement practices in S.D.M Institutions. Key facilitators and barriers to the successful implementation of employee involvement programmes, measuring and assessing the employees perceptions of employee involvement practices, key determinants and outcomes of employee involvement through a combination of quantitative empirical survey and qualitative multiple case study research.

Though the study examined and identified the key antecedents, measured and assessed employee involvement and studied the nature of relationship between employee involvement and intended outcomes by building on and extending prior research on employee involvement, it suggests a number of questions for future research. This research limited its focus to a key set of antecedents and outcomes of employee involvement. Though these antecedents and outcomes are considered by the earlier researchers as vital for evaluating employee involvement programmes, future research must examine other possible antecedents such as leadership, role ambiguity, span of control and examine the relationship of involvement to other outcomes including behavioural outcomes, such as creativity and organisational outcomes such as absenteeism, quality and user satisfaction.

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