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Psychological Availability, Psychological Safety and Optimism as Predictors of Innovative Behavior among Workers

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ABSTRACT

The study examined psychological availability, psychological safety and optimism as predictors of innovative behavior at work among administrative staff of Federal Teaching Hospital Abakaliki (FETHA). A total of 120 workers comprising of 82 males and 38 females were used for the study with the mean age of 32.5, standard deviation of 11.2 and age range of 19-60. The participants were selected through multi stage sampling technique, comprising of randomization and convenience sampling technique. The study made use of four instruments namely Psychological availability scale by Doglass (2004), psychological safety scale by Brown & Leigh, (1996), Life Orientation Test (LOT) developed by Scheier and Carver (1985) to measure optimism and Innovative Work behavior Scale by Kleysen and Street (2001). The design for this study was a cross sectional survey design and hierarchical multiple regression was used for data analysis. The study tested three alternate hypotheses. Findings indicated that Psychological availability significantly predicted innovative behavior at work at $\beta=.19, p < 0.01$ which accepted hypothesis one. Psychological safety significantly predict innovative behavior at work at $\beta=.13, p < 0.01$ therefore accepting hypothesis two. Findings also indicated that optimism did predict work innovative behavior at $\beta=.06, p < 0.01$ thereby accepting hypothesis three. Hence, findings were discussed and it was recommended that health practitioners and professionals should ensure the buildup of physical, emotional and cognitive resources in their workers to ensure optimal performance in the work place that is effective and efficient for productivity.

Keywords: Psychological availability, Psychological safety, Optimism, Innovative behavior.

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Introduction

Organisational productivity can be said to be a product of inventive behaviours which brings about new and modern approaches in the workplace.. Unfortunately Nigeria has witnessed the extinction of many organizations in the wake of global competitiveness, technological advancement and economic downturn because of high dependency in old and traditional ways of doing things which has become the hallmark of many organizations. For effectiveness, productivity and efficiency, organizations need to innovate in the pursuit of long-term survival and competitive advantage (De Jong, & Den. 2010). Increasing competition, globalization of companies and businesses, and the continuous changes in technologies, enable institutions to think about different ways and strategies to gain competitive edge in the work environment. (Dhawan,2005). Innovative behavior is defined as an individual's actions directed at the generation, introduction and application of beneficial novelty at any organizational level" (West & Farr, 1989). Innovation is being considered by organizations as one of the ways of achieving competitive edge and organizational success. Service organizations have received relatively little attention in innovation research which has long been discarded in favour of the manufacturing sector, with a strong focus on technological innovations (Scott & Bruce, 1998; Amabile &Gryskiewicz, 2017). The need for innovation and creativity in the workplace has become very important for organization's survival and that a large share of innovative efforts is related to the development of new techniques that replaces the traditional ways that has become routine practice in the workplace. (Howells,2010). Innovative behavior can be seen as actions directed towards the generation, introduction and application of beneficial novelty at any organizational level" (West & Farr, 1989). It consists of various practices, such as opportunity exploration, idea generation, championing and application

(Klysen & Street, 2011). Besides, current research has resulted in an impressive amount of literature on the success factors of new service development (Ghani, Hussin, &Jusoff, 2009).The ability to renew an organisation and introduce successful innovations is seen as a key success factor in most organizations especially manufacturing and service firms (Hancer,2005). Most innovation and change theories have been developed and directed to manufacturing companies though its applicability in the actual sense affects all organizations.(Chen, & Chiu, 2009). Jeroen (2016) investigated the drivers of innovative behaviour of individual co-workers, which is considered to be a major determinant of incremental innovation. Survey data were collected from 360 persons working in knowledge-intensive service firms. Based on a regression analysis, it appeared that perceptions of job challenge, autonomy, strategic attention and external contacts are positively related to innovative behaviour of individual co-workers. Also, operating in a market where firms compete on differentiation had a positive impact. On the other hand, a firm climate supportive to innovation and a high variation in demand did not affect innovative behaviour in a direct manner. However, in a bid to identify the predictors of innovative behaviors in the workplace, a lot of researchers have viewed innovative behaviour in various dimensions especially with much emphasis on personal and environmental indicators- Unfortunately, not much has been done on the psychological predictors of innovative behavior in the eastern part of Nigeria to the best of the researcher's knowledge. Hence, the present study is an attempt to evaluate different psychological indicators like psychological availability, psychological safety and optimism as likely predictors of innovative behavior in a work place.

Psychological availability refers to the notion that individuals must have the physical, emotional, and cognitive resources to devote

towards becoming engaged in their work Kahn, (1990). It measures how ready and confident a person is to engage the self at work regardless of the various roles that a person has to fulfill. How ready are people to engage, given the distractions that are encountered in life? Kahn (1990) found that the factors that influenced psychological

availability were depletion of physical energy, depletion of emotional energy, individual insecurity and outside lives. If workers are involved outside of work, then their personal resources are divided between work and outside activities, leaving fewer resources to put towards their work (Chen, & Kao, 2011). However, in some cases outside involvements may actually fuel one's personal resources towards work, by means of non-work to work enrichment (Cheung, & Lau, 2008).

Vansteenkiste, Lens, Soenens, & Luyckx (2016) examined psychological availability as a potential factor in innovative work behavior. They concluded that there are significant positive relationships between psychological availability and innovative work behavior

Psychological Safety is another construct of interest which could predict innovative behavior at work. Kumar, & Uz Kurt, (2010) define perceived safety climate as 'individual perceptions of policies, procedures and practices relating to safety in the workplace'. These perceptions reflect the priority that employees believe the organization gives to safety issues in relation to other organizational concerns (such as productivity). Psychological safety is defined as being able to show one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career' (Kahn, 1990). Psychological safety also describes a perception that 'people are comfortable being themselves' (Edmondson, 1999). The psychological condition of safety and its antecedents and outcomes have received relatively little attention in the literature to date Edmondson (2013).

The last psychological construct that is considered in this research is optimism. Optimism can be viewed as an attribution style that explains positive events through personal, permanent, and pervasive causes and negative events through external, temporary, and situation-specific ones (Fred, 2007). Optimism has prominently featured as a key concept in the emerging field of positive organizational behavior whose elements include work engagement. According to Vinkenburg, and Wilson-Evered, (2008) optimism contributes towards positive work-related employee outcomes. Optimists have positive attitudes toward their future and tend to believe that they are able to maneuver adversity successfully (Ajila, & Olutola, 2007). From the above reviews one can deduce that there is scarcity of literature on factors that can influence innovative behavior among workers, hence this research.

Hypotheses

The study will test the following alternate hypotheses:

1. Psychological availability will significantly predict innovative behavior among workers.
2. Psychological Safety will significantly predict innovative behavior among workers.
3. Optimism will significantly predict innovative behavior among workers.

Method

Participants

A total of 120 administrative staff of Federal Teaching Hospital Abakaliki (FETHA) served as participants in the study, 80 were male while 40 were female. The participants were selected through multi stage sampling technique. Comprising of randomization and convenience sampling technique. Hence, all the administrative staff seen at the time of data collection within the chosen unit were used for the study. The ages of the participants ranged

from 19 to 60 years with a mean age of 32.50 and standard deviation of 11.6..

Instruments

Four instruments were used for the study; they include the following, 5 item Psychological.

First is the Psychological Availability scale by Doglass (2004) which measures a person’s readiness to engage in a work role at any given time. It has concurrent validity with Psychological wellbeing scale with a cronbarch alpha reliability index of .85.

The second instrument is a 5 item psychological safety scale by Brown & Leigh, 1996; May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004. It measures ability to show and employ one’s self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career, with Coefficient alpha index of .75.

The third is optimism scale, It is a 12 item Life Orientation Test (LOT) developed by Scheier and Carver (1985) The LOT scale measures one’s general optimism–relative to dealing with challenges of daily life and one’s ability to and belief that one can cope with these challenges. The test-retest reliability coefficient over a 4

Result

week period was $r = 0.79$. Cronbach alpha was $r = 0.76$.

The fourth is 8 item Innovative Work behavior Scale by Kleysen and Street (2001). It measures all individual actions directed at the generation, introduction and application of beneficial idea at any organizational level with Cronbach alpha of .81.

Result of pilot study by the researchers indicated an alpha co-efficient of 0.63, for psychological availability scale, .59 for psychological safety scale, 0.66 for optimism scale, and 0.82 for innovative work behavior scale.

Design/ Statistics

The research was survey method; the design was correlational. This is based on the fact that three predictive variables (psychological availability, Safety and Optimism) were tested under one criterion variable or condition (Innovative behavior at work). Based on this ground, hierarchical multiple regression was adopted as a statistical tool for data analysis using SPSS version 20

Table 1: Summary Table Showing the Prediction of Sex, Marital Status, Educational Status Organizational Tenure, Psychological Availability, Safety and Optimism as Predictors of Innovative Behaviour.

Variables	B	t	R	R ²	df	F
			.936	.673	2, 320	76.65**
Sex	-.078	-.937				
Marital Status	.080	.883				
Educational Status	-.168	-2.01				
Psychological Availability	.193	2.24				
Safety	.135	1.65				
Optimism	.067	.785				

**Dependent Variable: Innovative Behaviour; N = 320 * p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

The result in Table 1, above indicated that sex did not predict innovative behaviour ($\beta = .07$, $p < 0.01$). This was such that sex did not result to increase in innovative behaviour. Furthermore, the prediction of marital status by innovative behavior did not show significant prediction on innovative behaviour ($\beta = .08$, $p < 0.01$). The result in Table 1 also indicated that educational status showed significant inverse relationship ($\beta = -.16$, $p < 0.01$) on innovative behavior meaning that as educational status increases, innovative behaviour tend to reduce and vice versa..

Psychological availability significantly predicted ($\beta = .19$, $p < 0.01$) innovated behaviour such that as psychological availability increase so those innovative behaviour. Safety significantly predicted innovative behaviour ($\beta = .13$, $p < 0.01$) such that, as perceived safety increase so does innovative behaviour. Lastly, optimism significantly predicted innovative behaviour ($\beta = .06$, $p < 0.01$) such that as perceived optimism increases, innovative behavior also increases.

Discussion and Conclusion

The outcome of this study based on the exploration of the roles of psychological availability, Safety and Optimism were tested under one outcome variable or condition (Innovative behavior at work) among administrative staff of Federal Teaching Hospital Abakaliki (FETHA) were discussed here under; The result indicated that psychological availability is a potent predictor of innovative work behavior among administrative staff. This means that the first hypothesis was confirmed. In keeping with the above result Vansteenkiste, Lens, Soenens, & Luyckx (2016) examined psychological availability as a potential factor in innovative work behavior. They concluded that there are significant positive relationships between psychological availability and innovative work behavior. In addition, psychological availability serves as an important personal resource that enhances greater engagement at work physical health

and vitality (Scott & Bruce, 1998). Findings also indicated that psychological safety of workers is a predictor of innovative work behavior which indicates that the second hypothesis was accepted, findings is in line with the work of Edmondson (2013) which argues that individuals engage in a cognitive process in which they weigh their decision whether to take a potential action or proceed in a given direction. This is done by assessing the interpersonal risk associated with that given action or behavior in the particular interpersonal work climate characterizing their organization. Finally findings accepted the third hypothesis with an outcome that showed a significant correlation between optimism and innovative work behavior. This is in line with the submission of Howells (2010) which opined that optimism consists of a set of generalized positive outcome expectations.

Hence, optimism has an impact on performance (Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 2017). Amabile & Gryskiewicz (2017) concluded that there are relationships between psychological safety in innovative work behavior. In line to the above result, people who generally expect things will go their way and believe that they will have more good outcomes than bad, are optimistic. Optimistic people are known to associate positive events with personal, permanent and pervasive causes and negative events with external, temporary and situation-specific causes (Dhawan, 2005). Optimistic persons have attributes that are characteristically opposite of the pessimist. The success of the later is undermined by their negative expectations, since it increases their potential towards failure. Optimistic individuals direct their energy towards attaining their set objectives because they are naturally positive, they assess situations positively in times of hardships and tribulations instead of resigning to fate. Optimism has prominently featured as a key concept in the emerging field of positive organizational behavior whose elements include work engagement. According to

Xanthapoulou (2009), optimism contributes towards positive work-related employee outcomes. Overall, however, both conceptual and empirical analyses suggest that relations among psychological availability, psychological safety and optimism in innovative work behavior are modest. Innovation as an important factor in helping organizations survive in a world full of changes (Ghani, Hussin, & Jusoff, 2009). While confronting the challenge of innovation, organizations do not merely rely on certain employees working in the research and development department. Instead, organizations try to mobilize the creative potential of all the employees (Chughtai, 2008). Thus, organizations are dependent on the knowledge, the creativity and the innovative engagement of their employees. However, since the relationship between employees and organizations can be characterized by diverging interests (Shalley Zhou, & Oldham, 2014).

Conclusion

The researchers concluded that psychological availability, psychological safety and optimism are among the significant predictors of innovative work behaviour among administrative staff

Implication of the study

Results from this study have implications for counseling practice and assessment. That psychological availability, psychological safety and optimism predicted innovative work behavior or among workers demands that counseling psychologists, hospital management and health practitioners should focus on means of boosting these psychological factors (psychological availability, safety and optimism) among workers to ensure and promote productivity at work.

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