

ORGANIZATIONAL CYNICISM: ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH JOB SATISFACTION

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Abstract

The nature of the employment relationship is changing fundamentally. Organizations and employees have to find ways to respond to the new realities in the workplace such, that work continues to provide meaning and organizational success. Organizational cynicism is a somewhat controversial issue; frequently brings confusion, irritation, among those who fail to acknowledge cynicism as something that may develop in the context of work. On the other hand, there is also a great deal of recognition and understanding for those who are cynical at work. Since organizational cynicism is associated with many other concepts such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, managers should deepen the perception of organizational justice that can be realized without spending much effort and resources. In organizations with a high sense of justice, motivation and internal loyalty, employees are more likely to be more loyal to their work and organizations. This study is intended to identify and assess the relationships between the organizational cynicism of the employees and their job satisfaction in a private company.

Keywords: organizational cynicism, job satisfaction, psychological contract

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1. Introduction

Organizational cynicism is an outcome of an employees' belief that organizations lack honesty; expectations of morality, justice, and honesty are violated. Over the years, researchers have become more interested on issues relating to organizational cynicism. The concept of cynicism has become the subject of various disciplines in social sciences like philosophy, religion, political science, sociology, management and psychology (Ince & Turan, 2011). 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 their employer to repay them with respect and dignity, and to be fair to the others too. 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.

2. Organizational cynicism

Originally cynicism comes from the ancient Greek word “kyon”, meaning “dog” (Dean et al., 1998). The earliest cynics had cynicism as a deliberate philosophy, contrary to modern cynics, who are often more portrayed as victims of society.

Common conceptualizations of cynicism have included trait-based approaches that identify cynicism as a fairly stable personality characteristic. The earliest measure comes from Cook and Medley's, 1954, hostility scale – a subset of items from the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI). This scale assesses cynicism as a range of negative and fairly stable perceptions regarding people in general and the degree to which there are feelings of hostility toward them. Graham (MMPI -2) put it, organizational cynicism should be conceptualized as an attitude, involving more temporal evaluations about the focal object-one's employing organization, not enduring personality traits-and these evaluations can change over time as conditions change in the organization. This contextual and specific attitude has been variously described by researchers as containing feelings such as “frustration and contempt” toward the organization (Andersson, 1996, p. 1397),

“disillusionment” regarding their expectations of the organization (Andersson & Bateman, 1997, p. 451), and beliefs that the organization’s leadership “lacks integrity” (Dean et al., 1998, p. 345), and “is incompetent and lazy” (Wanous et al., 1994, p. 270).

“Organizational cynicism is a negative attitude toward one’s employing organization, comprising three dimensions: 1) a belief that the organization lacks integrity; (2) negative affect towards the organization; and (3) tendencies to disparaging and critical behaviors toward the organization that are consistent with these beliefs and affect.” (Dean et al., 1998, p. 345). For Andersson (1996) cynicism “... can be defined best as both a general and specific attitude, characterized by frustration, hopelessness, disillusionment, as well as contempt toward and distrust of a person, group, ideology, social convention, or institution.” (p. 1397-1398). The most important element of these two definitions is that organizational cynicism is an attitude.

Employee cynicism is the version of cynicism suggested by Andersson (1996). The definition of cynicism proposed by her attempts to cover all possible areas of cynicism, including cynicism towards work, police cynicism and cynicism about organizational change. Since its inception, this definition has been used simultaneously for organizational cynicism. The main contribution of Andersson is that she has proposed that organizational cynicism may be caused by psychological contract violation. Rousseau (1989) suggested that the nature of relationship between employee’s and employer’s dramatically changed as employees no longer want to have a long term relationship with organizations, rather they want it to be transactional (based on transactions e.g. pay etc) which changed the concept of traditional employment relationship. Employees now don’t expect the organizations to take care of their careers; rather they are themselves responsible for their career development. An important aspect of psychological contract which supports the study of organizational cynicism is the concept of breach of psychological contract. Morrison and Robinson (1997) believe that breach occurs when organizations make promises without any intention to fulfill them as circumstances prevent the organizations to keep the promises or some times organization considers that it is fulfilling promises but employees feel otherwise. When employees consider that organization is not fulfilling its obligations this generates a feeling of frustration commonly referred to as organizational cynicism (Dean et al., 1998). In literature psychological contract theory has been used as a key basis to study organizational cynicism

which makes it the key theoretical underpinning for present study. Occupational cynicism as a form of organizational cynicism has originated in the earliest studies into cynicism, namely police cynicism (Dean et al., 1998). In fact, it has been purported (Dean et al., 1998) to consist of “work cynicism” (what we now call occupational cynicism) and “organizational cynicism”. Work cynicism refers to the content of work, and organizational cynicism refers to the context of work. Occupational cynicism is now associated with service workers under role conflict and role ambiguity (Dean et al., 1998) and with the burnout.

Some factors that influence cynicism are: dealing with stress, disagreement with organizational expectations, lack of social support and recognition, not having a voice in the decision-making process, unbalanced distribution of power, and lack of communication (Reichers et al., 1997). Cynics believe that employees have low-levels of critical thinking capabilities and are not worthy of trust or loyalty (Abraham, 2000). It should be mentioned that some researchers believe that cynicism is a personality trait or attitude rather than a lifestyle (Nafei, 2013, apud. Özgener et al., 2008). There are differences among the employees regarding their evaluative attitudes towards organizational cynicism and organizational change; the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of organizational cynicism have a significant relationship with organizational change. Cynicism development processes have been identified within the context of organizational change. Reichers (1997, p.48) suggest that cynicism about organizational change is a “loss of faith in the leaders of change and a response to a history of change attempts that are not entirely or clearly successful”.

Cynicism has been associated with a series of negative aspects, such as apathy, resignation, alienation, lack of trust in other people, suspicion, contempt, disillusionment, as well as with poor results in performance, interpersonal conflicts, absenteeism, turnover, 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). Since organizational cynicism is associated with many other concepts such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, managers should deepen the perception of organizational justice that can be realized without spending much effort and resources. In organizations with a high sense of justice, motivation and

internal loyalty, employees are more likely to be more loyal to their work and organizations. (Nafei, 2013).

As consequences of cynicism we can mention the decrease in organizational commitment, in motivation, or in satisfaction at 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, et al.,1997). Lynn Andersson considered that “unlike the other aspects of labour, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, cynicism is generally perceived as negative and therefore it represents a sensitive issue/topic for managers and organizations. Because of this, 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), because of 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 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!

3. Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a very crucial behavior exhibited by employees, which in different scenarios decide the fate of the organization. An employee who is satisfied by his job is more committed and work dedicatedly to achieve organizational objects but on the other hand a dissatisfied employee not only performs his work improperly but can inhibit the organization in achieving its goal and objectives. 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 (Fields, 2002). It is generally recognized as a multifaceted construct that includes employee feelings about a variety of both intrinsic and extrinsic job elements (Fields, 2002).

Researchers also found that job satisfaction is an individual feeling towards his/her job which is influenced by various factors, for example, the one's relationship with his/her supervisor, physical environment in which employees work, the degree of fulfillment, salary, compensation and benefits. Job satisfaction, motivation and affective commitment are the key ingredients to the continuing growth for any organization and high class performance around the world. Organizational cynicism is also related to lower job satisfaction and higher job dissatisfaction (Abraham, 2000). Negative emotions have been linked with job dissatisfaction (Fisher 2000). Job satisfaction also boosts self confidence in employees; it improves or decreases self confidence and lack of job satisfaction may cause a person to exhibit aggressive behavior towards others. Burke, Matthiesen (2009) consider that female employees have lower level of job satisfaction. Similar findings are supported by Antoniou, Polychroni & Vlachakis (2006). Empirically, negative relations between organizational cynicism and job satisfaction exist (e.g. Chiaburu et al., 2013; Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly, 2003). Organizational cynicism is associated with negative emotional reactions toward the organization (Dean et al., 1998) and if this colors the lens through which individuals view their work environment on the whole, it is likely that job satisfaction will be impacted negatively. Scott&Zweig (2016) found that supervisory support moderated the effects of organizational cynicism on job satisfaction. The nature of this interaction suggests that although individuals who express cynical attitudes about their organizations are also less likely to be satisfied with their jobs, supportive supervisors can mitigate some of these negative effects.

4. Research Methodology

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

Hypothesis:

H1: Employees' organizational cynicism will be negatively correlated

to their job satisfaction.

The research group contains 92 employees from a private company. The subjects are aged between 21 and 59. Of the total number of 92 participants in this survey 48 are women and 44 are men.

For the assessment of the organizational cynicism construct we used the Eaton and Struthers Questionnaire, 2000. 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

5. Result Interpretation

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, the standard deviation and the correlations between the analyzed variables.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations between demographic variables

| Variable | M | SD |
|--------------|-------|------|
| 1. Age | 32.62 | 9.17 |
| 2. Seniority | 10.22 | 9.54 |

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

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, correlation coefficients between the organizational cynicism and job satisfaction.

| Variables | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|---------|--------|--------|--------|------|---|
| 1. Organizational cynicism | 20.11 | 8.15 | | | | | | |
| 2. JDI current work | 38.87 | 10.9 | -.353** | | | | | |
| 3. JDI salary | 16.89 | 7.11 | -.487** | .539** | | | | |
| 4. JDI promotion | 14.74 | 8.61 | -.433** | .597** | .572** | | | |
| 5. JDI /manager boss | 40.20 | 12.56 | -.606** | .405** | .432** | .487** | | |
| 6. JDI co-workers | 39.92 | 13.43 | -.559** | .495** | .502** | .305** | .643 | |

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 the 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 n^o 1 is confirmed.

In the same time, we intend to identify whether age and seniority are predictors for organizational cynicism. In the study we ran regression analyzes where organizational cynicism where 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 ($\beta = .597$; sig. 0.070).

6. Conclusions

Since organizational cynicism is associated with many other concepts such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, managers should deepen the perception of organizational justice that can be realized without spending much effort and resources. In organizations with a high sense of justice, motivation and internal loyalty, employees are more likely to be more loyal to their work and organizations.

The results of our study indicate negative correlations between organizational cynicism and 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. 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.

Virga (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 behaviours against the organization and, therefore, cause a decrease in the level of job satisfaction and work engagement along with civic participative behaviours, affecting the performance of the entire organization.

As a research direction in the future, we intend to highlight the role of work engagement, organizational cynicism and job satisfaction on physical health, mental wellness and on the ability of emotional management. The management of emotions regarding different behaviours such organizational cynicism must be done constructively, to obtain a better performance regardless the age or seniority of the employees.

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