

Does Work Attitude result into Work Behavior for older and younger generation?

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ABSTRACT

Behaviour of an employee in the organizational setup is expected to be well defined and there is a diminutive scope for an employee to deviate. However, there are instances when our work behaviour is governed by our work attitude and other key reasons. The present paper attempts to explore the complex relationship between attitude and behaviour in the organizational setup across generations. Constructivist approach has been adopted to unravel this dynamic relationship. 18 employees from the older and the younger generations were interviewed. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The present study found that there is a weak relationship between work attitude and work behaviour across the generations but the reasons for the same differs across generations.

KEY WORDS: Work Attitudes, Work Behaviour, Generations.

INTRODUCTION

'Attitude', 'work', and 'generation' as concepts originated in different disciplines of social sciences. Attitude primarily belongs to social psychology, whereas work and generation are offshoots of sociology. The present paper makes an endeavour to unravel the relationship between work attitude and work behaviour across generations. There is a dearth of literature that focuses on the relationship between attitude and behaviour at workplace. Lack of attention to attitude and behaviour relationship can be attributed to an assumption that attitudes in general results into a given behaviour, they are generally tandem in nature. In other words, a person's behaviour is generally governed

by the attitude towards an object. Attitude was introduced in social psychology as an explanatory device in an attempt to understand human behaviour (Ajzen 1991). Studies carried out by La Perie (1934) and Wicker (1969) brought a paradigm shift. It was reported that attitude is not always be the cause and reason for behaviour. This led to the investigation of potential moderators and mediators of the attitude-behaviour relationship (Armitage and Christian 2003).

The current study does not advocate all or none stand in relation to attitude being related to behaviour or people behaving in accordance to their attitude. Across the generations there is a

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divided stand. There are occasions when attitude indeed governs behaviour and there are instances when the relation between them is extremely weak. The present study has makes an attempt to unravel the reasons behind such conflicting findings with the help of theory of planned behaviour.

The multi-component view of attitude is used to explain the low empirical relation between attitude and behaviour. This provides the range of behaviours that can be used to infer a person's behaviour; some responses might be reflective of affective and cognitive components and others of behavioural component. However, multi-component view does not provide full account of relationship between attitude and behaviour. As it is not clear whether behaviour is determined by attitude as a whole or merely by its conative (emotional/affective) component. Another approach that aids to explain the low empirical relationship between attitude and behaviour is the concept of moderating affects of the other variable. In the given context, if the subject has required degree of skill to perform a job in question, he is likely to perform well. In this case, the ability is seen as a variable that interacts with the attitude in determining variable. However, it is seen that these 'other variables' sometime do and sometimes do not have moderating and independent influence. Studies have shown that immediate predictor of behaviour is the intention to perform the behaviour, theory of planned behaviour deals with the concept of intention. In the present study, theory of planned behaviour has undertaken to explain the relationship between attitude and behaviour (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975).

In view of above stated limitations, the present

research applies theory of planned behaviour to explain relationship between attitude and behaviour. The theory of planned behaviour is an extension to the theory of reasoned actions; it addresses the limitations of the same by dealing with behaviours over which people have incomplete volitional control (Ajzen 1991).

METHODOLOGY

OBJECTIVE: To explore the relationship between work attitude and work behaviour across generations

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: Present study falls under the constructivist paradigm. It adopts social constructionist approach to unravel the reality. It is assumed that its participants are constructing reality and it can be understood by understanding its process of its construction.

METHOD: In-depth interview as a tool was used with interview as a method. Rationale behind selecting in-depth interview was to unravel multiple levels of realities from the participant's perspective. In-depth interview unfolds data that this grounded in the field.

SAMPLE PROFILE AND SAMPLE SIZE: Employees from older and younger generation were drawn out using theoretical sampling. Another criteria for selecting the sample were employees should have been associated with their employers for at least two years. 18 interviews across generations from various cross-sections of organizations were taken. Nine from each generation, gender -based bifurcation is 16 males and 2 females.

DATA ANALYSIS: Data was analysed using

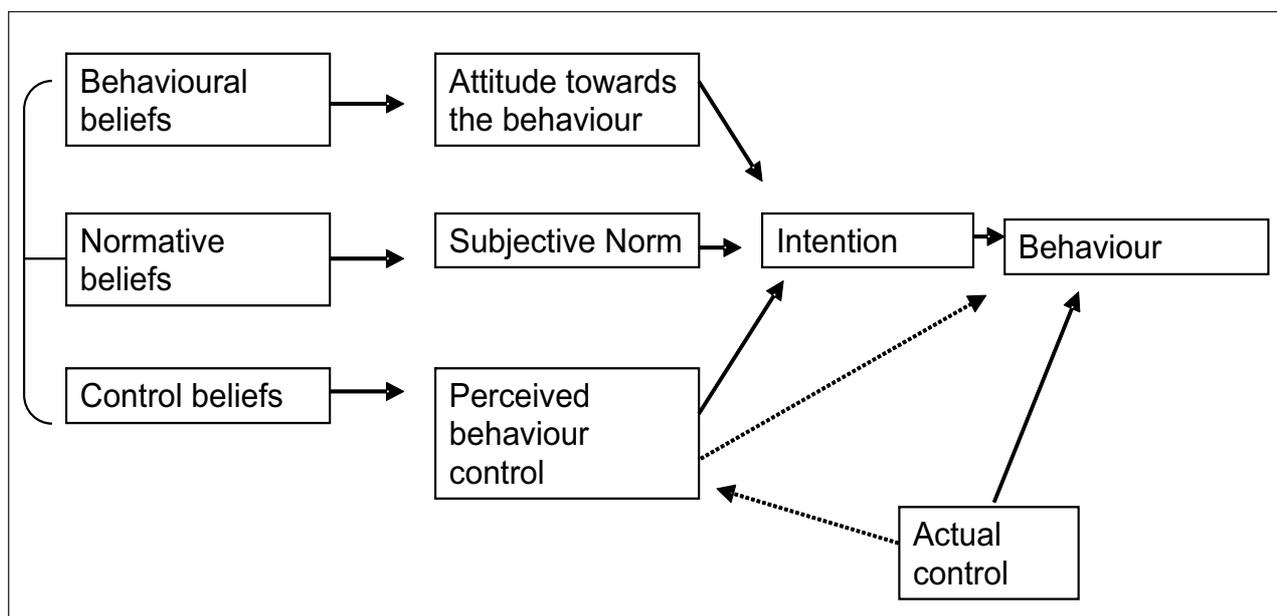
thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is based on the premise of encoding qualitative information.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Older and the younger generation reports instances wherein their work attitude has not corresponded to their work behaviour. However, the reasons attributed for the weak relationship between work behaviour and work attitude differs for older and younger generation. The present study as stated above applies theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen 1975) to explain this dynamic relationship.

According to the theory of planned behaviour, human action is influenced by three major factors: a favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the behaviour (attitude towards behaviour), perceived

social pressure to perform or not perform the behaviour (subjective norm), and perceived capability to perform the behaviour (perceived behavioural control). These three components lead to the formation of behavioural intention (Ajzen 1991). Therefore, favourable the attitude towards behaviour, subjective norm, and greater perceived behavioural control there is a likelihood that the stronger the person's intention to perform the behaviour in question. While carrying out work, a person assesses the attitude towards work behaviour as well as the perception of social pressure to do so, and perceived control over this behaviour. Therefore, together these elements are going to predict intentions to work or not to work. Actual working should correspond to the intention to the extent that the participant has the authority to carry out work.



Source: Theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen 1991)

¹Before 1985 (pre-liberalisation) are considered as the older generation and those who have joined the workforce after 1991 (post-liberalisation) are part of the younger generation.

²Rationale behind taking two years of association with the organization is that individual do take time to identify with the organization and the kind of work they are suppose to do.

SITUATIONS IN WHICH WORK ATTITUDES DO NOT RESULT INTO CORRESPONDING WORK BEHAVIOUR

Extant literature profess conflicting findings, that is, some of the research suggests that attitude and behaviour are related to each other whereas there is an another section of studies that question's the relationship between them (Suazo 2009, Carmeli 2003). In the present study it is seen that on many occasions participants are unable to behave in accordance to their attitude and state of dissonance that they undergo. There are situations when they have non-positive work attitude but demonstrate positive work behaviour. Situations under which they feel the state of dissonance are different for the younger and the older generation. For the younger generation, dissonance arises when nature of work is not of their kind and their efforts are quashed for inexplicable reasons. They feel that since others are going to form impression about them and their personality, it is safer to behave in socially desirable way. Therefore, even if they do not have a non-positive attitude towards work their work behaviour is of high standards. For the older generation, it happens when they are dropped from promotion, are not having good interpersonal relationship with boss, conflict with management, when people are not working. One of the participants elucidates by quoting an incident.

I was in Pata and my executive director was incharge of plants we had certain differences in term of opinion. His officer incharge would say work has to be done in given time frame, I also wanted the work to be done in the same time frame but then procedures should also be given its space and importance...but then so are the

system procedure, financial prudence etc. I had to follow what my boss and do the job in the time frame and let go the procedures. I feel that even if I have non-positive orientation towards work but I had to give my best to the work. (Paritosh, older generation)

APPLYING THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR IN THE GIVEN CONTEXT

The nature of non-linear relationship between work attitude and work behaviour is that people hold non-positive attitude towards work but their work behaviour is positive.

SOCIETAL NORMS: It is observed that people in the Indian society are highly governed by subjective norms. Indian society is directed by the concept of nishkam karmayoga propagating that people should work selflessly without being outcome oriented. Younger generation considers work as a contribution that one should make but for varied reasons. For some, it is a way of contributing to the society, if they work hard the profit of company will soar hence higher the contribution to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and make world better place to work. Others feel that it is one of the ways of developing personality. According to the older generation, society terms 'not working' as wasting time, which is not considered good for society at a larger level. Work helps the personal and professional fulfilment. Since work is conceived as the immediate identity of people, so it becomes imperative for employees to work to prove their identity to avoid being termed as 'useless'. Therefore, there is a likelihood that people are going to give their best to the work even though they do not possess positive attitude towards it.

Participants amongst the older generation state that another reason for their positive work behaviour is that they cannot fight against system and management and want to maintain healthy interpersonal relationship with everyone. Result and betterment of the organisation is also one of the potent factors. Whereas for the younger generation the reason is professionalism and recognition that motivates people to behave in socially accepted manner with respect to their work irrespective of their attitude.

Yeah yeah, it has been so times. The day I had joined audit (dislike it).. Sometime the kind of boss you have can also be one of the possible reasons... there is something like professionalism. I must not forget that I am first a professional and then an employee of any organisation. Therefore, I would be recognised and that recognition should remain one of the important elements in my life. Being a professional it is important to strive for doing something different and dynamic. (PKY)

PERCEIVED BEHAVIOURAL CONTROL

Within the organisational context where the individual is bounded by various rules and regulations, there is a less likelihood that people are going to be high on perceived behavioural control. Employees across the generations have said that on several occasions they have felt lack of perceived behavioural control. Several reasons have been cited by both the generations in demand to increase perceived behavioural control. The older generation put forth the view that there should be higher perceived control so that they will be able to work wholeheartedly. In addition, it is a specialised works and their involvement is imperative. They state that 'we are the major force

contributing to work so we can come up with additional information and value addition'. It can be also considered as one of the ways of recognising people. In order to have effective function, it is important to make employee aware of the pros and cons of what they are doing. Another section of respondents feel that it might not be possible to provide with higher degree of perceived control due the limitation of the organisation (decision might be in favour of individual and not in favour of organisation). However, their opinions must be taken and effort should be taken to make them part of key issues that is going to effect them directly.

On the similar lines, younger generation states that one of the first step towards making the employee take ownership of his work. Also that while taking decision, management may not be aware of ground reality and that the employees can make them aware of that. Certain section of them feel that it is their right to be part of the decision-making process. Others feel that even if they are not being made part of decision making process they should be taken into confidence by enumerating the reasons and rationale behind decisions. In general, employees across the generation feel that they feel lack of control regarding the things that are directly related to them.

From the above arguments, it can be concluded that since people are governed by the subjective norms that are not in consonance to their attitude and they lack the perceived control, there is a likelihood that they are going to have weak behaviour intention, which leads to dissonance between attitude and behaviour. This scenario

reduces the likelihood of people to behave in accordance to their work attitude. Therefore, even if people hold non-positive work attitude towards work their work behaviour is positive.

IMPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

Attitude and behaviour relationship is dynamic in nature. There are certain occasions wherein people across generations are able to behave in accordance to their work attitudes. However, in general, participants across generation find it difficult to behave in tandem to their work attitude. This has been explained with the help of theory of planned behaviour. Organizations need to come out of the predominant outcome mind-set. If employees are demonstrating positive work behaviour irrespective of their work attitude, organizations should not neglect the area of work attitude and work behaviour relationship. An attempt to should be made to bring in right reasons for right behaviour. Consonance between work attitude and work behaviour should be achieved. It is being hypothesized that when positive work attitude is in consonance with positive work behaviour the intensity and nature of positive work behaviour is going to be far stronger. Future studies can put this hypothesis to test.

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