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The Effects of Envy on Job Engagement and Turnover Intention

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Abstract

Over the past 15 years managing employees' emotions is seen as one of the main way in order to be successful on global environment. While positive emotions have gained particular momentum through positive organizational behavior and positive organizational scholarship negative emotions in the workplace have been neglected. This study presents envy that is one of the rampant negative emotions in the workplace (Tai et.al.,2012). The study also outlines how envy affects job engagement and turnover intention. By studying 111 white-collar employees, and using regression analyses, we found that (1) feelings of envy influences emotional engagement, (2) feelings of envy affects propensity to leave and (3) emotional engagement impacts intention to leave. The study contributes to understanding the role of negative emotions on employees. The empirical findings of this research will lead practitioners and scholars with theoretical and managerial implications.

1. Introduction

Since the study of Hoschild's (1983) there has been a tremendous growth of interest in research and theory in the arena of emotions in organizational life (Ashkanasy,2003). In organizational behavior field the impact of emotions on attitudes, behavior, cognition and personality have been investigated. Scholars are fragmented and focus in a number of aspects of emotions (i.e. experiences, causes, and consequences) at work. It is not surprising, because organizations are composed of people and people have emotions (Akgün et. al,2009). The developing field is characterized by scholars a diversity of topics such as emotional labor, emotional intelligence, emotional capability, affective events theory, intergroup emotion theory and affects infusion theory. The diversity generates inconsistency for defining emotions in the literature. The definition of emotion is not clear. First, there is ambiguous definition between emotion, affect and mood. While mood reflects to lasting affective states that need not be responses to specific events, emotions imply short responses to specific events. The word of emotion is derived from the Latin promotionem meaning to move forward. Emotions are fundamentally a social phenomenon and defined as individuals' dynamic reactions to an object or event (Barclay et. al, 2005). Moreover, levels of analysis in emotions research in organizations are not clear too. Ashkanasy (2011) developed an integrated five-level model of emotion in organizations for clarifying this gap. Five-level model of emotion identifies, within person, between persons, interpersonal interactions, group and organization-wide levels. In organizations through interpersonal interactions, employees experience positive or

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negative emotions. While positive emotions are associated with events that facilitate the fulfillment of an individual's objectives; negative emotions are associated with events that hinder the fulfillment of objectives (Barclay et. al, 2005). For example people feel anger when they are under rewarded (Barclay et. al, 2005) or feel happy when they accomplish a task.

After the positive psychology movement (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 200), scholars investigate the role of positive emotions for enhancing extraordinary performance. The role of positive emotions on productivity and innovativeness has been demonstrated both theoretically and empirically through broad and build theory (Frederickson, 2001). Besides, negative emotions emerging in the workplace or carried from home affects work performance negatively and threaten productivity and destroy cooperation among colleagues in the workplace. Although positive emotions have relationship with positive outcomes, positive emotions may hinder positive outcomes or, negative emotions have relationship with negative outcomes, negative emotions may foster positive outcomes in organizations.

The study responds to the call for more research into emotions by focusing both negative and positive consequences. To address this gap, we investigate both negative and positive consequences of envy. Envy is one of the negative emotions that occur in organizations frequently. In the study we evaluate both light side and dark side of envy.

Accordingly, the paper is structured as follows. First, envy is examined. In this section, the concept of envy and being envied is investigated. Second, the relationship between envy and job engagement is explained. Third, the association among envy and turnover intention is investigated. Fourth, the relationship between job engagement and turnover intention is revealed. Then, the empirical results are provided. Lastly, suggestions for future researches and information for practitioners are presented..

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1 Employee Envy

Early research on leader behavior conducted by psychologist in 1950s-60s, much of the studies on leadership In recent years there is a shift from trait affect and mood to discrete emotions (Gephart et. al., 2009). Scholars use Lazarus and Cohen-Charash's (2001) list of discrete emotions (i.e., anger, anxiety, fright, guilt, shame, sadness, envy, jealousy, joy, pride, relief, hope, love, gratitude and compassion) for understanding the role of emotions in organizational context. Envy is one of the meaningful construct in the workplace that has powerful emotional influence on employees (Vecchio, 2000). Envy is defined as a negative emotion felt that occurs a person lack another's obtaining outcomes (superior quality, achievement or possession) that are personally desired (Charash and Muller, 2007). Since Aristotle's time, envy is classified as malicious or benign envy. Notwithstanding benign or malicious, envy is an unpleasant emotion (Smith and Kim,2007) and both of them is the sensation of pain (Tai,2012).While malicious envy examines envy with negative attitudes and behaviors and refers to ill will and hostility, benign envy emphasizes motivating aspects of envy and identified as admiring and emulative (Tai, 2012). The two views have different consequences. Malicious envy engenders negative outcomes whereas benign envy positive outcomes. Van de Ven et. al (2009) demonstrated the distinction between malicious and benign envy empirically.

Envy is a pervasive emotion that has been found in most culture and is felt by most people (Smith et. al., 1999). The competition for scarce resources, for time and for promotions generates and triggers envy in most organizations too. Employees compare their benefits, advantages and salaries with colleagues through formally and informally mechanisms and differentiation promotes competition among coworkers and foster greater feelings of envy. Duffy et.al. (2012) conceptualized workplace envy in three related ways. First, envy conceptualized as a situational which refers to general envy of others in an environment e.g. workplace; then as dispositional envy which indicates to a tendency generalized across all situations and lastly as episodic envy that shows an emotional reaction to a specific event. In this study we follow Duffy et.al (2012) and take the first view. In organizations envy and its work related consequences have been realized. Envy is important in organizations is that, envy is an interpersonal concept. Grounded in social exchange theory, organizations allow both tangible and intangible exchanges among coworkers. Through the exchange envy can lead to negative outcomes. For instance, envy reduces friendship ties and hinders knowledge sharing among coworkers. The other consequence of envy is poor health. Envy is linked mental-ill health such as depression and stress. Envy leads to poor mental health and depressive tendencies and poor mental health