



Formal Organizational Career Development Support And Employee Engagement: Role Of Employment Experience

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Abstract

The study attempts to understand the mechanism for strengthening formal organizational career development support and employee engagement with the moderating impact of employment experience based on organizational support theory. Pre-existing questionnaire was used for collecting data through convenience sampling. Data were collected from a total of 397 millennial employees working in information technology industry operating in India. Analysis of the data was done using structural equation modelling. The results of the study show that employment experience strengthens the relationship between formal organizational career development support and employee engagement. The study attempts to understand the importance of formal organizational career development support in fostering employee engagement. The study has also used employment experience as a moderating variable for solidifying the above relationship.

Keywords – Employee engagement, employment experience, organizational support theory, formal organizational career development support.

Paper type – Research paper

Introduction

Employee developmental activities within an organization often promotes employee motivation and employee engagement (EE) (Jena et al., 2024). Therefore, the study focusses on formal organizational career development support (FCS) for propagating employee engagement (EE) among employees, as such supports are often studied in isolation (French, K. A., & Shockley, 2020; Xiong and King, 2018). FCS is defined as the career growth activities that are formally planned and managed by the organization, such as training (Sturges et al. 2002). The study aims to give insight for encouraging millennial employees' engagement through formal career development supports within organizations based on organizational support theory (OST). Formal career development support within organizations serves as positive amplifier and fosters dedication for one's organization (Pattnaik and Sahoo, 2023; Dachner et al., 2021). Moreover, it has been suggested to find out non-monetary antecedents for reducing employee-related

difficulties, such as EE (Kodagoda and Deheragoda, 2021). FCS helps employees to update themselves as per the organizational needs through organizational sponsored plans (Renee Barnett and Bradley, 2007). Therefore, it can be predictable that facilitating FCS can provide growth opportunities to millennial employees within the organization, leading to EE.

Nowadays, jobs do not only mean being employed rather encompasses practices that make jobs attractive and meaningful. Millennial employees seek favourable work practices to function efficiently (Aman-Ullah *et al.*, 2022; Hurtienne *et al.*, 2022; Pattnaik and Sahoo, 2021). Such practices have tremendous motivational impact and modifies employees' behaviour, leading to EE (Fletcher *et al.*, 2018; Hurtienne *et al.*, 2022). This drove the attention to study on employment experience (EExp) as the moderating variable in the relationship between FS and EE. Based on OST such initiative also serves as a mechanism for using one's skills in a job, thereby improving employees participation, leading to EE (Dokko *et al.*, 2009; Jehanzeb and Mohanty, 2018; Yao *et al.*, 2019). Facilitating FCS and EExp shows organizational caring and importance for the professional well-being of employees, which can boost up EE (Sahni, 2021). Such support and experience modify employee behaviour, enhances quality of work life and develops commitment that fosters EE (Tucker, 2020).

Development of hypotheses

Formal organizational career development support and employee engagement

FSC may be defined as those organizational sponsored activities that help employees to flourish in their careers within an organization (Milman, 2002). The relationship between FCS and EE is based on OST where benefits and support provided by an organization often harness positive work-related behaviour among employees, leading to EE (Jena and Nayak, 2023; Jia-jun and Hua-ming, 2022; Pattnaik and Sahoo, 2020). FCS shapes employees' behaviour and generates interest in one's work (Napitupulu *et al.*, 2017). Such support helps employees to perform well and it also shows organizational concern for employees well-being that triggers employees' dedication, for which they give their best efforts to achieve organizational targets, leading EE (Wen *et al.*, 2019). FCS adds meaning to one's professional life by fulfilling growth needs and expanding the scope in one's work. It acts as a motivational strategy that makes individuals pay more attention to organizational well-being and goals (Pant and Venkateswaran, 2019). It modifies work attitudes and behaviour by encouraging employees interest and involvement in the workplace. On the basis of above literature support, the following hypothesis has been framed:

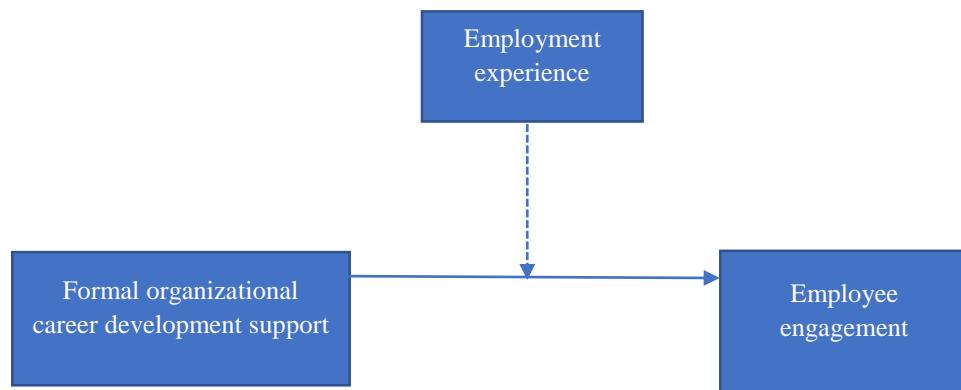
H1: FSC is positively associated with EE.

Formal organizational career development, employment experience and employee engagement

Irrespective of one's expertise, the competencies of employees are determined by the EExp within an organization (Rosmi and Syamsir, 2020). EExp is viewed as the refined work practices within organizations that support employees' efficient performance and professional growth (Quiñones *et al.*, 1995; Beus *et al.*, 2014). It is considered as a noteworthy indicator to many human resource functions as it encourages efficiency in the workplace (Campion *et al.*, 1994; Milman, 2003; Mc-Call *et al.*, 1988; Budhwar and Khatri, 2001). Similarly, FSC satisfies the job expectations and helps employees to flourish in the organization (Kodagoda & Deheragoda, 2021). It assists employees to gain exposure, acquire new skills and competencies and provides opportunities for better job position and designation that leads to motivation, resulting EE (Hurtienne *et al.*, 2021). The relationship among FCS, EExp and EE can be theorized using OST. OST shows the extent to which an organization cares about the well-being of its employees through benevolent employment practices that builds up positive internal culture and enables employees as well as organizational benefits (Kurtessis *et al.*, 2015). OST deals with supportive and fair internal practices that generate constructive work experience (Akgunduz *et al.*, 2022). EExp helps reduce job stress, ensures organizational happiness and dedication for one's job. So, based on OST it can be expected that EExp and FCS together helps foster a pleasing-productive internal work atmosphere that inspires employee advancement and meaningfulness at workplace (Harney *et al.*, 2014). Such practices often lead towards positive employee behaviour and generates interest among employees for organization benefits, leading EE (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2020). On the basis of above literature support the following hypothesis has been framed:

H2: Employment experience moderates the relationship between formal career development and employee engagement.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model



Methods

Procedure and sample

Snowball sampling technique was adopted in the study for reaching the target respondents within a period of six months that is from February to July, 2024. Online questionnaire was sent to the managerial and non-managerial employees of IT industry functioning in India through google form. For determining the sample size guidelines suggested by Hair et al. (2010) were followed, where a minimum of 10 samples for each item is necessary. Anonymity and confidentiality have been maintained by presenting the results of the data in aggregated form.

Measures:

Pre-established questionnaire with Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 denotes strongly disagree and 5 denotes strongly agree were used in the study. The details of measures are shown in Table 2.

FCS: It was measured using a 6-item scale developed by Sturges et al. (2002).

EE: It was measured using a 11-item scale developed by Saks (2006).

EE: A 10-item scale of Milman (2003) was used in the study.

Results

Out of 397 useable sample with 57.8% males and 42.2% females were derived. Of these sample, 22.3% of the respondents were having 0-3 years of work experience, and 47.6%, 20.9% and 9.2% of the respondents were having 3-7 years, 7-10 years, and more than 10 years of work experience in the present organization. Likewise, 64.5%, 26.5% and 9% of the respondents were having bachelor, master and doctorates degrees. Similarly, 20.9% of respondents were at junior level, 41% were at middle level and 38.20% were at senior levels respectively.

All the hypotheses were tested using structural equation modelling (SEM) using AMOS 24. For examining the descriptive statistics and correlation matrix SPSS 24 was used in the study. The analysis was done using 95 % of confidence level that is 5 % level of significance. The mean, standard deviation, correlation matrix and square root value of average variance explained (AVE) [for assessment of discriminant validity] for all the constructs are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Mean, standard deviation and correlation matrix (along with square root of average variance explained- AVE)

| Variable | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | FCS | EE | ExP |
|----------|-----|-------|----------------|---------|---------|--------|
| FCS | 422 | 2.935 | 0.521 | 0.721# | | |
| EE | 422 | 3.650 | 0.687 | 0.452** | 0.747# | |
| ExP | 422 | 3.333 | 0.637 | | 0.468** | 0.724# |

Notes: # Square root of AVE; *p-value <0.05; **p-value<0.01; FSC= Formal organizational career development support; ExP= Employment experience; EE= Employee engagement

Assessment of measurement model

The measurement model was examined using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to establish the relationships between the latent variable and the measures. The factor loadings of all the variables obtained were above the minimum acceptable range that is 0.7. Likewise, the values of model fit achieved is satisfactory as recommended by Hair *et al.* (2010) [$\chi^2/df = 2.420 (<3)$, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.935 (>0.90), comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.943 (>0.90) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.058 (<0.07)]. The construct validity was established through convergent and discriminant validities. The AVE and construct reliability (CR) of all the constructs are above 0.5 and 0.7 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Nunnally, 1978). The results of construct validity, factor loading of all the items, and Cronbach alpha are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2: Results for convergent validity and construct reliability (CR)

| Factors and items | Standardized factor loadings* | Cronbach's α | AVE | CR |
|--|-------------------------------|---------------------|-------|-------|
| Formal organizational career development support | 0.881 | 0.872 | 0.521 | 0.867 |
| FS1: I have been given training to help develop my career. | 0.708 | | | |
| FS2: My boss has made sure I get the training I need for my career | 0.758 | | | |
| FS3: I have been taught things I need to know to get on in this organization | 0.672 | | | |
| FS4: I have been given a personal development plan. | 0.752 | | | |
| FS5: I have been given work which has developed my skills for the future. | 0.761 | | | |
| FS6: My boss has given me clear feedback on my performance. | 0.678 | | | |
| Employment experience | | 0.919 | 0.559 | 0.926 |
| EE1: My job responsibilities are very clear to me. | 0.881 | | | |
| EE2: My manager knows me as a person. | 0.708 | | | |
| EE3: Working here is fun. | 0.694 | | | |
| EE4: In this organization, I am recognized as an individual | 0.672 | | | |
| EE5: I have a sense of fulfilment with my job | 0.752 | | | |
| EE6: I would like to further my education while working here. | 0.761 | | | |
| EE7: I would like to further my career while working here. | 0.678 | | | |
| EE8: I would like to work | 0.738 | | | |

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|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| somewhere else in the future. | | | | |
| EE9: I could do a better job than I am doing now. | 0.855 | | | |
| EE10: I would like to find another job soon. | 0.708 | | | |
| Employee engagement | | 0.873 | 0.525 | 0.868 |
| EE1: Being a member of this organization is very captivating. | 0.721 | | | |
| EE2: One of the most exciting things for me is getting involved with things happening in this organization. | 0.774 | | | |
| EE3: I am really not into the “goings-on” in this organization (R). | 0.741 | | | |
| EE4: Being a member of this organization make me come “alive.” | 0.713 | | | |
| EE5: Being a member of this organization is exhilarating for me. | 0.731 | | | |
| EE6: I am highly engaged in this organization. | 0.665 | | | |

Note: (R) = reverse coded

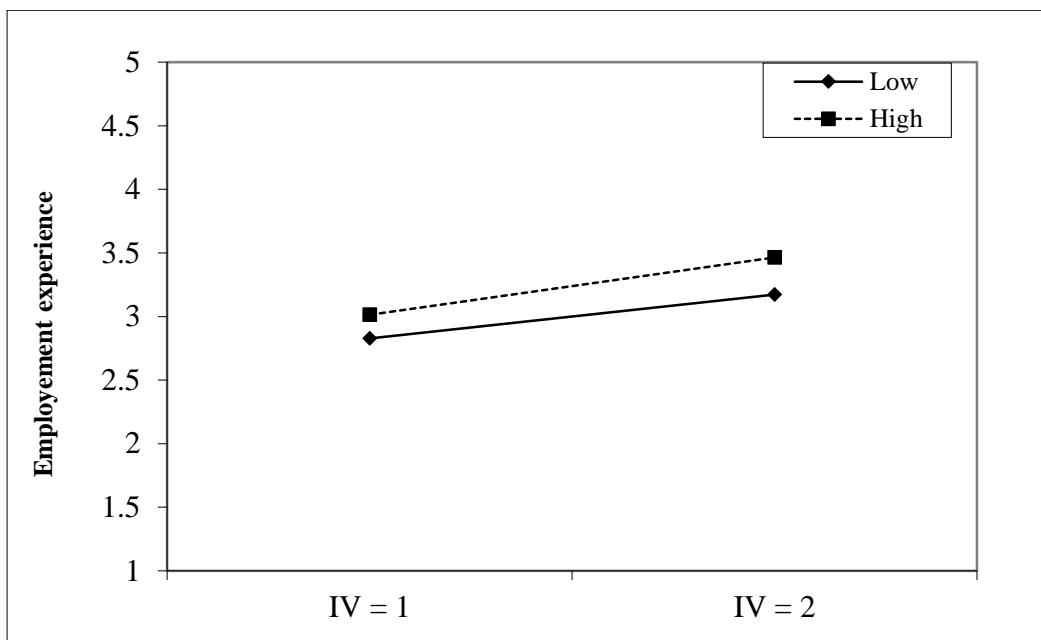
Testing of Hypotheses

Direct and indirect paths were examined for testing the hypotheses. A significant relationship between FCS and EE were found ($\beta = 0.317$; $p\text{-value} < 0.01$) supporting H1. The moderating impact of interaction (FCS*EE) in the relationship between FCS and EE were found to be significant ($\beta = 0.317$; $p\text{-value} < 0.01$) supporting H2. All the hypotheses proposed in our study have been established and shown in Table 3. The moderating effect of interaction is shown in Figure 2.

Table 3. Path analysis

| Path | Direct effect | Remarks |
|-----------------|---------------|--------------|
| FCS->EE | 0.265** | H1 Supported |
| ExP->EE | 0.231** | |
| Interaction->EE | 0.148* | H2 Supported |

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; FCS= Formal organizational career development support; ExP= Employment experience; EE= organizational engagement

Figure 2. Moderating effect

The visual representation of Jeremy Dawson graph showing the moderating effect of interaction (FCS*ExP) on EE can be clearly identified in Figure 2. As the interaction effect increases, the relationship between FCS and EE gets strengthened.

Discussion

The study shows the crucial role played by organizations for generating meaningful relationship with employees through developmental strategy. The study contributes to understand the importance of organizational practices such as FCS and EE for engaging employees. The study adds knowledge in the extant literature by fulfilling research calls in the field of formal career development support within organization and employee engagement, particularly in developing nations (Ete *et al.*, 2022; Hendriks *et al.*, 2020; Kwon and Kim, 2020; Pattnaik and Panda, 2020). The study delineated the boundary conditions by taking EExp for strengthening the relationships between FCS and EE, thus considering the recommendations of Lu *et al.* (2018) to understand the role of moderating variables in social science research (Saks, 2019). EExp exemplifies support, professional development, and recognition in work that are crucial for employee career progress and encourages beneficial organizational outcomes, such as EE (Chavadi *et al.*, 2022).

Implications of the study

The study has several theoretical contributions. It fulfils the research gap by addressing both FCS for propagating EE (Saks, 2006). The study can help organization to understand how employees can be engaged through the means of non-monetary employee wellbeing strategy, such as FCS and EE (Jena and Nayak, 2024; Di Fabio, 2017). It should be noted that managers must understand the needs and demands of employees before making any policies successful (Houssein *et al.*, 2020). FCS and EExp when provided by an organization for millennial employees acts as catalyst for individual and organizational benefits as well. The study also established that EExp impacts on the emotions and moods of employees leading to motivation, satisfaction and a better internal culture that strengthening the relationship between FCS and EE. The research expands knowledge and understanding in the field of human resources management. Managers can execute OCD as a motivating factor for enhancing millennial employee engagement. Before executing an polices, mangers should know the demands of the employees as OCD that appears as a strong requirement among millennial employees may not be a requirement for other group of employees (Straub *et al.*, 2020).

Limitations and future research

The study has the following limitations that can serve as a guide for future research. First, the study is based on cross-sectional research. So, achieving more reliable information requires longitudinal study. Second, the respondents of the study are millennial employees. So, generalizability of the result for other generations cannot be applied. Third, the respondents of the study comprise white-collar employees and,

therefore, it is suggested to carry further study on these variables by taking blue-collar or part-time employees. Fourth, for avoiding CMB, future researchers can apply other techniques as recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003) including time lag method adopted in the study. Fifth, some individual moderating variables such as personality etc. can be studied along with organizational moderating variable by future researchers.

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