Antecedents of New Recruit’s Adjustment: An Empirical Study on Indian IT Industry

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ABSTRACT

The transition of newly hired employees from educational institutes to the corporate world thrusts them into unfamiliar environments. The reality shocks during a new employee’s early days can lead to behavioral withdrawal, interpersonal conflict, lack of work engagement, lack of productivity, dissatisfaction, and turnover. The purpose of this article was to explore the antecedents of new recruits’ adjustment in the Indian IT industry. The study considered three antecedents: supervisor support behavior, psychological empowerment, and feedback-seeking behavior. Data was collected from 607 newly hired employees working in the Indian IT industry and was analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM). The article highlights that supportive supervisors can encourage new employees to seek feedback and help them to ‘fit into’ the organization. Managerial implications suggest that organizations conduct training programs to make managers more approachable and available for new recruits during their early days to ensure adjustment and engagement in the organization.

KEYWORDS

Feedback Seeking Behavior, New Recruit’s Adjustment, New Recruits, Psychological Empowerment, Socialization, Supervisor Support Behavior

INTRODUCTION

An Information Technology (IT) professional’s job requires employees with a specific educational background and skill set, which has posed new challenges for organizations to recruit and retain IT professionals (Ertürk and Vurgun, 2015). In a dynamic work environment, where employees must be flexible and skilled enough to work on a particular project and then move to different teams and time schedules constantly, thus creating a cross-functional workforce, the early adjustment of newly hired employees is critical for the success of the organization. The early departure of newly hired employees cost more to the organization, as the employee departs before the organization can obtain returns on investment in recruitment, induction, and training, in terms of contribution to goal achievement (Griffeth and Hom, 2001). According to Leibowitz, Schlossberg, and Shore (1991), the unsuccessful adjustment of newly hired employees leads to approximately 50-60% of voluntary turnover among new recruits. Once the newly hired employees join the organization, the entry period is the most critical phase in their corporate journey. Thus, it is important to study the factors that are responsible for the early adjustment of newly hired employees in an organization to reduce the attrition of new recruits.

During the entry phase, employees start determining whether or not they “fit into” the new organization. In the initial days, newly hired employees need support and authentic information to reduce uncertainty in the organization (Louis, 1980). In the past literature, there are two factors,
which act as antecedents for new recruits’ adjustment, namely supervisor support behavior and the new recruit’s proactive behavior. Supportive supervisors aid the adjustment of newly hired employees in the organization (Ashforth, Sluss, and Harrison, 2007; Jokisaari and Nurmi, 2009). Also, new recruits’ who take conscious steps after joining the organization adjust quickly (Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg, 2003; Morrison, 1993). The present study blends these two research streams to explore how supervisor support behavior and a new recruit’s proactive feedback-seeking behavior leads to the successful adjustment of newly hired employees in the organization. The study also investigates the impact of psychological empowerment on a new recruit’s adjustment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the past, the term ‘new recruit’ has been used for employees based on their tenure after joining the organization. Also, new recruits are newly hired employees of the organization who have completed less than one year in the organization (Rollag, 2007). One of the prominent studies, conducted by Bauer et al. (2007) on new recruits, has considered tenure of less than 13 months to define the new recruits.

When it comes to transition, the newly hired employees joining the organization just after completion of their education face more challenges as compared to those who switch jobs from one organization to another (Ashford and Black, 1996). Bauer et al. (2007) defined new recruit adjustment through three factors: role clarity, task mastery, and social adjustment. The newly joined employees are expected to adjust in the organization and start their assigned work within three months (Nifadkar, Tsui, and Ashforth, 2012). Newly hired employees experience reality shocks that lead to tension and increased levels of stress, which lead to behavioral withdrawal (Halbesleben and Buckley, 2004), interpersonal conflict, lack of engagement, lack of productivity (Ganster and Rosen, 2013), dissatisfaction, and turnover (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2005).

Before joining an organization, new employees have a positive outlook towards their new job responsibilities and they are confident in their abilities to perform. But soon after joining the organization, the adjustment phase is full of surprises and shocks (Kim, Cable, and Kim, 2005). Past studies suggest that to alleviate uncertainty, new recruits seek information about organizational expectations, details about job responsibilities, and the ideal way to behave within the organization. This attitude of the new recruits leads to frequent feedback-seeking behavior (Ashford and Cummings, 1985). The supervisor plays an important part in boosting the feedback-seeking behavior in the new recruits, and supports their adjustment in the organization, as they are vulnerable in the beginning (Bauer et al., 2007; Bauer and Erdogan, 2011).

Antecedents of New Recruits’ Adjustment

The antecedents of new recruits’ adjustment are the factors that have a positive impact on the adjustment process.

Feedback Seeking Behavior

Saks and Ashforth (1997), suggest that the feedback-seeking behavior of newly hired employees gives them new information related to the tasks and social norms of the organization and, thus, helps them to adjust in the organization. In the initial days of work, the new recruits are likely to seek more feedback. Further, new recruits acquire information from observing their supervisors, co-workers, and other new recruits in the organization during the socialization process. Knowledge transfer happens during the socialization process, which leads to knowledge creation and sharing (Roberts, 2000; Roux et al., 2006), which are major focus areas of knowledge management (Hendriks, 1999). However, a study by Morrison (1993) stated that new recruits seek information through direct inquiry and prefer feedback from supervisors on technical issues.
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