Attitudes and Work Environment Factors Influencing the Information Technology Professionals’ Work Behaviors

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore individual factors that moderate the relationship between fulfillment of the psychological contract and work behaviors. Two such work behaviors, innovative work (IWB) and organizational citizenship (OCB), impact organizational performance. A sample of 258 information technology (IT) professionals across the U.S. responded to the web-based survey. Research hypotheses were evaluated using multiple regressions. Findings indicated that moderators (self-efficacy, affective commitment, trust, and job satisfaction) significantly affected the relationship between the IT professional’s fulfillment of their psychological contract and their innovative work and organizational citizenship behaviors. Managerial implications for more informed decisions concerning policy and work environment issues are provided and avenues for further research are suggested.

Keywords: Affective Commitment, Innovative Work Behavior (IWB), Job Satisfaction, Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), Self-efficacy, Trust, Web-based Survey

INTRODUCTION

Innovation continues to be critical to the competitive welfare of organizations. And as aptly expressed in one popular press, Information Week, (Preston, 2013) “…a company’s and nation’s long-term economic health is only as strong as its ability to innovate (pg. 1).” Thusly this ability – to be innovative – in turn remains a critical component of the information technology (IT) professional’s job. Yet, job roles of IT professionals are typically less structured, and involve business and technology environments that evolve continually (King et al., 2005). As IT jobs are modified and readjusted within organizations (Panko, 2008), it’s important that we better understand the IT professionals’ qualities that enable their resilience and performance in this ever transforming environment. This resilience can be a key as the work of IT professionals often revolves around IT-related
innovations to enable their firm to maintain or gain an advantage over the competition.

Innovative work behavior (IWB) and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), which are not within typical job roles (Organ, 1988; West & Farr, 1990), are two individual work behaviors that have been found to impact organizational performance (Organ, 1988; Janssen, 2000). Organizations need IT workers, who willingly and routinely take actions that may not be fully specified in their job; but because of their expertise and perspective act to help solve an IT problem or make an innovative suggestion that may improve the functioning of a work process.

Research has evolved from early determination of individual differences of IT professionals and relationships with their work behaviors, to assessments of the IT professional’s soft skills (Cougar, Zawacki & Opperman, 1979; Ang & Slaughter, 2001; Joseph et al., 2010). Researchers also continue to investigate antecedents of OCB and IWB. For instance, in 2005, Ramamoorthy and colleagues considered an integrated framework and found an individual’s perceived obligations to innovate (by way of their psychological contract) and job autonomy directly influenced their innovative work.

For this study, the authors investigate the qualities of the IT professional that may stimulate them to perform these work behaviors that are often important ingredients in the sustainability of the firm (e.g. Janssen, 2000; Scott & Bruce, 1994; West & Farr, 1990). The primary driver of this research is to respond to the call for further investigation into such influences and to better understand the IT professional’s beliefs, attitudes and behaviors (Brooks et al., 2011; Lounsbury et al., 2007; Van Dyne & Ang, 1998; Van Dyne et al., 2000). Armed with this information, managers can then make informed decisions concerning policy and work environment issues, and to lay the foundation for increased innovative behaviors and organizational citizenship within their organizations.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. First, a review of the literature is provided to lay the groundwork for the hypotheses. The research methodology is then provided, followed by the data analyses and results. We conclude with a discussion and the implications of the research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employees respond to the social cues that they receive from their employer’s behaviors, as well as their own behaviors. Applying Salancik and Pfeffer’s (1978) social information processing theory, employees then modify their beliefs of perceived obligations owed to and from their employer. Herriot and Pemberton (1997) parallel this view and propose that psychological contract development is a social process and beliefs of the contract originate from each party through direct or indirect communication. Therefore, when an individual receives social information, it may engender consequences about perceptions of their job, their organization, and, more importantly, their individual attitudes and behaviors (Morrison, 1994).

Salancik and Pfeffer’s (1978) model supports the notion that the job environmental characteristics, which are defined in this study as the IT professional’s perception of level of fulfillment of the psychological contract, will provide certain social cues. These social cues will be affected by the IT professional’s attitudes; which are defined in this study as affective commitment, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and trust in the employer. This will in turn affect their subsequent work behaviors; which are defined in this study as organizational citizenship and innovative work.

Work Behaviors

One work behavior of interest is organizational citizenship, which is considered discretionary and typically not part of the formal job expectations, but contributes to the well-being of the organization (Organ, 1988, 1997). Van Dyne and Ang (1998) proposed that an individual’s perceptions come into play as organizational citizenship can be regarded as a behavioral gauge of the employee’s responses to their relationship with their employer. The relevancy
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