



Research Article

A CRITIQUE ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AND WELL BEING IN ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Performance and well being is an important stream in organizational studies. Prior researchers have drawn particular attention towards these concepts. In the present article, the construct of performance, its dimensions and well being is outlined. Moreover, relevance and reasons for excessive emphasis on performance of an employee in today's world are discussed.

We attempt to connect these two seemingly disparate literatures arguing that underlying element between performance and well being is same. In particular, we note that common element underlying performance and well being is behavioral or psychological. Although we emphasize the complementarities between the two perspectives, we also note points of tension.

Hence, we would also like to argue whether an employee who does not perform well individually/collectively cannot be considered happy/successful in his or her life? Is performance so important/essential for an individual's well being?

Based on this, conclusions emerging from the paper are drawn. Finally, suggestions for future research and for practitioners are outlined.

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INTRODUCTION

Performance and well being is an important stream in organizational studies. Prior researchers have drawn particular attention towards these constructs. The principal reasons for theoretical and empirical studies in these domains can be attributed to people decisions that stake organizational survival. These are: effective recruitment and selection, employee assessment for rewards and recognitions, predicting future employee performance; promoting training and development, and succession planning. Hence, tremendous attempts have been made in the past two decades to understand these concepts.

Schmidt & Hunter (1992) wonderfully note this expression that there is recent surge in industrial/occupational psychology, human resource management and organizational behavior domain for the development of theories of job performance. The primary objective of such theory development is to understand the causes of job performance, underlying processes that determine performance, its structure and antecedents, and predictors of performance. Though such studies are certainly in large number, they provide consistent predictors of job performance.

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However, there have been no attempts that enquire the relationship among job performance and well being. In this paper, a different view to understand the concept of performance and well being is suggested. Instead of elaborating current views, it is proposed that existing views are examined, organized and causal connection is explored. To facilitate this, common element underlying the performance and well being is identified, and likely association is inferred. Further, point of tension is highlighted. Thereafter, emerging conclusions are drawn. Finally, implication for research and practice are outlined.

Performance

Performance research and definitions

The construct 'performance' or 'job performance' is cardinal area of study among the human resource, organizational behavior researchers and industrial/occupational psychologist (Schmidt & Hunter, 1992) and it is well documented by researchers. For instance, Borman & Motowidlo (1993), Campbell (1990), Murphy & Cleveland (1995), and, Schmidt & Hunter (1992). Hence, both practitioners and researchers investigate measures that lead to effective job performance (Schmidt & Hunter, 1992).

Campbell *et al.* (1993) and Campbell *et al.* (1996) define performance as the degree to which individuals create value for organization to achieve its goals. Moreover, Campbell *et*

al., (1993) view performance as reflecting behaviors rather than outcomes. Consistent with this view, Borman, Motowidlo & Schmit (1997) suggest that performance is behavioral, episodic, multidimensional and evaluative. Further, Borman & Motowidlo (1993) split performance as comprising of task performance and contextual performance. Thereafter, Murphy (1994) notes that performance comprises of four dimensions namely downtime behaviors, task performance, interpersonal and destructive behaviors. In light of the above views, job performance can be noted as behaviors that contribute (minor and major) organizational context that can be measured. Thus, from existing reviews on performance, the theories of performance have two broad interpretations (Campbell et al., 1996). The first interpretation suggests that domain of performance has dimensional structure and second interpretation is causal that involves explanation of antecedents of job performance and dimensions of performance.

To evaluate performance it is important to identify the behaviors that contribute in achieving organizational objectives. Further, the behavioral facet of performance is required to identify individual differences and to understand the construct of performance in a much broader context. Thus, on this basis behaviors can be clustered together either in the category of contributions or hindrances in organizational goals.

Dimensions of Performance

Prominent researchers since long have proposed that the concept of job performance is more than task performance. For instance, Borman & Motowidlo (1993); Brief & Motowidlo (1986); Organ (1988), and Smith, Organ and Near (1983). The most studied dimensions of job performance are: task and contextual performance, organization citizenship behavior and deviant behavior. In addition to this, some similar concepts found in the review along the lines of dimensions are also discussed. There is extensive work conducted on the construct of job performance. Thus, for our purpose, in this article only widely cited work is referred.

Task Performance and Contextual Performance

Borman, Motowidlo & Schmit (1997) define performance as the total value for the organization through discrete behavioral episodes that an employee performs over a period of time. However, Borman & Motowidlo (1993) argued that job performance is more than task performance. Hence, contextual performance should be included and distinction is needed between the two. Task performance is defined as officially identified activities that transform and maintain organizational goals, whereas, contextual performance supports broader organizational, social and psychological contexts (Borman, Motowidlo & Schmit, 1997).

Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Smith, Organ & Near (1983) pioneered the concept of organizational citizenship behavior in the domain of job performance. Organizational citizenship behavior is intentional behavior by an employee that is discretionary and which is not recognized or rewarded but supports the organizational goals (Organ, 1988; Schnake, 1991). Similarly, Organ (1988) defines it as individual behavior that is discretionary not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that is aggregate promotes the effective functioning of organizations.

Smith, Organ & Near (1983) reported two dimensions of organizational citizenship behavior. These are interpersonal dimension and organizational dimension. Organ (1988) identifies it as altruism, courtesy, cheerleading, sportsmanship, civic virtue and conscientiousness. However, over the years these dimensions were dilated by researchers (Organ, 1988; Podsakoff & Mackenzie, 1994; Organ & Paine, 1999; Coleman & Borman, 2000).

Parallel to this, concepts such prosocial behavior (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986) and extra role behaviors (Van Dyne, Cummings & Park, 1995) emerged. To illustrate, "behavior performed by a member of organization directed toward an individual, group or organization with whom he or she interacts while carrying out organizational role and performed with the intention of promoting welfare of individual, group or organization towards which it is directed" is defined as prosocial behavior (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986). However, Organ (1997) distinguished that the extra role behavior is not required since it is not rewarded in organizational citizenship behavior. Though, it might fall into the orbit of role behavior and may be getting rewarded by means of results through performance appraisal. Still, the decisive feature is that it plays a part to maintenance and enhancement of organizational purpose.

Deviant Behavior

Behaviors that result in positive and negative organizational value are important sphere in organizational studies. It clearly makes up one of the vital dimension of job performance. Since, these behaviors influence organizational effectiveness. Hence, behavior negating the organizational goals is critical area of study for researchers.

Hollinger & Clark (1983) developed the conceptual framework of counterproductive behavior in two broad categories namely property deviance and production deviance. It is defined as deliberate behavior by an employee that harms or hinders organizational interests (Gruys & Sackett, 2003; Martinko, Gunlach & Douglas, 2002; Sackett & Devore, 2001; Benett & Robinson, 2000; Robinson & Benett, 1995; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). Similarly, Robinson & Bennett (1995) expounded it as "voluntary behavior that violates significant norms and in doing so threatens the well being of the organizations, and its members, or both". Further, bifurcated in two aspects: one, organizational or individual deviance, and, two, serious or minor deviance. Thereafter, Gruys (1999) reported 11 deviant behaviors out of 87 deviant behaviors. The identified deviant behaviors were: theft, destruction of property, misuse of information, misuse of time and resources, unsafe behavior, poor attendance, poor quality work, alcohol use, drug use, inappropriate verbal actions, inappropriate physical actions. Thus, it is clear that deviant behavior consists of two components, first, intended interpersonally (that harm specific individuals) and, second, against organizations viz. its systems like verbal abuse, theft, rebellion (Aquino, Lewis & Bradfield, 1999).

Well Being

Well Being research & definitions

Employee well being is critical component in effective organizational functioning. Its decisive nature has resulted in ample researches reporting employee well being. For instance, science of well being (Cloninger, 2006); subjective well being

(Diener, 1994; Diener, 2000; Diener *et al.*, 1999); psychological well being (Ryff, 1989a, 1989b; Ryff & Keyes, 1995); well being and the workplace (Warr, 1999) has been of great interest to researchers. Further, the relevance of employee well being is noted in ample researches that identify the impact of employee well being on performance (Danna & Griffin, 1999; Judge *et al.*, 2001; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000; Wright & Cropanzano, 2000).

Well being is multidimensional construct. It comprises psychological, physical and social well being, which is prominently noted by researchers. For instance, Huppert & Baylis (2004) notes that well being comprises of positive physical, psychological and social states. However, researcher's concentrate mainly on psychological well being (Huppert & Baylis, 2004). Along the same lines, Ryff (1989) notes well being (psychological) as multifaceted, comprising of six dimensions. These dimensions are: self acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. Similarly, Warr (1999) identifies that employee well being is either context specific i.e. related to job/work environment or it is context free i.e. related to person. For example, factors related to job/work like job satisfaction is considered context specific whereas, factors related to person viz. purpose in life are context free. Further, WHO (2001) defines it as "a state of well being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" (See Huppert, 2009).

Consistent with the above interpretations, Huppert (2009) notes wellbeing as, "combination of feeling good and functioning effectively". Thus, the term 'employee well being' in light of above discussion can be defined as being happy with a purpose in life.

Relevance of performance

The objective of organizations is profitability, increase shareholders' value and wealth creation. Clearly, this is done only by human resource in the workplace. Creating a multifarious approach to support employees in job performance and well being requires the expertise of human resources researchers and practitioners to develop insights that support organizational success. Since, organization's visibility depends on its employees' performance. On the other hand low performance and poor well being is detrimental to company's success.

Staw (1984) views the most critical problem in organization studies for practitioners and researchers are the construct of job performance. Since, the concept of performance is broad. Despite its limitations job performance is widely recognized due to its relevance and unique facet that complements organizational outcomes. Landy & Farr (1980) emphasize that in personnel decisions defining and predicting, performance is critical. Since, the inputs out of performance evaluation facilitate personnel decisions namely, training, compensation, promotion, placement, succession. Likewise, Huselid (1995) insists that the firm's current and potential human resources are important considerations in the development of execution of its strategic plans. Further, it is observed over the years by majority of researchers who have emphasized that human resources are the source of competitive advantage (Wright & McMahan, 1992; Wright & Snell, 1991). Based on this, timely

and systematic attempts are made by practitioners and researchers to ensure constant job performance and well being of employees. To increase the market share, employ more workers expand business operations and diversify in other locations and businesses. Thus, individual performance is critical to the success of business enterprises.

Reasons for excessive emphasis on performance

Most researchers, managers and employees would agree that behaviors of employees within firms have important implications not only for individual performance but also organizational performance. Appraising individual performance is done on the basis of employee behaviors exhibited in response organizational intentions at work over a period. This requires some aspects of performance that makes up and support organizational purpose. The prominent and generally accepted organizational behaviors are citizenship behaviors and behaviors in contextual performance (e.g. supporting an employee, being honest etc). All such behaviors can be categorized as positive behaviors leading to positive organizational value.

Baily (1993) asserts that human resources are underutilized since employees perform below their maximum potential (See Huselid, 1995). The reasons can be manifold. For instance, individual factors such as attitude, ability and competency impacts variables such as work satisfaction, rapport with supervisors, interpersonal relations (beside other variables). This impact on performance either happens directly or inversely. Since, individual or environmental factors such as hr practices, working condition, attitude, cognitive ability either complement or hinder these factors. Further, situational and motivational factors are widely acknowledged in the literature that impacts job performance (Borman *et al.*, 1991; Judge & Bono, 2001; Judge *et al.*, 1998; Motowidlo, Borman & Schmit, 1997; Murphy, 1989; Hunter & Hunter, 1984; Riketta, 2008; Sakett, 2002; Schmit & Hunter 1983; Schmit *et al.*, 1986; Schmit *et al.*, 1988; Tett & Burnett, 2003). Therefore, individual job performance would be superfluous if the facets encompassing performance i.e. the cluster of behaviors directed at achieving organizational stakes are not time and situation sensitive. Even so, organizational interest is to promote those behaviors that contribute to organizational effectiveness.

The criterion developed to evaluate and predict job performance is objective in some circumstance and subjective in other situations. For instance, occupations such as sales and recruitment have constant pressure of achieving targets within deadlines. Like salesmen have to get more number of sales accounts. Similarly, recruiters have to hire good employees within budget and time. This would require certain specific skills. Here, the criteria of evaluation would be objective since for salesmen it would depend on number sales within first quarter and for recruiters it will be counted on hire to offer acceptance ratio. However, in case of retaining exiting customer for repurchase or to hold existing employee from leaving company would require some set of behaviors (e.g. assertive, diplomacy, communicative etc). Similarly, in case of customer service executive or bank teller to respond to buyers and account holders would require behavioral proficiency. Nevertheless, customer service executive and bank teller would also require task techniques to keep the data updated to respond organization demands like number of complaints

addressed, out of those addressed how many got solved and how many are pending? Therefore, multiple rating techniques are applied (e.g. 360 degree feedback). Still, identification and describing the content of dimensions of element viz. quality and quantity is debatable.

Till there is a standalone measure for job performance, arguments will arise between managers and employees on the criterion and evaluation method adopted for performance. Despite being argued over the criterion of performance, it is relevant to monitor periodically for organizational success. Thus, consistent with the above views, individual performance is not only critical to organizations but over emphasized.

Commonality between Performance and Well Being: a hypothesized relationship between Performance and Well Being

Motowidlo, Borman & Schmit (1997) define performance as behavioral, episodic, evaluative and multidimensional. Further, they reasoned the relevancy of behaviors in forming three facets. There facets are organization, social and psychological which drive job activities and processes. Likewise, Campbell (1990) and Campbell *et al.* (1993) stress that performance should not be defined in terms of outcomes but rather behaviors.

Aggregated well being incorporates physical, psychological and social well being. Along the same lines, Huppert & Baylis (2004) note that well-being includes positive physical, psychological and social states. These can be understood as: *physical well being* includes somatic health where there is no disease and malfunction of organs. This helps in being physically fit to endure day to day stress. *Psychological well being* stands for mental and emotional stability i.e. being resilient amid disturbing events. This is especially important for managerial situations which require lot of emotional stability. *Social well being* entails amiable or inclined towards interpersonal relations. Fellow feeling amongst peer or directed to subordinates or towards superiors creates atmospheric state which leads people to share feelings comfortably.

Employee performance and well being is important concept in organizational studies. Since, the primary goal of researchers and practitioners is to identify methods that enhance performance and ensure wellbeing for positive organizational outcomes. This is done by proactively aligning organizational interventions towards employees to achieve shared goals. It is exercised by identifying the elements that not only facilitates performance but also assure wellbeing. For instance, one way could be identify the common factor among performance and wellbeing. As noted above that performance should be measured in terms of behaviors (Campbell, 1990; Campbell *et al.*, 1993) and focus of researchers on wellbeing is more psychological (Huppert & Baylis, 2004). It can be inferred that both performance and wellbeing are connected via psychological or behavioral component. Further, it can be assumed that both influence each other through their connection. This link i.e. behavioral or psychological factor if influenced positively would yield positive results or countered intuitively would yield negative results. To illustrate, a stressed employee would not be able to achieve performance norms. Further, unsatisfactory performance would make an employee experience emotional strain. On the other way round when employee is not emotionally resilient then likely outcomes

would be physical tension viz. ache, rigid body muscles. Hence, it can be deduced that there is connection between performance and wellbeing.

To support this opinion number of researchers has highlighted the connection of performance and well being. For example, Fisher (2003) asserts that happier and healthier employees make higher effort, contribution and productivity. Similarly, Warr (1999) notes that higher employee well being results in better job performance and discretionary work behaviors. Finally, its significance is noted in the efforts of practitioners who oversee and are responsible for employee well being (Rynes *et al.* 2002) to facilitate job performance. Consistent with the above views it is noted that a point of connection exists between these two disparate concepts i.e. psychological or behavioral. Constituting a cumulative effect, performance and well being facilitates achievement of organizational matters. To sum up well being results in better performance and like performance increases wellbeing. Thus, performance and well being are connected via psychological or behavioral factor.

Points of Tension

Performance consists of day to day behaviors demonstrated in workplace to achieve micro and macro organizational aims. By behaviors the purpose is to include positive behaviors like citizenship and contextual behaviors. Though, prominent efforts were made focusing on behavioral facet and causal antecedents of individual performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Campbell, 1990; Campbell *et al.*, 1996; Sacket, 2002; Organ, 1997; Schmit & Hunter, 1992; Van Dyne *et al.*, 1995). Yet, prior research attempts were not comprehensive in covering behaviors that encompassed performance that facilitated organizational effectiveness due to uncertainty and independent system (Campbell *et al.*, 1993). Consequently, the concept of individual (job) performance has been largely questioned over the years due to changing work pattern and organization (Hogen & Pulakos, 1999). Another reason for doubt over the concept of performance and wellbeing is objective and subjective nature of performance and wellbeing. These objective and subjective nature of performance and wellbeing can be summed up as in the following paragraphs:

First of all, it is important to question the criterion of performance. Why is performance given so much importance? It is because nobody really looks at moderate or non-performers as they are already looking at high or potential performers. There is a tendency to celebrate high performance and worship good performers. Employees who do not achieve are considered non-performers. It is also necessary to celebrate people who tried hard, but just cannot make the last bit that is required or standard to be a performer.

It is also becomes essential to question the meaning of performance – It is all or nothing, i.e. either a worker is a performer or a non-performer. And this seems quite unnatural to me. There are also those who try hard, perhaps for years, but despite their best efforts, are not considered good performers or do not have the reward to prove their worth.

There are dangers of being too performance oriented. By focusing only on performance that may or may not come, what is lost is the value of doing something for the pleasure of it. One can only write, paint, produce music or play a sport as well as one can. And there is no shame in that; one has tried

one's best. Similarly, in work also one has given one's absolute best; one has enjoyed it while one has done it. If one performs well it is good, if not that is also fine, it is just the existential phase the person is in. It is important to understand that performing well and not performing are part and parcel of work life.

It is the process of 'doing' work and getting satisfaction in what one does that ensures a person's happiness and well being in the true sense. It further motivates a person to keep on doing their best, rather than stressing about being a good performer by any means: may be by hook or crook.

But it is important to note that the above mentioned argument in no way implies that in the process of enjoying work and not bothering about being a good performer, one should become laid back and stop working hard. What is important to understand here is that one should give one's best shot, keep on trying and enjoying one's work. Since, when a person enjoys and does a work whole-heartedly with dedication, it definitely reflects in his attitude, behavior, personality, relationships (both professional and personal), and most importantly in his work. And he or she, therefore, not only contributes to his personal growth, but also to the growth of organization (collective growth) sooner than later.

CONCLUSION

In organizational studies employee performance and wellbeing is an important realm. The primary reasons of their utility in practical life are to enhance individual transformation for broader organizational aims. This is done by evaluation and enhancement of individual performance that facilitates positive organizational outcomes. In hr domain performance is defined as behaviors that an employee exhibit at work which bring positive results and can be measured; whereas, wellbeing is defined as being happy with purpose in life.

The common factor between performance and well being is behavioral or psychological. Understanding of these factors can help researchers and practitioners to dig further into their nature. However, point of tension exists in the orbit of performance and wellbeing due to their objective and subjective nature. That is, even for researchers and practitioners it is difficult to evaluate and describe the components that encompass performance and wellbeing. Moreover, a novel orientation is needed in the performance and wellbeing arena. Despite some deficiencies in the construct of job performance and wellbeing it remains an obsession for scholars and practitioners due to its importance in corporate survival.

Our purpose in this paper is to sum up the widely cited views in the sphere of job performance and well being. In doing so it is assumed that the connection between performance and wellbeing may have many possible approaches and factors. If so, such possibility emerging from this paper may be relevant input to research and practice in the area of performance and wellbeing. Therefore, this paper describes performance and wellbeing, and highlights commonality and point of tension between these two concepts. It is hoped that for advancement of research in these areas where especially the construct of performance and wellbeing are authoritative for individual and organizational transformations to achieve results may provide positive inputs.

Implications for research

The descriptions and point of connection between performance and well being outlined in this paper provides some directions for future research. One would be specification of more comprehensive classification of connection between performance and well being. In light of the above discussion and conclusion in the preceding part of paper there may be multiple common factors between employee performance and well being. The direction for future research emerging from this paper is to explore and delineate comprehensive link between performance and well being. Hence, either conceptually or empirically deduced concepts can provide opportunities to specify connection between employee performance and well being. For example, observations from specific workplace would be ideal to get exclusive coverage in specifying the link between employee performance and well being.

Implications for practice

The existing views from literature on employee performance and well being may inform the hr experts in their practice of approaches towards performance and well being at work. For example, understanding of performance and well being connection may possibly indicate some areas to implement any intervention to enhance individual performance and well being. Yoga, meditation, physical exercise or any other form of intervention can be suggestible. Further, the commonality and point of tension may facilitate suitable workplace approaches focused at individual performance and well being. Such approaches would be based on realizing counterpoint views of above concepts. Further, reasonable connection between individual efforts and organizational outcomes can be established. Based on this, existing personnel approaches to performance and well being can be redefined. Thus, based on the limited review, this paper can contribute the hr practice by developing a more proactive approach to employee performance and well being at work.

Limitations

The coverage of views from existing literature reflects a limitation in this paper. However, accompanying inputs may be observed to consider the limited review. First, despite confined review to the best knowledge of author it is one of the few attempts to address the link between performance and well being via behavioral or psychological component in hr domain. Second, the view on point of tension is distinct and it facilitates a substantive discussion. Third, restrictive discussion on perspective of employee performance and well being may suggest further comparison and identification of commonality. Based on this, future directions are generated. This results in identifying and providing concrete inputs to researchers and practitioners.

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