A Study on Workplace Adaptability: An Indian Perspective

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Abstract of the Dissertation

Interest in the topic of adaptability at workplace has grown owing to ongoing rapid changes in the business world. To endure the changing environment, business organizations are undergoing technological, structural, and procedural transformations. Organizational transformations can be effective only when the employees of such organizations are able to successfully adapt to the new technologies, tasks, structures, and work procedures. Thus, in today's changing business environment, workplace adaptability has emerged as a critically important employee attribute. Consequently, there is a perceived need to develop comprehensive knowledge about this construct along with its correlates. The present research is an attempt to explore the dimensions of w*orkplace adaptability* and construct a scale for measuring workplace adaptability. This research also aims to explore the impact of relevant demographic variables, individual centric variables, and work centric variables on workplace adaptability. The demographic variables examined for the study includes employee's age, gender, and marital status. The individual centric variables investigated for the study consists of employee's workplace personality traits and employee's locus of control at work. The work centric variables include perceived job demands and job resources.

This survey-based research was carried out on employees working in private sector organizations in India. Prior to the final survey, a pilot study was conducted on a sample of 100 respondents. Initially, a 50 itemed workplace adaptability questionnaire was developed to measure workplace adaptability for the pilot study. The domains of workplace adaptability considered for developing the questionnaire were in accordance with the eight dimensions of adaptability as proposed by Pulakos et.al. (2000). Exploratory factor analysis was carried out using principal axis factoring method to find out the factorial structure of workplace adaptability. Five factors were extracted from factor analysis. Based on the specific dimensions which they represented, they were termed as 'cognitive adaptability', 'situational adaptability', 'socio-cultural adaptability', 'endurance' and 'resilience'. From the original 50 items, 25 items that met the criteria of

factor loadings and communalities were retained from the factor analysis. Using these items, a 25 itemed workplace adaptability questionnaire was developed following the steps of scale developments as prescribed by Hinkin (1998) and was subsequently used in a structured questionnaire for the final research survey. The final survey was conducted on a sample of 495 respondents. Sampling was done following stratified random sampling method.

The proposed five-factor model was further subjected to confirmatory factor analysis through AMOS (version 21) for validation of the model structure. Model parameters and goodness of fit indices, namely, the minimum discrepancy per degree of freedom (CMIN/DF), the goodness of fit index (GFI), the comparative fit index (CFI) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) for the model was tested with the maximum likelihood method. Results of the "goodness of fit" tests revealed an acceptable fit for the proposed five factor structure of workplace adaptability.

Statistical analysis was carried out by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 20 (SPSS 20). The analysis was conducted in two phases, namely the scale development phase and the final survey phase. Prior to statistical analysis, normality tests were carried out to examine the suitability of the data for parametric tests. As the data was found to be normally distributed, parametric tests were conducted.

Three-way ANOVA test was conducted to examine the main and interaction effects of the demographic variables, namely age, gender and marital status on workplace adaptability. Prior to ANOVA test, Levene's test for equality of variance was conducted and the result was insignificant ($p > 0.05$) indicating the suitability of the dataset for ANOVA test.

Results of ANOVA test reveal that the considered demographic variables namely employee's age, gender and marital status have significant main effect on workplace adaptability, indicating that workplace adaptability scores vary significantly across different age-groups, across the two genders, and difference in marital status. However no significant interaction effect was observed.

Hierarchical linear regression analysis was carried out to examine the impact of workplace personality profile, work locus of control and work characteristics (job demands and job resources) on workplace adaptability. Prior to regression analysis, the variance inflation factor values or VIF values were determined for the independent variables to check for the multicollinearity amongst variables. The VIF values of all the variables were greater than 1, which indicated that there was no multicollinearity among variables.

Regression analysis results indicated that employee's workplace personality traits, employee's locus of control and work characteristics (job demands and job resources) significantly predict employee's workplace adaptability. The four variables together accounted for a 57.6 % variation in the dependent variable. Employee's workplace personality emerged as the strongest predictor of workplace adaptability, singularly accounting for 43.6% of the variation in workplace adaptability. Employee's work locus of control accounted for more than 10 % of the variation in the dependent variable.

This study reveals that while employee's workplace adaptability is greatly dependent on employee's personality traits relevant to workplace and also on employee's locus of control. However, perceived job demand and job resources also have significant impact on employee's workplace adaptability. While job demands such as work overload, job insecurity have a negative correlation with workplace adaptability, job resources such as perceived organizational support, perceived growth opportunities and control have significant positive correlation with workplace adaptability.

The present study makes both theoretical and practical contributions to the existing body of knowledge on workplace adaptability. The significant theoretical contribution lies in the fact that it brings out the dimensions of workplace adaptability, studies the factors that constitute the construct and establishes the correlates of workplace adaptability. The practical contribution lies in the construction and validation of a workplace adaptability scale which can easily be utilized by the organizations for measuring the adaptability in their existing and potential employees.