

A Correlational Study of Learned Optimism and HRD Effectiveness

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Abstract- The modern world is much more volatile and so to sustain and develop in this globalized world, every organization has to gain competitive advantage. For gaining this advantage the organizations will have to develop employees' competencies. HRD and optimism are fundamental in generating and implementing the competencies. Present study tries to find the correlation between these two if any.

Keywords-HRD Effectiveness, competitive advantage, positive attitude

I. LEARNED OPTIMISM

Optimism is term used in everyday life and has varied meanings and applications based on its usage and also depends on the person or situation. When its comes to management literature the usage of this term can be traced from 1980's, when many scholars borrowed this term from psychology and tried to apply the concept in organizational studies. Martin P. Seligman wrote a book "Learned Optimism" based on his research and experiences he gained as a practitioner psychologist. The book is solely written for psychology students and cannot be linked the management literature. With time the management thinkers while studying the individual behavior of the employees understood the relevance of being optimistic.

Optimism comes from the Latin word *optimus*, meaning "best," and so an optimistic person is always looking for the best in any situation and expecting good things to happen. Optimism is the tendency to believe, expect or hope that things will turn out well. Optimism can be differentiated from belief, expectation or hope as it is the only attribute, which according to Seligman, can be learned.

An optimistic person will generally find the good in all the things that come their way. They are the first to say that everything will work out in the end. They believe that they can find the good in most people and that everyone has good in them. Optimistic people like to think that no matter what happens our problems will work out. Being an optimist makes it difficult to make clear decisions because this person only sees the good and never the bad. This could prove to be difficult because people will do what it takes to get their way and therefore, the optimist could be easily deceived. So on reviewing the various thinkers, who have tried to write some characteristics of optimists the following benefits can be stated:.

Snyder (1994) has contended that optimism differs from hope, because it contains the proactive component of planning. Optimistic statements are usually based on logical and concrete facts.

In modern days life optimism has become a desirable characteristic, and an important component of human functioning (**Peterson, 2006**). The position of optimism appears to have changed according to the way that modern societies behave. It could be argued that it has always existed however it has only recently been brought to the forefront 'when people started to think ahead' therefore 'something had to develop and that something was optimism' (**Tiger, 1979, as cited in Peterson, 2000**). A widely recognized definition of optimism is: 'a mood or attitude associated with an expectation about the social or material future, one which the evaluator regards as socially desirable, to his or her advantage, or for his or her pleasure' (**Tiger 1979, as cited in Peterson, 2006**). This definition gives ownership to the individual as to how they perceive optimism as it largely depends on how they interpret the terminology (**Tiger 1979, as cited in Peterson, 2006**). From this we can see how optimism can be used as a powerful coping strategy and even a method of motivation by providing hope that something can be achieved. Is there a learned component to optimism? Several researchers have contended that optimism is a thinking style that can be learned.

Goleman (1995) believes that hope and optimism both can be learned. He feels that self efficacy (the belief that one has mastery over the events of one's life and can meet challenges as they come up) leads to hope and optimism

According to **Seligman (1991)**, how an individual thinks about events in his/her life greatly affects the kinds of actions he/she takes. Explanatory styles vary on a continuum from optimistic to pessimistic. People who see temporary reasons for good events may give up even when they succeed; believing success was a fluke. The optimistic explanatory style for good events is opposite to that for bad events. The optimist believes that bad events have specific causes, while good events will enhance everything he does; the pessimist believes that bad events have universal causes and that good events are caused by specific factors.

Whether or not an individual has hope depends on two dimensions of his/her explanatory styles; pervasiveness and permanence. Finding temporary and specific causes for misfortune is the art of hope. Temporary causes limit helplessness in time and specific causes limit helplessness to the situation. On the other hand, permanent causes produce helplessness far into the future and universal causes spread helplessness through all endeavors. Finding permanent and universal causes for misfortune is the practice of despair. Sometimes when bad things happen, and individual may blame himself (internalize). People who blame external events do not lose self-esteem when bad events strike. On the whole, they like themselves better than people who blame themselves. Optimistic people explain good events to themselves in terms of permanent causes, traits and abilities. Pessimists name transient causes, moods and efforts. People who give up easily believe that the causes of bad events that happen to them are permanent. People who resist helplessness believe that causes of bad events are temporary. People who give universal explanations for their failures give up on everything when a failure strikes in a particular domain of life. People who give specific explanations may become helpless in that particular domain only, not affecting the other domains of life.

There is an aspect of optimism which is temperamental (some people are by nature more positive about life) and another which is learned and responsive to the right type of experiences. Optimism is having a strong expectation that despite the inevitable setbacks and frustrations, events and experiences will eventually turn out alright.

Optimists believe that Good events are permanent, universal, and internal Bad events are temporary, specific, and external When good things happen to optimists, they believe the good will hang around for a while, that the good is permanent, global, and somehow linked to their efforts. When bad things happen to optimists, they are hopeful that the bad is temporary, specific to the event, not their fault, and it is bad things that are fleeting and transitory.

Pessimists tend to believe that Bad events are permanent, universal, and internal Good events are temporary, specific, and external when good things happen to pessimists, they believe the good to be an accident and likely to soon disappear. It is fleeting, transitory, and certainly limited in scope. When bad things happen to pessimists, they believe the bad to be permanent, global, and the result of some internal failing.

“People who make ‘universal explanations’ for their failures give up on everything when a failure strikes in one area. People who make ‘specific explanations’ may become helpless in that one area, but not in any others. Optimists believe that bad events have specific causes and are compartmentalized, and that good events enhance everything they do. Pessimists believe that bad events have universal causes, and good events have specific factors. People who believe that good events have permanent causes try even harder after they succeed. People who believe that good events have transient causes give up even when they succeed, believing success to be a fluke.”

II. HRD EFFECTIVENESS

Shaikh T.S. (1978) stated that the banks could get good personnel only on proper advertising, selection done by a committee having experts and induction programme well organized. His findings also clarify the need for proper HR department and promotions based on performance systems.

Bhatia S.K. (1986) in the research article “ Training In Public Enterprises: Future Directions” reported trend in the area of Human Resource training and Market changes and competition. His study concludes that more emphasis had to be placed on training in attitudes and behavioral changes as compared to skill to bring about a change in work culture. He recommended setting up “ Training Institute” for trainers at National level.

Venkataraman K (1986) in “Sensitivity Training to Improve Inter-Relations” focused on working and learning based on experiences. He stated that employees should work together in small group to examine the experiences, feeling and behavior. Environment should be such that employees can experiment in behavioral patterns. Sensitivity training is an integral part of HRD used for team building and for attaining organizational goals.

Fernandez Z. B. (1987) stressed that a practical training is useful to increase the effectiveness of Co-operatives. He states that employees should be given chance to visit other Co-operatives, which will help them in further learning.

Kolekar B. D. suggested to impart long term training, appoint a director (T&D) set up a valid and reliable performance evaluation system and to recognize outstanding employees. He also focuses on employee counseling etc. and use of computer in functioning of HRD effectively.

Kurkute A.D. (1988) reported poor employee participation in management. He also found that on the job training method was used to train the lower level employees.

Ravishankar S., Mishra R.K. and Sharma Motilal (1988) established with the help of research that once the Human Resource is developed, it becomes resourceful for enhancing its effectiveness and can play a vital role in coping with change and innovations.

Rele Yatin (1988) in “Training Effectiveness” has advised that continuous training results in 100% productive employees, as new skills are developed as per the changing environment. The effectiveness of training depends on the constant efforts of adjusting training, aligning it, making field manager perceive its effectiveness and transforming the participants not only in functional skills but also in their attitude.

There is no significant correlation between learned optimism and HRD effectiveness. The Universe Comprises of all the working executives of automobile and pharmaceutical organizations having their operations in geographical region of Pithampur Industrial area. For the present study the executive is defined as all the posts of supervisor and above levels.

The sample of the universe comprised of total 400 employees of the two industries, 200 from each industry viz. Automobile and Pharmaceutical selected on convenience basis. The organizations of automobile industry from where the respondents were taken are Eicher Volvo limited, Mahindra Limited, Force Motors, Bright Automotive, Badve Automotive etc. and The Organisations taken from Phrmaceutical industry are Cipla Limited, Syncom, Zyg Pharma, Medicaps limited, Pfizer limited etc..

Data Collection

Standardized scales have been used for the present study. They have high reliability and validity and have been administered on each subject of the sample. The detailed description of the two standard scales used for measuring variables Learned optimism and HRD Effectiveness are given below (Refer Appendices for the data Collection Instruments)

Learned Optimism Scale:

Author Sanjyot Pethe, Santosh Dhar, Sushama Chaudhari and Upinder Dhar
 Structure 22 items
 Reliability (0.99)
 Validity (0.99)

HRD Effectiveness:

Author N. Ramkumar¹
 Structure 60 items
 Reliability High
 Validity High

Correlations

Table 1
Correlations

		lotot	hrdtot
lotot	Pearson Correlation	1	.524**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	399	396

	Pearson Correlation	.524**	1
hrdtot	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	396	396

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

III. CONCLUSION

In any organization the optimism of employees is very necessary for effective working. In today's world HR is working for the development of human resources rather than only managing them. HRD Effectiveness is a very important variable, which measures the working of HR Department. The present study clearly establishes a strong correlation between the Learned Optimism of the employees and the perception of employees towards the HRD Effectiveness of the organization.

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