Role of Optimism Subculture and Optimism in Sales force Creative Performance: Empirical Evidence from Pharmaceutical Industry in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research investigation was to ascertain whether or on sales force creative performance is developed by their optimism and perceptions of optimism subculture. Three hundred and sixty five statistically usable survey questionnaires, administrated to frontline pharmaceutical salespersons and sales managers, were analyzed to test study hypothesis. Results of regression analysis revealed that both optimism subculture and optimism contributed to nurturing creative performance of frontline salespersons only but not for sales managers. Implications for future research and sales force management were presented, too.

KEYWORDS: Optimism, Optimism Subculture, Creative Performance, Pharmaceutical Sales force, Pakistan

1. INTRODUCTION

If one talks about the most highly technological industry in the country, the pharmaceutical sector comes first to is one's mind. Pakistan has a vibrant and growing (PPMA, 2011) pharmaceutical industry. Many different companies sell a diverse range of drugs and pharmaceutical products. Pharmaceutical Industry is not yet quite self-sufficient, though it satisfies its needs to around 70%. According to the statistics in 2007, total value of the sale of the pharmaceuticals mounted to over US. $1.4 billion, and is predicted to cross the figure of US 2.3 billion by 2012. Contrary to the bright picture of rapid economic growth in 2007, the medicine market of Pakistan is still in the developing phase and the drug spending per person is still about US$9.30 (PPMA, 2007).

In today's competitive environment, all businesses irrespective of the markets in which they operate are continually experiencing pressures to modify, renew and enhance its market offerings. Innovative tricks can be a good supplement to all firms to improve the creative performance of their employees [1]. Moreover, significant facts suggest that employee innovativeness put significant contribution to organizational innovation, effectiveness and survival [2]. Consequently, researchers are very interested to find the social conditions that impact employee creativity [3,4]. One of these conditions is back-up for creativity, or the degree to which individuals provide support for, and encouragement of people employed' creative performance [5].

Creativity is one of the most important assets in the human mind [6] (Huang, 2005). Innovation is an increasingly important management function to ensure a firm's growth [7,8] Creativity has recently attracted significant amounts of research and this interest has been spurred by the belief that employee creativity is important to ensure firm performance [2], with a considerable number of researchers suggesting that it has an important component to get competitive advantage [e.g. 9].

While there is a recognized need for research directly relating optimism with creativity [10], the two have been linked theoretically with respect to the relation between optimism and expectations that is, positive expectations of achieving creative outcomes being realized through a self-fulfilling prophecy [10]. According to [11] further research is needed on a wide range of personality constructs and their relationships with creative performance. Furthermore, [12] took an even broader perspective on the issue and examined creativity in terms of culture. He concluded that the relationship between culture and creative expression is complex. Culture may affect creativity through a number of mechanisms, such as the availability of resources, and influences on which, how, and when individuals can be creative.

Not surprisingly, considerable researches have been made on employee creativity antecedents particularly role of personality traits and cognitive style is considered although numerous studies have directed to the personal drivers of employee creativity. Furthermore, role of contextual factors is also considered another important area which is defined as "dimensions of the work environment that potentially influence an employee's creativity but that

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are not part of the individual" [9]. Employee job's characteristics [4], employee relationships with co-workers [5] and employee relationships with supervisors [13] are numerous contextual factors that have impact on creativity. As regards contextual factors, manager particularly immediate boss's behaviors shape the perceptions of the employees regarding work context to larger extent which could affect their creativity and innovation. So, this research endeavor aimed at investigating whether or not optimism subculture and optimism predict creative performance of sale force employed by pharmaceutical companies in Pakistan.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee creativity defined as the process to which, an employee seeks to develop a novel idea about tangible or intangible product, practices and procedure which are potentially useful for organization is known as employee creativity [4,9]. According to [4] any novel idea may be explained as signification or substantial changes in the current material or developing throughout the new materials for product or service. Moreover the basic understanding is that the ideas are valuable and useful only when they add value in an organization, directly or indirectly for short run or long run [9]. Thus, innovation process is actually started from creativity [9, 14].

Creativity is related with the production of new ideas which are potentially valuable for organization's products, methods or practices [2, 15]. There is some difference in creativity and innovation. Creativity is referred to create new and useful idea at personal level whereas in latter case is related with its implementation at organizational level [2]. That is why creativity is conceptualized at initial point which is important for innovation. Therefore; creativity might be conceptualized as a first step that is necessary for following innovation [14].

In general speaking, optimism is one's trend to consider in the best potential outcomes in the face of ambiguity [16]. It is the preconceived notion toward holding positive hope across circumstances. Optimism and self efficacy, that is one's belief in himself as regards to successful accomplishment of tasks, are two closely related concepts [17]. "Optimists, by definition, put stress either or both favorable aspects of situations, actions, and events now as well as trusting in the best possible results in the future world [18].

Moreover, [19] remark "optimism is associated with greater mental and physical health benefits than is pessimism." Non-optimistic people are comparatively less achiever than optimistic people [20, 21], considering failure is a short-term setback so do good in school [22], have good health than pessimist [23, 24], practice larger relationship satisfaction [25], are in a better position to get rid of be better depression [26]. Relationship between acute, chronic stress exposure and depression severity have also appeared to shield by optimism [27, 28], and forecast life satisfaction [29, 30] and psychological well-being [31, 32].

Positive psychology may also be known as the knowledge of positive subjective practice, which focuses on well-being, gratification, satisfaction, hope, optimism, flow, and pleasure [33, 34] explained positive psychology as ''the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions''. Researcher [35] states that optimism promises to be one of the most important areas of concentration of positive social science.

Optimism relates to the expectation and an explanatory style of positive outcomes for the individual, regardless of the specific willpower or way power behaviours needed to achieve those outcomes" [36].With regards to an expectancy framework, optimism is subjective to task and its outcome, when an optimistic individual confronted with the pressures and challenges tasks, practically he expect to success [36]. An optimistic explanatory style enables to people senses in control of their future; it generates a self-fulfilling prophecy which leads to positive explanations become reality [37]. Despite the fact that there is a recognized need for research directly relating optimism with creativity [10], the two have been linked theoretically with respect to the relation between optimism and expectations that is, positive expectations of achieving creative outcomes being realized through a self-fulfilling prophecy [10]. Hence,

Hypothesis 1: Optimism has significant positive relationship with creative performance for both managerial and non-managerial pharmaceutical salesforce.

[38] argued that "culture has been described as having seven primary characteristics". From these characteristics "innovation and risk taking, outcome orientation, people orientation, and team orientation" should all be associated to the extent of optimism that establish within a division or sub-division. "An optimism subculture is created when units encourage innovation, focus on results rather activities, consider the effect of outcomes on employees, and stress teamwork" [39]."Intuitively, one would expect that within optimism subcultures (as defined above), there would be an emphasis on the process of goal setting – developing measurable and achievable objectives, resource and leadership support toward the accomplishment of objectives, and performance-based rewards when objectives are met" [40].

Out of the basic reasons to which the Shein found that culture should be worldwide within an organization. To share are beliefs, values and thoughts with others is not only our social need but also our biological setup needs to do so and for this reason, those people who can't match to a specific culture's thoughts and beliefs, consequently they find themselves departing the organization. Cultural detergency creates the cognitive and emotional dissonance which consequently become exclusively great and ultimately become obvious in employment issues and then, individual desire to move on. Hence organizational culture and integrity is furnished."An individual with an optimistic explanatory style sees the causes of aversive events as changeable, controllable, and limited in scope greater motivation could arise from high expectancies of control or optimistic predictions of success" [41].

Optimistic organizational cultures seek to enhance the holistic well being of their constituents and thereby influence effective and successful performance within the organization [42]. When such a cohesive group faces challenges or opportunity, "culture defines the possibilities considered and attitudes which are brought to bear on the effort" [43]. To create optimistic subculture and maintaining it organization must have to promote high performance motivation within the creating and maintaining an optimistic culture would also seem to produce a high performance motivation within an organization. Optimistic culture is transportable, cognitive and affective. "Optimistic culture would seem to be positively correlated with holistic well being and high performance motivation while negatively correlated with, neuroticism, rumination, stress, anxiety, and depression. Clearly, there is much to be gained through engendering an optimistic culture" [42].

The extent to which an organizational culture stress through a set of values which gives shape to the behavior of employees in order to report the external environment [44, 45]. Such a culture develops a sense of belonging in employees and they feel themselves at ease in sharing and actualizing their ideas without any hesitance or embarrassment. "Employees cognitively assess the characteristics of their work context and positive perceptions of the work context are seen by employees as support from their supervisors or leaders, thus building their trust in their supervisors. For empowerment to work, trust must first be nurtured so that employees will have no fear of experimenting with new ways of doing things" [46]. So based on the intuitive logic, it can be proposed that optimism subculture can foster to creative performance of individuals where sales force is not an exception.

Hypothesis 2: Optimism subculture will contribute significantly in nurturing creative performance of both managerial and non-managerial pharmaceutical salesforce.

3.   RESEARCH METHODS

Data was collected in three months from July, 2011 to September, 2011. The data is collected from respondents who belonged to pharmaceutical industry based in Lahore, Pakistan. We used census sampling method. The criterion of company selection was very simple; For instance, the company should be national or multinational but working in pharmaceutical industry based at Lahore, Pakistan only. The study targets particularly the managerial or non-managerial (front line) sales staff. By using census sampling method, a total of 700 questionnaires were distributed in this manner. An achievable sample of 300 questionnaire responses was targeted. However a total of 365 questionnaires from pharmaceutical companies were received.

Creative performance was assessed on 7-items scale presented by [47] and the respondents were asked to give their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert response format (i.e. strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree) to statements such as "I make sales presentations in innovative ways" etc. Optimism of sales force individual is measure with 3-Item Scale of "good events" and 3-item scale of "bad events". The respondents were asked to give their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert response format (i.e. strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree) to statements such as "I do projects which is highly praised" (Good Events), "I give an important talk and the audience react me negatively" (Bad Events).For measuring optimism, 18-items were derived from Attributional Style Questionnaire developed by [48] and only 6 items were relevant to Pakistani pharmaceutical industry setting in which 3-items categorized as "good events" and 3 categorized as "bad events". For measuring individual optimism level, the average of good events were subtracting from average of bad events. Optimism Subculture of sales force was assessed on 7-Item scale and the respondents were asked to give their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert response format (i.e. strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree).

4.   RESULTS

The demography profile of the respondents was as follows:
- *Gender*: Out of the 317 valid respondents, 302 were male and 15 were female.
- *Age*: 206 (56.4%) respondents below the age of 30 and just 84 (23%) respondents above the age of 30 years, 75 (20.5%) of the respondents did not mention their age.

- *MaritalStatus*: Unmarried respondents were 187 and 127 were married.
- *Education*: Respondents having Graduation degree were 196, 95 respondents had the master's degree.
- *Designation*: Out of the 365 respondents, 80respondents had the managerial positions and respondent with non-managerial position were 222.
- *Experience*: 233 respondents had below than 5 years experience in the same company whereas only 72 respondents had more than 5 years experience with the same company.

Table # 1indicated the means, standard deviations and inter-item correlations of creative performance, optimism subculture and optimism for managerial and non-managerial salesforce separately. The correlation between the predictors was less than 0.8 meaning that multi-collinearly was not a threat to the regression analysis.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Creative Performance	Optimism Subculture	Optimism
MANAGERIAL SALESFORCE					
Creative Performance	3.89	0.43	1.00		
Optimism Subculture	3.69	0.45	$0.04^{N/S}$	1.00	
Optimism	1.67	3.06	$0.16^{N/S}$	$-.06^{N/S}$	1.00
NON-MANAGERIAL SALESFORCE					
Creative Performance	3.77	0.54	1.00		
Optimism Subculture	3.68	0.51	.17*	1.00	
Optimism	1.20	2.69	.15*	-0.12**	1.00

* Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, N/S = Not Significant

Table # 02 showed the regression analyses of optimism subculture and creative performance for managerial and non-managerial salesforce. When creative performance was regressed on optimism subculture for managerial salesforce, it explained insignificant relationship with creative performance. For non-managerial sales force, when creative performance was regressed on optimism subculture, it explained 3% variability with significant F-statistics (F= 6.31, p<0.05). So, results revealed that optimism subculture had significant positive impact on creative performance (b=0.18, t=2.51, p<0.05).

Table 2: Regression Analyses for Optimism Subculture

	Creative Performance		
	R^2 Change	B	t-statistic
MANAGERIAL SALESFORCE			
Optimism Subculture **F-statistics = 0.73 $^{N/S}$**	$0.002^{N/S}$	0.04	$0.35^{N/S}$
NON-MANAGERIAL SALESFORCE			
Optimism Subculture **F-statistics = 6.31*****	0.029*	0.18	2.51*

* Significant at 0.05 Level, N/S = Not Significant

Table # 03 indicated the regression analyses for the impact of optimism on creative performance for managerial and non-managerial salesforce. When creative performance regressed on optimism of managerial sales force, it showed insignificant impact on dependent variable. On the other side, when dependent variable was regressed on optimism for non-managerial salesforce, it explained 2% variability in the dependent variable indicating that optimism had significant positive impact (b=0.03, t=2.22, p<0.05) on creative performance.

Table 3: Regression Analyses for Optimism

	Creative Performance		
	R^2 Change	B	t-statistic
MANAGERIAL SALESFORCE			
Optimism **F-statistics = 2.11 $^{N/S}$**	$0.03^{N/S}$	0.02	$1.45^{N/S}$
NON-MANAGERIAL SALESFORCE			
Optimism **F-statistics = 4.92*****	0.02*	0.03	2.22*

* Significant at 0.05 Level, N/S = not significant

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study empirically assessed the direct impact of optimism subculture and optimism separately on the creative performance in two subsamples of pharmaceutical sales force. Contrary to the expectations of the researchers, study findings revealed that optimism subculture, in line with the assertion that such culture must enhance innovation [46], and optimism, consistent with study findings [10], had significant positive impact on creative performance for frontline sales force only but not for sales managers. Self -report bias, structured survey questionnaire, quantitative analytical approach, multi-company samples, direct impact of limited predictors, single industrial and cultural context were the limitations of the study. So for future researchers, it is urged that triangulation of data collection methods, approaches and analytical techniques to be employed in studying direct, moderating and mediating mechanisms of many other theoretical and understudied variables on creative performance of sales force across diversified industrial and cross cultural settings. Leadership in selling organizations of pharmaceutical industry is urged to take necessary initiatives to boosting optimism culture at each work group level and select sales force and/or develop their attitudinal optimism to fostering the creative performance of their frontline sales persons which may lead to their improved sales performance, job satisfaction and engagement resulting into improved organizational performance.

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