

An Empirical Study on Assessing the Relationship Between Affective commitment and Informal workplace learning

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Abstract

Informal workplace learning plays increasingly an important role for enhancing knowledge and skill of employees which is necessary for achieving competitive advantage and sustainability of organization. Although, Researchers recognized the importance of informal workplace learning, study related to informal workplace learning is still limited. With a view to ensure the success of knowledge management endeavor, informal workplace learning among employees must be encouraged. The main focus of this study is to explore the relationship between affective commitment and informal workplace learning. A total of 728 questionnaires were distributed to employees working as head of the department of branches of private commercial bank in Bangladesh. 381 questionnaires were used for further analysis out of 728 questionnaires, representing a response rate 52.33%. Hypothesis for direct effect were tested using Partial Least Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The result of the study revealed that affective commitment has significant and positive relationship with informal workplace learning. Implications and directions for future research are also highlighted.

Key Words: Informal Workplace Learning, Affective Commitment, Private Commercial Bank, Bangladesh.

1. Introduction

In the age of globalization, the role informal workplace learning is increasing day by day due its significant contribution to the development of knowledge and skill of employees. Studies related informal learning suggested that employees are continuously picking up knowledge, skill and ideas through informal set up. A number of researchers recognized the significance of informal learning over formal learning (Boud (1999); Garrick, 1998; Hughes & Campbell, 2009)

but the study related to informal learning are very limited. Organizations can encourage, capture, exchange, manage and share of their employees' valuable knowledge through informal learning in workplace (Caruso, 2017). Earlier studies stated that most of the times individuals learn informally where they understand the requirement to learn and they learn through experience or sharing knowledge with each other in the place of work (Eraut, 2004; Global Focus, 2012). For instance, Eraut (2011) conduct study across multidiscipline and reported that 70% to 80% of all learning in the workplace is informal.

Previous studies have proposed some factors that could influence learning in workplace (Ellinger, 2005; Sambrook & Stewart, 2000; Savolainen, 2000). More particularly, Park and McLean (2008) stated that organizational factors and personal factors influence the learning in workplace. organizational factors includes culture and environment, job design and investment, changes and demand, learning opportunities and participation, human resource practices and development, managerial responsibilities, extensive professional contract, superior feedback, management support for learning, learning committed leadership and management, technology, resource information, job challenge and guided learning at work. Personal factors include skills, attitudes, motivations, perceptions, and communications, and commitment, involvement, rewards and people relationships for learning. Previously, a number of studies mentioned that organizational commitment more particularly, affective commitment is considered as one of vital component that greatly influence the informal workplace learning (Peltokorpi, 2004; Salarian, Baharpour, & Habibi, 2015; Samad, 2003). Affectively committed employees are highly involved in discretionary efforts and engaged in learning and sharing knowledge. Earlier, researches have been conducted by considering effect of commitment on employees' outcomes such as job satisfaction, motivation to work, job performance, organizational citizenship behavior and others behavioral and work related performance (George & Sabapathy, 2011; Khan, Ziauddin, & Ramay, 2010; Liu & Cohen, 2010; Paré & Tremblay, 2007; Vilela, González, & Ferrín, 2008). However, the study that considered the effect of affective commitment on informal workplace learning is still limited. Therefore, current study paid attention on affective commitment as an important driver that act as a platform to enhance informal workplace learning.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Informal workplace learning

The term informal learning refers to any types of learning which is associated with the understanding of knowledge, skills and ability and that occurs outside of the curricula of academic institutions or workshops or the courses offered by educational or training agencies. A number of authors stated that informal learning is defined as learning by action and experience, courses or workshops take place outside the institutional curricula, and without explicit learning objectives, time, and support (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014; Cunningham & Hillier, 2013; Eraut, 2004; Livingstone, 1999, 2001; Marsick & Volpe, 1999; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Sloep, 2012; Za, Spagnoletti, & North-Samardzic, 2014). For example, informal learning includes networking, coaching, performance planning to review learning

needs, self-directed learning, mentoring and so on (Marsick & Watkins, 2003). There is no formal certification or recognition of informal learning (Skule, 2004).

Some authors explained informal learning as a learner initiated approach and defined it as self-directed, intentional, unintentional, social, self-motivated, incidental, and without controlled by teacher or supervisor (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014; Colardyn & Bjornavold, 2004; Cook, Pachler, & Bradley, 2008; Cunningham & Hillier, 2013; Livingstone, 1999; Lucas & Moreira, 2009; Marsick & Watkins, 2001; Merriam et al., 2007). Informal work place learning occurs through on-the-job interactions such as discussion with experienced and knowledgeable colleagues regarding work related ideas and issues (Rowold & Kauffeld, 2009). Therefore, the essence of informal learning is that acquisition of knowledge and skill from work arrangement and is not occurs only from organized program rather from the actual work setting even there is no intention to learn.

More particularly, Choi and Jacobs (2011) mentioned that there are three ways by which informal workplace learning takes place such as learning with others, self experimentation and external scanning. Learning with others means learning by sharing experiences and knowledge with others, observing the activities of others, as well as collaborating with others. Self-experimentation indicates such informal learning which occurs when individuals intensely involved in experimentation and explore new ideas and develop better technique. Finally, external scanning means such informal learning which occurs when individual involved with external sources such as learning through joining conferences, searching internet, reading journals, and communicating with respective experts.

As mentioned, there are a number of factors that can encourage employees' towards informal workplace learning. One of them is affective commitment that can stimulate informal workplace learning because it determines how employees show their affectivity to learn in the workplace. In order to reap the advantage of informal workplace learning, organizations need to increase the affective commitment of its employees that can encourage such learning.

2.2. Affective Commitment and Informal Learning

Affective commitment indicates the emotional attachment of individual's towards the organization such that highly committed individual is involved in, identifies with, and enjoys membership in the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). In the same line, Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) stated that affective commitment is the comparative strength of an individual involvement in and identification with a particular organization. Employees need to be committed towards their organization for informal workplace learning because commitment plays a vital role for encouraging employees to involve in informal workplace learning (Bartlett, 2001; Naquin & Holton, 2002). More particularly, affective commitment have a significant impact on workplace learning climate (Budihardjo, 2013). Previous studies mentioned that employees with greater level of commitment especially affective commitment will encourage them to participate learning in workplace (Samad, 2003). But there is a lack of study on

influence of affective commitment on employees learning in workplace, although affective commitment can highly influence the willingness of employees to learn and transfer their knowledge (Hislop, 2003). Employee with greater level of affective commitment are less likely to move from the organization and intended to do discretionary efforts, thus they are eager to learn and share knowledge within the organization (Storey & Quintas, 2001). Moreover, affective commitment highly influences the willingness of employees to exchange and share knowledge (McKenzie, Truc, & van Winkelen, 2001; Scarbrough & Carter, 2000).

One of the important studies conducted by Joo (2010) where he found that there is a significant relationship between organizational commitment and learning culture in workplace. Particularly employees' affective commitment to organization is an important contributor to continuous learning in workplace. moreover, Wu and Liu (2006) and Treuer, McHardy, and Earl (2013) found that, there is a positive association between affective commitment and learning in workplace. Based on the above discussion it is proposed that affective commitment will have significant positive influence on informal workplace learning.

Hypothesis: Affective commitment will have significant positive relationship with informal workplace learning.

The research framework is presented in figure 1, forms a model of Affective commitment with informal workplace learning.

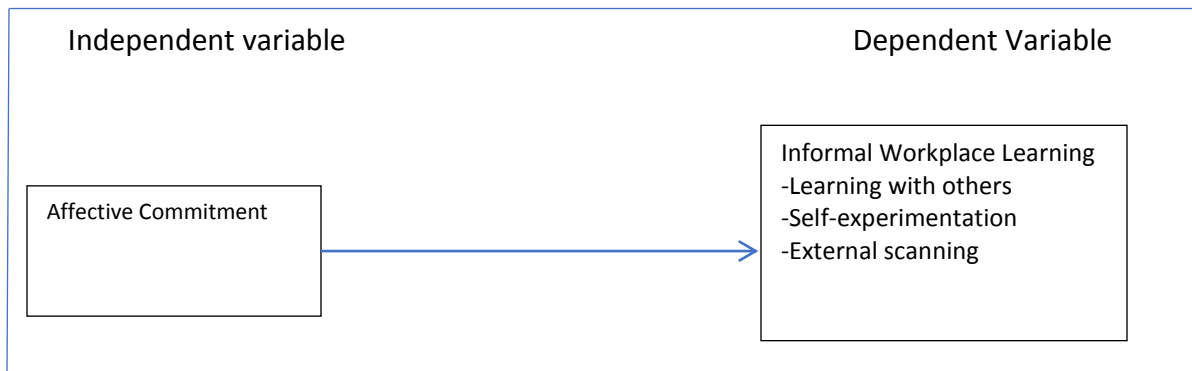


Figure 1: Proposed Research Framework

3. Research Methodology

Data for this study was gathered through questionnaires containing items assessing all the variables involved. Informal workplace learning was measured from three dimensions and by 12 items adapted from the study of (Choi & Jacobs, 2011). Affective commitment was measured using the 8 items measure adapted from the study of Allen and Meyer (1990). All items of this study were assessed by using a five point Likert scale, where by 5 'indicated 'strongly agree' and 1 'indicated strongly disagree'.

The study was conducted among the head of the department of branches in private commercial banks and a total of 728 questionnaires were systematically distributed among them in 364 branches. After completion of survey, a total of 403 questionnaires were returned. Out of 403 questionnaires, 381 cases were used for the analysis. Nine cases were deleted because of missing data and thirteen cases were dropped due to outliers.

4.1 Analytical strategy

Analysis process started with checking the common method bias. The study used SPSS (Version 22) to detect common method bias. The first factor accounted for 24.541 percent of the variance which indicated that common method bias did not seem to be a problem for this study. In this study hypothesis was tested by the application partial least square (PLS) software developed by Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2014). There are two ways by which PLS model can be evaluated namely assessment of the measurement model and assessment of the structural model (Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009). The study assessed the relationship between manifest variables (observed items) and latent variables through the measurement model. The measurement model tested the reliability (internal consistency and items reliability) as well as validity (discriminant validity and convergent validity). Through the bootstrapping method the structural model indicates the relationship between the latent variable. The significance of path coefficient and the value of R2 are the main criteria of evaluating the structural model.

4.2 Measurement Model Results

The loading for each item and composite reliability were tested to examine the reliability and validity of the measurement model. The minimum loading should be of .60 as per the suggestion of Chin, Gopal, and Salisbury (1997). All item loadings were exceeded the cut off value of .60 (see Table-1). The range of items loadings of the study is in between 0.640 to .0.790. According to Henseler et al. (2009) Composite Reliability indicates the internal consistency of the latent variables. The minimum threshold value of internal consistency is off .70 as per the suggestion of Fornell and Larcker (1981). Table 1 shows the composite reliability of this study ranged from 0.758 to 0.871, which exceeded the minimum cut off value .70 recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

In measurement model, the next stage is to measure the convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity examine if a specific items measures a latent variable that it is supposed to measure. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981) the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is used as the criterion to calculate the convergent validity of the measurement model. The cut off value of AVE should equal to or greater 0.50 as per the suggestion of Fornell and Larcker (1981). In the study, the value AVE is ranges from 0.510 to 0.529, which surpassed the threshold value of 0.50. Therefore, it can be said that the measurement model satisfies the criteria of convergent validity.

The subsequent task is to measure the discriminant validity of the model. Discriminant validity refers to the degree by which the item of a latent variable differs from one other. The study used of both Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion and Chin (1998) cross loading criterion in determining discriminant validity as suggested by Henseler et al. (2009). Table 2, showed that the square root of the AVE of the latent variable exceeded the correlations of other constructs which satisfied the criteria suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Besides, the cross loadings for each items is higher than all of its cross loading denotes the presence of adequate convergent and discriminant validity (Chin, 1998). Therefore, it can be said the measurement model is valid and reliable.

In addition, in the measurement model, the R2 value is 0.193 which indicates that 19.3 percent variance of informal workplace learning is explained by affective commitment. This model also have predictive ability ($Q^2=0.054$), as the value of Q^2 were above zero.

Table 1: Items Loadings, Composite Reliability and the Average Variance Extract for the Measurement Model

Constructs	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR
	AC2	0.704	0.529	0.871
	AC3	0.704		
	AC5	0.698		
	AC6	0.703		
	AC7	0.790		
	AC8	0.760		
	EXTS2	0.711		
	EXTS3	0.670		
	EXTS4	0.774	0.510	0.805
	LWO1	0.778		
	LWO2	0.681		
	LWO3	0.640		
	LWO4	0.748	0.512	0.758
	SE1	0.788		
	SE2	0.689		
	SE3	0.664		

Note: AVE, Average variance extracted; CR= Composite reliability, AC= Affective commitment; EXTS= external scanning; LWO= Learning with others; SE= Self experimentation. AC1, AC4, EXTS1, SE4 were deleted due to poor loadings.

Table 2 Discriminant Validity

	AC	EXTS	LWO	SE
AC	0.727			
EXTS	0.257	0.720		
LWO	0.442	0.445	0.714	
SE	0.269	0.324	0.382	0.715

Note: Diagonals values represent the square root of the AVE while the other entries represent the correlations. AC= Affective commitment; EXTS= external scanning; LWO= Learning with others; SE= Self experimentation.

4.3 Structural Model Results

It is possible to test the hypothesis to explain the direct link between dependent and independent variable by the evaluation of structural model. This study conducted bootstrapping analysis to measure path coefficient of the structural model and to assess the significance of path coefficient. The study used 1000 resampling rate for bootstrapping as suggested by Chin (2010). The results revealed that affective commitment ($\beta=0.439$, $p<0.01$) have strong and significant positive relationship with informal workplace learning.

Table 3: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Std.Beta	SE	T-values	P Values	Decision
AC -> IWPL	0.439	0.037	11.823	0.000**	Supported

5. Discussion

At present, informal workplace learning is vital for all occupations and business as it provides competitive advantages. In knowledge based economy, it plays a focal role for growth and development of knowledge and skills of employees which leads organizational success. Since, previous studies considered affective commitment and employees others behavioral and job related outcomes, the aim of the current study was to examine the relationship between affective commitment and informal workplace learning of employees working in branches of private commercial banks of Bangladesh. For achieving the goal of the study a model was projected to test the direct relationship between affective commitment and informal workplace learning. The result explored that affective commitment have significant and positive relationship with informal workplace learning as expected in hypothesis. This result is consistent with study of Treuer et al. (2013) and Mehrabi, Jadidi, Haery, and Alemzadeh (2013) where they found that affective commitment have significant positive effect on learning. Moreover, private commercial banks of Bangladesh are giving more emphasis on employees affective commitment to enhance informal workplace learning.

6. Implications and future directions

Throughout the world emphasis are giving on achieving competitive advantage and sustainability, which is highly depends on informal workplace learning. The knowledge related to informal workplace learning is still growing. This study enlarged the idea by clarifying role of affective commitment on informal workplace learning. The study expanded the theoretical aspect of situated learning where individual factors are important predictors of informal learning. Future study can be conducted by considering the other personal factors which have potential impact on informal learning in workplace. This study have conducted on banking sector only, future study can also be conducted in other manufacturing or service sector where informal learning in workplace is essential.

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