

**Mapping the behavioural aspects of Discretionary Work Effort and Employee
Motivation: An Empirical Approach**

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Abstract

Although there is a significant amount of research that has been conducted in the area of employee motivation in an organizational workplace, research in discretionary work effort domain is still in an embryonic stage. It is evident from the existing literature that the primary task of the manager is to motivate people in an organization to perform at peak level. The present study is empirical in nature. Both primary and secondary data has been used and analyzed for the purpose of study. The sample has been drawn by using stratified random sampling technique. The respondents of the study were employees of both public and private sector telecom organizations. The organizations understudies were Bharat Sanchar Nigam limited (BSNL) and Bharti Airtel which represent public and private sector telecom organizations respectively. The study concludes that discretionary work effort is dependent on motivational level of employees and different motional factors have different level of impact on discretionary work effort.

Key Words: Discretionary Work Effort, Employee Motivation, High Performance, Public and Private Sector Organizations.

1. Prologue of the study

Human nature appears to be simple, yet complex too, so an understanding for effective employee motivational construct to enhance discretionary effort of employees at work places becomes an important area for organizational research. In context of organizational functions, employee motivation becomes driving force which is arguably the most complex phenomenon to understand. In the current public as well as corporate scenario, employees are motivated by many different factors in order to work at their peak levels. It has never been an easy task for managers to find out such factors of motivation which motivates employees to work above and beyond what is normally required. Many organizations all over the globe throughout the past hundred years have focused on theories that motivate the workers to be the best they can be and some of these theories have proven to be true. As economic competition has intensified in the wake of globalization and technological advances, employers' demands for discretionary work effort have increased.

1.1. Discretionary Work Effort –An overview

Discretionary work effort is an emerging concept which demands scholarly investigation. The concept has its origin both from behavioral sciences as well as economic conceptualizations. Discretionary work effort appears to have been first mentioned by Yankelovich and Immerwahr (1983), who described it as the voluntary effort employees provide above and beyond what is required. Lloyd (2003) defined discretionary work effort as 'the voluntary effort employees spend that lies above the minimum level of effort required in order to keep the job and is directed towards organizational goals'. Needham (2005) defines discretionary effort as "additional effort over and above requirements of a job description- the difference between how well people actually perform and how well they are capable of performing". Fielder (2006) defines discretionary effort as "something we hold back unless we feel really motivated or inspired to give more". Fielder also notes that this may not be deliberate; the capacity for extra effort may be unrealised until the motivation and inspiration occurs.

1.2. The Organizational Behaviour (OB) perspective

In the organizational behaviour literature, discretionary work effort is commonly conceptualized as comprising the dimensions of duration, intensity and direction (Blau, 1993; Brown & Leigh, 1996; Campbell & Pritchard, 1976; Kanfer, 1990; Naylor, Pritchard & Ilgen, 1980). The dimension of duration is concerned with the time aspect of discretionary work effort.

Thus it reflects how long a person works or keeps trying on a task. The dimension of intensity deals with the level of effort an employee puts in a given job. It involves how hard a person works and therefore reflects how much energy a person chooses to exert per unit of time. The direction dimension of work effort considers what work behaviors or activities a person engages in and with what frequency i.e. it is the directing work effort towards activities that promote the attainment of organizational goals rather than activities that do not contribute to these goals. Research reveals that all the three dimensions of discretionary work effort i.e. time, intensity and direction, are important in affecting employee performance (Blau, 1993; Katerberg and Blau, 1983; Terborg, 1976). A study conducted by Brown and Leigh (1996) revealed that discretionary work effort, which is an employee's tendency to work long and hard in his/her work, is a key component of performance.

1.3. The Economic perspective

The concept of discretionary work effort is considered within the context of labor supply so far as the labour economics literature is concerned. Early theories of labor supply (Jevons, 1871:1970; Marshall, 1890:1910, Robertson, 1921) identified work time and work intensity as important and distinctive elements of labor provided. Jevons (1871:1970) was first to make the distinction between the hours employees work and the intensity with which employees work during their time at work (Spencer, 2003:2004). Similarly Marshall (1890) and Robertson (1921) differentiated work time from what they termed the "efficiency of labor". Discretionary work effort decision was depicted as a time allocation decision in the neoclassical theory of labor supply. This theory considers time dimension as a simple means to the desired end (Spencer, 2003). Thus this perspective considered discretionary work effort only in terms of work time (Spencer, 2004). According to this conventional view of discretionary work effort, only work time was under individual's control. Intensity of work effort exerted during the time at work was assumed to be enforced under the employee's employment contract (Bowles et al., 1984; Fairris, 2004; Leibenstein, 1977:78). The traditional concept of discretionary work effort was subsequently challenged by Leibenstein (1966) and Bowles, Gordon and Weisskopf (1984). The researchers asserted that due to incomplete nature of employment contract and supervisory surveillance, there are no assurances that employees will work at the maximum level possible. Firms cannot totally control the level of work effort of employees, and that unless adequately motivated; employees typically deviate from their optimal level of work effort.

Within the theoretical frameworks of discretionary work effort in economics, skill and ability are generally viewed as being distinct from work effort but interact with work effort to affect employee productivity. When greater skill and ability are combined with a given level of work effort, they enhance the productivity rather than the level of discretionary work effort.

1.4. Discretionary Work Effort and the Performance Domain

Discretionary work effort has long been associated with performance. Hackman and Oldham (1976) in their study used a performance measure that also included efforts expended on the job, apart from work quality and quantity. Research conducted by Palmer, Welker & Giacalone (1993) demonstrated that discretionary work efforts belong to the performance domain. The multidimensional approach of discretionary work effort towards performance is now widely recognized. The performance domain has been shown to include in-role behaviour and a vast number of organizational citizenship behaviors also called extra-role or discretionary behaviors or contextual performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997). Many of the forms of citizenship behaviour are specific to certain jobs and in some jobs they are extra-role, whereas in others they may be considered in-role (Van Dyne, Cummings & McLean Parks 1995).

Overview of Employee Motivation

Motivation is the driving force by which humans achieve their goals. The term is generally used for humans but it can also be used to describe the causes for animal behavior as well. According to various theories, motivation may be rooted in a basic need to minimize physical pain and maximize pleasure, or it may include specific needs such as eating and resting, or a desired object, goal, state of being, ideal, or it may be attributed to less-apparent reasons such as altruism, selfishness, morality, or avoiding mortality. Conceptually, motivation should not be confused with either volition or optimism. Motivation is related to, but distinct from, emotion. Workers in any organization need something to keep them working. Most times the salary of the employee is enough to keep him or her working for an organization. However, sometimes just working for salary is not enough for employees to stay at an organization. An employee must be motivated to work for a company or organization. If no motivation is present in an employee, then the employee's quality of work or all work in general will deteriorate.

Motivation is such a factor that exerts a driving force on our actions and work. According to Baron (1983), motivation is an accumulation of different processes which influence and direct our behavior to achieve some specific goal.

It is such a dynamic in today's environment that explicitly creates and encompasses a positive impact on job. Within an organization, the best performance is feasible with most committed employees that can only be achieved through employee motivation. Kreitner and Kinicki (2004) assume that motivation contains "those psychological processes that cause the arousal, direction and persistence of voluntary actions that are goal directed." Motivation depends on certain intrinsic, as well as, extrinsic factors which in collaboration results in fully committed employees. According to Broad (2007), tangible incentives are effective in increasing performance for task not done before, to encourage "thinking smarter" and to support both quality and quantity to achieve goals. Incentives, rewards and recognitions are the prime factors that impact on employee motivation. As the employees engage in their working activities purposely for own's sake then they will feel intrinsic motivation in their behaviours as their activities will essentially be enjoyable and satisfactory (Vansteenkiste, 2005). The factors like incentives and rewards are the most preferred factors for employee motivation programs.

Human motivation refers to "what energizes a person's behavior, what directs it, and what maintains and sustains it" (Porter & Miles, 1974). Within complex, ambiguous, and heterogeneous work environments, motivating employees to be both positive and effective in performing their work remains a crucial and sensitive challenge for managers (Rainey, 2003). Also, in organizations, selecting, retaining, and managing highly motivated people are primary human resource (HR) functions to improve organizational outcomes. In the public sector, as Robert Behn (1995) suggested, one of the big questions of public human resource management is how to effectively and appropriately enhance the level of employees' work motivation in the public sector, mainly aiming at increasing job and organization performance and effectiveness at the micro-level as well as ultimately pursuing public-based social purposes at the macro-level.

Integrative Theory of Motivation, Volition, and Performance

Work motivation is a function of employees interacting with their work environments (Amabile, 1993). With the same notion, in the integrative theory of MVP, Keller (2008) proposed that a complete motivation–implementation–performance cycle consists of several stages: motivational and volitional processing, motivational and information processing interfacing, information and psychomotor processing, and finally, the outcome processing. Motivational processing helps employees set up initial performance goals.

First, employees should have sufficient level of curiosity to explore the task, then understand the value of the task, and evaluate the possibility of attaining successful performance and to identify and confirm the performance goal. The next stage is volitional processing that converts employees' intentions into executable actions.

Employees at this point apply action control strategies to implement needed activities that move them toward the performance goal. At the effect of volitional processing employees enter the interface between motivation and information processing. Here employees apply metacognitive strategies to actively manage their learning processes. The next stage, information and psychomotor processing, requires employees to utilize a variety of mental activities to process information. Employees at this stage carry out cognitive and metacognitive activities to create and automate transferrable mental models. The processing capacity, however, is limited by employees' working memory. Finally, the outcome-processing stage allows employees to evaluate the discrepancy between performance consequences and invested efforts. Employees reflect upon experiences from all previous stages, both affectively and cognitively, and develop a collective sense of satisfaction that might sustain a continuous performance cycle.

The implication of this framework in managing work motivation and performance is manifold. First, since motivational processing is crucial at the early stage of the performance process, one must be cautious to avoid overwhelming employees' processing capacity or distracting them with competing stimuli. Their depleted affective and cognitive capacity can prevent employees from effectively converting performance intentions to effective actions. Second, employees' cognitive processing activities could play a substantial role in sustaining their motivation consistently. Employees overloaded with cognitive stimuli, regardless of their initial motivational processing results, remain vulnerable to be demotivated by exhausting cognitive information processing tasks. Finally, the theory provides fruitful opportunities for job task and work environment design to research and manages employees' motivation, cognitive processing, and performance with an integrative approach.

2. EVIDENCES FROM THE EXISTING LITERATURE

There is often a difference between how well people perform and how well they are capable of performing. In this concern, it has always been a daunting task for the top management to analyze the factors which lead toward Discretionary work effort of an employee.

Concern about employees withholding work effort goes back to management pioneers such as Frederick Taylor (1911), whose scientific management was designed in part to eliminate systematic soldiering in the work force. Kowalski (2003) conducted a study among young workers and found that the workers rather work for themselves than for an organization. These trends clearly indicate that organizations are losing discretionary work effort of workers and intellectual capital that was once willingly offered by employees.

Another research study of 990 respondents showed that 70% of employees had planned to stay with their current organization for the near future, while only 21% per cent of those indicated that they offered their full discretionary effort to their current job (BlessingWhite, 2005). A study conducted in two different colleges, one in which faculty appeared collaborative and creative, and another wherein faculty appeared to provide only their contractual requirement, investigated discretionary work effort by faculty. It was found that the area of student relationships and student success, either through the use of new technologies or through their personal investments of time and effort was significantly positive in relation with their discretionary work effort (Dietze, Beverly & Ann, 2005).

There have been ample evidences in the existing literature which shows the relationship between employee motivation and discretionary work effort. Employee skills, knowledge, creativity and talent may remain idle without the motivation of individuals to use them (Grazier, 1992). The highest priority attributes in a research study regarding discretionary work effort among Chinese employees were motivation, initiative, company knowledge, leadership and loyalty (Peppas, Peppas and Jin, 1999). The positive relationship between work-life balance and discretionary work efforts depend on a supportive work place culture, which is a determinant of work motivation. Work places can improve employee engagement, discretionary work effort and productivity by supporting work-life balances (McPherson, 2007). Intrinsic factors (perks) of work motivation are important as motivators of discretionary work effort and irk i.e. autocratic leader behaviour, work load pressures, co-worker shirking, excessive bureaucracy etc. proved as demotivators of discretionary work effort. It was also found that there were differences among the intrinsic motivational factors with regard to discretionary work efforts (Morris, 2009). Negative leader behaviors may adversely affect employee discretionary work efforts differently from an absence of positive leader behaviour.

In a qualitative study on the effect of negative leader behaviour on creative acts, which are a form of direct discretionary work effort, the researchers conclude that negative leader behaviour is important in affecting employee work behaviour (Amabile, Schatzel, Moneta, & Kranner, 2004). A research in UK among 10, 000 employees in 14 organizations revealed that an organization's concern for employee's health and wellbeing, including family friendliness is a key driver of discretionary work effort along with feelings valued and involved. The essential factors to increase discretionary work effort are good quality line management, commitment to employee wellbeing and clear accessible HR policies and practices (Robinson, Perryman & Hayday, 2004).

Co-worker support is a determinant of discretionary work effort. The other factors which were later on identified as the measures of discretionary work effort were positive feedback and acknowledgement of the contributions of other work group members. The emergence of co-worker support provided a useful direction for extending the conceptualization of discretionary work effort. Higher wages do not always lead to discretionary work effort in an environment where overtime is regularly available and workers have the discretion of supply overtime hours. Work intensity is a component of discretionary work effort. The employment contracts specify the hours an employee shall work but they do not typically prescribe how much work must be done in that time. Thus, there is an opportunity for an employee to vary their level of discretionary work effort by varying work intensity (Bowles, Gordon & Weisskopf, 1984). The decision to render discretionary work effort involves an economic exchange relationship, whereby higher levels of monetary rewards motivate employees to supply more discretionary work effort (Akerlof, 1982). Therefore, there is a positive relationship between monetary reward and discretionary work effort (Alchian & Demsetz, 1972). A work environment conducive to peak effort requires opportunity for individual growth and skill development, challenge, meaningful work, autonomy, and where the end results of one's work is seen. Work design theory advocates jobs that are meaningful, interesting and challenging (Parker et al., 2001; Hackman & Oldham 1980) as this enhances employee satisfaction. It gives employees a greater sense of control, achievement, growth and recognition which generates higher levels of motivation (Rainey, 2001; Hackman & Oldham 1980). Empirical research supports the positive impact of intrinsically motivating job characteristics on job satisfaction and motivation (Parker & Wall, 1998). Job characteristics are amongst the least researched factors affecting discretionary behaviors.

Intrinsically motivating work encourages personal initiatives (Frese et al., 1996) and more proactive role orientations (Parker et al., 1997). Leader behaviors have an important direct and indirect influence on employee attitudes. Perceptions and behaviors as they affect the functioning of the organization and shape the internal work environment that fosters discretionary work effort (Podsakoff et al. , 1996). Higher employee motivation leads to greater creativity, productivity and discretionary effort, which in turn lead to improved company performance. Furthermore, working for a successful company itself becomes a component of employee motivation, helping create and sustain a cycle of performance improvement. It has always been an interesting and significant topic that whether women put same work effort as men in their work places.

In this backdrop, a laboratory experiment was carried out by the researchers which was specifically designed to examine sex differences in effort and standards of personal entitlement, Major et al. (1984) asked men and women to do as much work as they thought was fair for a fixed amount of money. They collected objective measures of the accuracy and efficiency of performance on the task as well as information on each subject's perceptions of his or her level of performance. The researcher found that on average, women worked longer, did more work, completed more correct work, and were more efficient than men.

3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study seeks to investigate the existing scenario of discretionary work effort in the Indian telecom sector. The industry sector choice is based on the fact that telecom service organizations have a key role in the socio- economic development of a nation. It is one of the prime support services provider needed for rapid growth and modernization of various sectors of the economy. Besides the enormous growth of the sector, there are certain crucial aspects which have emerged as a challenge for the organizations to survive in the long run. Such aspects include organizational performance, employee satisfaction, organizational productivity, employee loyalty, extra role performance, employee retention and so on. Although a great deal of research supports employee motivation, there is little evidence of literature supporting discretionary effort of employees at their work places. Against this backdrop, the present paper attempts to analyze the impact of motivational level among employees on discretionary work effort and would also attempt to add fresh insight into the pool of existing literature on discretionary work effort.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND APPROACH

The research paper is an endeavor to study various motivational factors which motivates employees to provide their peak efforts at their work places. The study is empirical in nature. Both primary and secondary data has been used and analyzed for the purpose of study. 110 questionnaires were distributed among employees out of which only 70 completely filled questionnaires were received.

The sample has been drawn by using stratified random sampling technique. The respondents of the study were employees of both public and private sector organizations. The organizations under study was Bharat Sanchar Nigam limited (BSNL) and Bharti Airtel which represent public and private sector telecom organizations respectively. The primary data has been collected by means of questionnaire. A self designed questionnaire was framed based on the factors of discretionary work effort and employee motivation. The factors under study were co-worker support, challenging work, monetary benefits, performance appraisal, work environment, team oriented leadership, growth opportunities, discretionary work time, discretionary work intensity, discretionary directed effort, and organization citizenship behaviour. A 7 point Likert scale was tested which proved reliable with Cronbach’s Alpha value greater than 0.7. The data so collected was simultaneously tabulated followed by analysis.

5. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Stepwise Regression

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.446 ^a	.199	.187	.70847	.199	16.843	1	68	.000
2	.635 ^b	.403	.385	.61598	.205	22.954	1	67	.000
3	.730 ^c	.533	.512	.54905	.130	18.332	1	66	.000

- a. Predictors: (Constant), My co-workers are committed to the work we are doing.
- b. Predictors: (Constant), My co-workers are committed to the work we are doing., My organization stresses teamwork.
- c. Predictors: (Constant), My co-workers are committed to the work we are doing., My organization stresses teamwork., I have opportunities to tackle new problems and do different things.
- d. Dependent Variable: I strive as hard as I can to be successful in my work.

The above table reveals that the f-value is significant at 95% confidence level because the value lies below 0.05. Consequently, the adjusted R square value i.e .187, .385 and .512 designates that there is 18.7 % coefficient of determination between predictor A dependent variable D. Similarly, there is 38.5 % coefficient of determination between predictor B and dependent variable D and 51.2% coefficient of determination between predictor C and dependent variable D.

Table 2: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.454	1	8.454	16.843	.000 ^a
	Residual	34.132	68	.502		
	Total	42.586	69			
2	Regression	17.164	2	8.582	22.617	.000 ^b
	Residual	25.422	67	.379		
	Total	42.586	69			
3	Regression	22.690	3	7.563	25.089	.000 ^c
	Residual	19.896	66	.301		
	Total	42.586	69			

- a. Predictors: (Constant), My co-workers are committed to the work we are doing.
- b. Predictors: (Constant), My co-workers are committed to the work we are doing., My organization stresses teamwork.
- c. Predictors: (Constant), My co-workers are committed to the work we are doing., My organization stresses teamwork., I have opportunities to tackle new problems and do different things.
- d. Dependent Variable: I strive as hard as I can to be successful in my work.

From the above table, it can be mentioned that F-values of Model 1,2 and 3 respectively are significant at 95% level of confidence as the sig. value lies below 0.05. This further reveals that there is a strong positive impact of employee motivational levels on discretionary work effort.

Table 3: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	8.337	.483		17.260	.000
	My co-workers are committed to the work we are doing.	-.354	.086	-.446	-4.104	.000
2	(Constant)	11.915	.857		13.907	.000
	My co-workers are committed to the work we are doing.	-.501	.081	-.631	-6.186	.000
	My organization stresses teamwork.	-.479	.100	-.489	-4.791	.000
3	(Constant)	13.547	.854		15.872	.000
	My co-workers are committed to the work we are doing.	-.349	.081	-.439	-4.335	.000
	My organization stresses teamwork.	-.595	.093	-.607	-6.390	.000
	I have opportunities to tackle new problems and do different things.	-.326	.076	-.445	-4.282	.000

- a. Dependent Variable: I strive as hard as I can to be successful in my work.

The coefficient of a variable is interpreted as the change in the response based on a 1-unit change in the corresponding explanatory variable keeping all other variables held constant. The above table reveals that the value of sig. lies below 0.05, which means that t-values are significant at 95% confidence level.

The table further depicts that different motivational factors has a different level of impact on discretionary work effort as the value of beta coefficients are different for different factors of employee motivation. It can be concluded that employee motivational factors has a positive impact on discretionary work effort.

Result: Hypothesis stand accepted.

6. FINDINGS

The data collected for the study was analyzed by using statistical tools. Linear stepwise regression were used through SPSS version 17 to analyze the impact of motivational level among employees on discretionary work effort. The analysis shows that prior to any transformations of variables to satisfy the assumptions of multiple regressions or the removal of outliers, the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables (R^2) were 19.9%, 40.3% and 53.3.0%. Linear stepwise regression was performed to identify the best predictors of the dependent variable "discretionary work effort" among the independent variables viz. co-worker support, challenging work, monetary benefits, performance appraisal, work environment, team oriented leadership, and growth opportunities, Based on the results in the ANOVA table ($F = 16.843, 22.617, 25.089, p < 0.001$), there is a positive relationship between the dependent variable "discretionary work effort" and the factors of motivation. Since the probability of the F statistic ($p < 0.001$) was less than or equal to the level of significance (0.05), the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between employee motivation and discretionary work effort was stands accepted. The study concluded that discretionary work effort is a function of motivational level among employees. The factors of discretionary work effort were highly correlated with those of motivational factors.

7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The concept of discretionary work effort is fast emerging with high precedence because of its scope and significance. Although there is a significant amount of research that has been conducted in the area of employee motivation in an organizational workplace, research in discretionary work effort domain is still in an embryonic stage. It is evident from the existing literature that the primary task of the manager is to motivate people in an organization to perform at peak level.

It is further found from the study that public sector employees are motivated by factors like job security and stability, teamwork, and worthwhile service to society, while eschewing monetary rewards, prestige, and the desire for challenge and autonomy while as private sector employees are motivated by status, opportunity to advance, autonomy, and high pay, while being unconcerned with worthwhile contributions to society and job security.

Research supports that public sector organizations internationally are facing greater environmental turbulence along with community demands and are perhaps in greater need of corporate renewal than their private sector counterparts. The highest priority attributes in a research study regarding discretionary work effort among Chinese employees were work motivation, initiative, company knowledge, leadership and loyalty. Intrinsic factors of work motivation were seen as the important motivators of discretionary work effort than irks i.e. autocratic leader behaviour, work load pressure, co-worker shirking, excessive bureaucracy etc, which proved as demotivators of discretionary work effort. Further it has been found that higher wages do not always lead to discretionary work effort in an environment where overtime is regularly available and workers have the discretion of supply overtime hours. The study concludes that motivational factors like team oriented leadership, co-worker support, recognition of performance; monetary benefits, work environment, challenging work etc. are the important predictors of discretionary work effort which is supported by the research.

8. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has an implication for the telecom service organizations under study. The study reveals that employee motivation has a significant impact on discretionary work effort. Further, from the study, it can be concluded that employees are motivated differently by different factors to put their discretionary work effort. The further implication was that public sector employees were motivated by different factors as compared to private sector employees.

9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Though the study was carried out in a systematic manner, the research limitations can not be underestimated. There is always some type of bias associated with the responses given by respondents mainly because of different perceptions. Furthermore, the sample selected for the study was not large enough so that the study can be generalized. The study was limited to the telecom sector of Jammu and Kashmir state and the number of factors taken for the study were not large enough which paves the way for further research in the area.

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