

Effect of Emotional Ambivalence on Employee Creativity

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Abstract

The present study examines the relationship between emotional ambivalence and employee creativity among hospitality sector personnel in Pakistan. Data were collected from 196 employees working in different hotels and also from aviation hospitality staff. Findings indicate that employee who has feeling of mixed emotions is more creative than others. Results also indicate that emotional competence as moderator is not working between the relationship of emotional ambivalence and employee creativity. Implications and future research directions for hospitality management are also discussed.

Keywords: Emotional ambivalence; Emotional competence; Employee creativity

Introduction

There are considerable and several evidences are available which are suggesting that employee creativity have substantially contribution to organizational competitiveness, innovation, effectiveness and survival [1]. Employees in organization are continuously exhibiting creativity and coming with novel ideas at workplace, which are potentially relating about organizational products, practices, its services or procedures [2,3]. It is necessary and need of organizations to identify the factors that influence the level of creativity of employees at work. Some Personal and contextual factors like intrinsic motivation [1], work related and non-work related support [4], styles of supervisor [5] and working environment features [6] have all been known as strong sources which influence creative performance of employees at work. Beside the above stated factors emotion are also playing an important role in the creativity of employees at work. Emotions of employees and their performance are relative terms as these two are having strong connection [7] especially at the workplace. The emotions of employee generally at workplace can be distinguished according to its nature like positive or negative emotions. Important fact is that for management of the organization to identify the emotions of employees and control as well as utilized it in a way that these emotions can be used in an efficient way for organization. If the employee is having positive emotions at his workplace which ultimately affect its level of creativity as his positive emotion exhibit that the environment of organization is supporting. On the other hand it cannot be work unless employee/individual is not emotionally competent. If the employee is emotionally competent he can easily understand the current environment/situation weather it is supporting or not, this can ultimately affect the creativity level of employee. So emotional competence is also an important factor as emotional ambivalence is. If employee is emotionally competent and facing the ambivalent situation regarding to his emotions, he can easily understand the situation and can easily regulate his emotions and use them in a better way. In this situation it can increase the creativity, performance and commitment level of employee. There are very few studies available in the connection of emotional ambivalence,

emotional competence and employee creativity. As earlier mention that creativity is important for the success of organization, so organizations need to identify the factors which influence the level of creativity of its employees. Emotional ambivalence is an unexplored and important issue with respect to creativity of the employee. Pakistan is the country which is still known as under developing country and where very few studies are conducted on emotional ambivalence and on emotional competence, especially in the connection of creativity. Pakistani society has the characteristics of collectivist culture [8] where people are too much effected by their own emotions (emotional ambivalence) as well as others emotions which results in their performance and attitude [9-12].

Now a day's research on emotions of the employee has gained a great attention of researchers, however the moderating role of emotional competence is comparatively new dimension when need to study the impact of emotional ambivalence on creativity. By testing such variables and conducting the study will add new dimension in the existing literature body of emotional ambivalence. In hospitality sector where competition is comparatively high, it is need to investigate the effects of ambivalent feelings of emotions in employees on their creativity. This study will also help in finding that how emotional competence effects the relationship between of emotional ambivalence and creativity.

Literature Review

Emotional ambivalence and employee creativity

Investigating the effects of emotional ambivalence on employee creativity has undoubtedly been useful in the context of organization. Emotional ambivalence is relatively new term which can be defined as, "the simultaneous experience of positive and negative emotions regarding an object, event or idea" [13] and creativity can be define as "A product or response will be judged as creative to the extent that (a) it is both a novel and appropriate, useful, correct or valuable response to the task at hand, and (b) the task is heuristic rather than algorithmic" [1]. The effects of emotional ambivalence on creativity is the idea which discussed by psychodynamic theorists in early of 20th century. These theorists explained that emotional and creative

processes are intertwining with each other [14,15]. According to definition of emotional ambivalence it is a combination of positive and negative emotions. Some of the researcher concludes their research as positive emotion has significant relationship with creativity [16] and some other researchers defined as negative emotions has significant relationship with creativity [17]. Employee creativity depends on the perception of employee about environment.

When employee in a positive mood he/she perceive his working environment is supportive and this is the right time for creativity, on the other hand when employee is in negative mood he/she perceived the environment as problematic and more efforts need to solve the problem [18]. According to the statement, the individuals who are having negative mood/emotions are also known as creative employees. Beside the concept of positive and negative emotions some of the researcher has identified specific stimuli where individual report mixed emotions i.e. Larsen, et al. [19] identified co-occurrence of happiness and sadness in college students in their study. At the end, according to informational theories of emotions and most of the researchers predict that emotional ambivalence and creativity have a positive significant relationship with each other [13].

H1: Emotional Ambivalence has a significant relationship with employee creativity.

Emotional competence as moderator between emotional ambivalence and employee creativity

Emotional competence defined as “a person demonstrates the competences that constitute self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills at appropriate times and ways in sufficient frequency to be effective in the situation” [20]. Whereas employee creativity can be defined as generation of new idea which can also be

useful for organization related to product, service, policies and procedures in the said organization [4].

There are sufficient amount of literature and theoretical models available which attempting to explain the significant relationship between emotional intelligence/competence and creativity. Such literature and models explains the creativity as a subset of emotional intelligence [21] and as creating partially overlapping construct between both of emotional competence and creativity [22].

Moreover the theory of emotional intelligence explaining that, an individual who is having good relationships at workplace with his/her colleagues and bosses with the ability to understand one's own feelings, controls stress/negative emotions [23] and feeling of frustration, can certainly have better relationships with colleagues and supervisors, which ends up with positive outcomes i.e. job satisfaction [24], organizational commitment, better job performance and creativity. On the other hand if the individual is less competent in the context of emotions cannot able to deal with job related stress which lead him to lower job satisfaction, results in negative coping strategies like self-blaming, withdrawal behavior and less ability to creative thinking.

Emotions are having strong connection with creativity, because it is the ability of individual who express novelty and effective blend of emotions [25]. The individual who know as ambivalent expressers perceived as less competent than other individuals who are having pure positive or negative emotions. Tiedens, et al. [26] explains that emotional ambivalence is associating with one's competence level. So emotional competence can alter the relationship of individual's ambivalent emotions and creativity, because when individual feel mixed emotions perceived as less competent which effects his level of creativity and emotional competency may help him to control the ambivalent emotions or use them in a positive way.

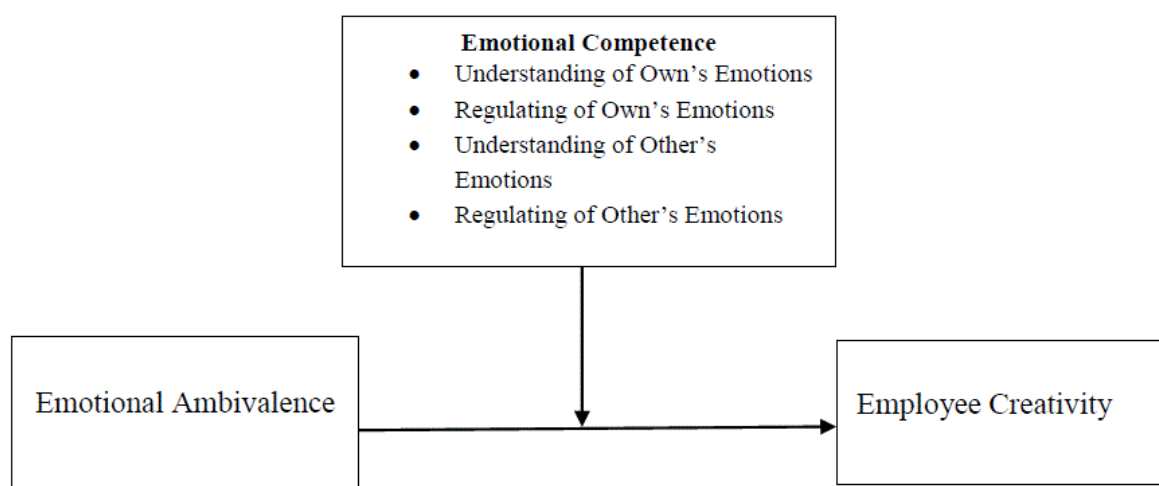


Figure 1: Research model for emotional competence.

Emotional competence is having four constructs such as understanding of own emotions, understanding of other's emotions, regulation of own emotions and regulation of other's emotions.

These constructs are having strong connection with employee creativity. Because ability of understanding and effective use of emotions facilitate/increase thought process [27] which leads to creativity. Same as due to regulation of emotions decrease the negative

and maintain the positive emotions which can enhance the level of employee creativity [28].

The main theme behind the emotional competence taking as moderator between emotional ambivalence and creativity is that when individual is having ambivalent emotions, he/she feel confused but with emotional competency he/she can lead these ambivalence towards positive way i.e. creativity. On the other hand individual with ambivalent emotions perceived as less competent then other individual who is having pure happiness or sadness emotions (Figure 1). Based on this the formed hypothesis are as under:

H2: Emotional Competence is moderating the relationship of Emotional Ambivalence and employee creativity.

Methodology

Instrumentation

For measuring the Emotional Ambivalence 13-item scale is adopt from King, et al. [29]. The reliability of the scale is measure as 0.927. A 13-item scale has been used for measuring the employee creativity, adopted from Zhou, et al. [30] with having the reliability 0.830. Employee emotional competence is assessed with Law, et al. [31] 16 items scale.

The reliability of emotional competence is 0.966. All the items in the questionnaire were responded to using a 5-points Likert-scale where 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), unless otherwise stated [32].

Population and sample

The population of the study was the employees who are serving in hospitality sector organizations of Pakistan, where creativity of the employee is very much needed for survival of the organization and for gaining the competitive edge. The respondent consisted of staff working in aviation hospitality like air hostesses and flight stewards.

Moreover, this study includes the staff working in various hotels in Pakistan as sample. Since creativity discouraged in small hotels, data was collected only from those five/four star hotels and aviation hospitality staff where creativity is allowed under certain constraints. Data was collected using convenient sampling method.

Initially, 230 questionnaires were distributed and 200 were received back. Out of these questionnaires 4 were incomplete and were omitted. Consequently 196 questionnaires were used for the study, representing a response rate of 85%. The respondents were asked not to mention their name anywhere on the questionnaire to ensure confidentiality. In order to get honest and true information from the respondents, the questionnaires were kept anonymous.

Sample characteristics

The sample constitutes 62.8% males and 37.2% females. The respondent's ratio of males is high as compare to females because working women are less in number due to cultural norms of the country.

In terms of qualification, 29.6% of the respondents possessed a degree of Graduation (B.A/B.Sc/B.S) and 70.4% of the respondents had Master's Degree. The age group of the respondent of current study is 54.1% were between the age of 20 and 30 years and 45.9% were between the age of 31 and 40.

Results

Correlation table

The results as indicated by correlation table shows the correlation among the different variables under study. The table also shows the results with reference to the demographic variables such as emotional ambivalence has weak and insignificant correlation with demographic variables such as gender ($r=-0.006$), education ($r= 0.091$), Age ($r=-0.029$) and Experience ($r=-0.078$) (Table 1).

	Predictors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Gender	1							
2	Education	0.407**	1						
3	Age	0.031	0.216**	1					
4	Experience	-0.043	0.136	0.627**	1				
5	Emotional Ambivalence	-0.006	0.091	-0.029	-0.078	1			
6	Employee Creativity	0.230**	0.065	-0.118	-0.116	.777**	1		
7	Emotional Competence	0.503**	0.099	-0.213**	-0.111	0.044	0.552**	1	
8	EA_EC	0.389**	0.128	-0.172*	-0.127	0.625**	0.885**	0.787**	1

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

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1: Relationship of moderator with dependent variable.

The study has one independent variable that is emotional ambivalence is significantly correlated with the dependent variable (employee creativity) of the study where r is equal to 0.777 with p value

of 0.01. The Table 2 also shows the significant relationship of moderator with dependent variable i.e. 0.552 at p value 0.01.

Regression analysis

H1: Emotional Ambivalence has a significant relationship with employee creativity.

Results of the regression analysis shows that emotional ambivalence has strong and negative relationship with employee creativity having Beta value as 0.773 with significant level of P 0.000 (Table 3). According to the results, which are supporting the hypothesis that emotional ambivalence is significantly related to employee creativity? Thus the hypothesis is accepted.

Predictors	Employee Creativity		
	β	R ²	ΔR^2
Step I:			
Control Variables		0.014	
Step II:			
Emotional Ambivalence	.773***	0.607	0.594***
Emotional Competence	.546***	0.308	0.294***
***p ≤ 0.001, **p ≤ 0.01, *p ≤ 0.05			

Table 2: Hierarchical regression analysis for determinants of emotional ambivalence.

Predictors	Employee Creativity		
	β	R ²	ΔR^2
Main Effect: Emotional Ambivalence			
Step I:			
Control Variables		0.014	
Step II:			
Emotional Ambivalence	.258***	0.873	0.859***
Emotional Competence			
Step III:			
EA x EC	0.182	0.874	0.001
***p ≤ 0.001, **p ≤ 0.01, *p ≤ 0.05			

Table 3: Moderated regression analysis.

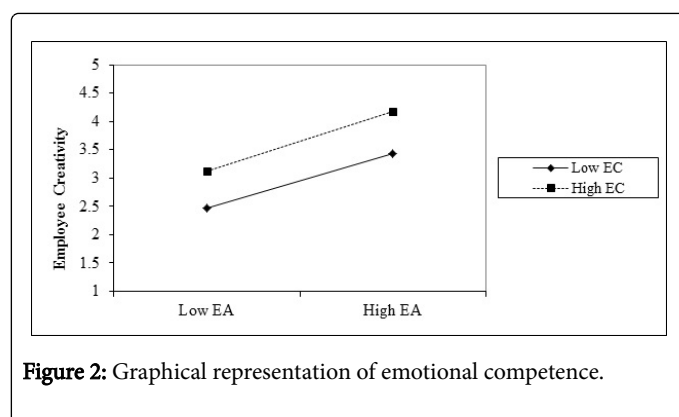


Figure 2: Graphical representation of emotional competence.

H2: Emotional Competence is moderating the relationship of Emotional Ambivalence and employee creativity.

The table of moderation analysis and graph is showing that the moderated relationship of emotional competence between emotional ambivalence and employee creativity is not working. According to that the proposed hypothesis for moderation is rejected (Figure 2).

Discussion and Conclusion

The objective of study was to examine the relationship between emotional ambivalence and its impact on employee creativity with moderating role of emotional competence. Results of the regressions analysis shows that emotional ambivalence has the strong relationship with employee creativity having the Beta Value as 0.773 with the significant level of P 0.000. According to result, that is supporting the hypothesis that emotional ambivalence is significantly related to employee creativity. The Hypothesis is accepted. In hospitality sector organization where come up with new idea is essential for employees. There is a need to study the impact of emotional ambivalence on employee creativity performance. Results are supporting the concept that the employees who are having ambivalent emotions are generally found as creative employees. The result of current study is supported by another study in which researcher state that “people who feel mixed emotions interpret the experience as a signal that they are in an unusual environment and thus respond to it by drawing upon their creative thinking abilities, this increased sensitivity for recognizing unusual associations, which happy or sad workers probably couldn’t detect, is what leads to creativity in the workplace” [13]. In the context of Pakistan where very few organizations of hospitality sector are under the control of government where job security is high. Moreover hospitality sector organizations are working in uncertain environment so the employees of such organizations are having jobs with fear of losing their jobs, this create ambivalent feelings which leads them to creativity. Because if the employee exhibit creativity they feel that their career is more secure than others. The emotional competence as moderator is rejected in the current study the reason is very much related to above stated argument because when employees are emotionally competent they cannot victimize through ambivalent emotions. So they do not exhibit creativity.

Implications

As this study targets the hospitality sector but has several practical implications for the other sectors as well. It can used in service sector, telecommunication sector and banking sector of Pakistan. This study helps the top level management and managers to build a strategy in which employee cannot assess the actual environment of organization rather he perceive it as unusual working environment. Organization can use the study in the training session to aware their top management which can take more creative work their employees.

Limitations

One of the limitations of the literature review was that there was too little literature available on emotional ambivalence. Data were collected from the hospitality sector organization which is situated in Rawalpindi and Islamabad so the results cannot be generalized to entire companies (Or Pakistan population). Moreover the data were collected through self-administrated questionnaire, the in-depth interviews and observations can change the results. The people are not

well aware about emotional ambivalence so the results can change if cross sectional study design will use.

Future Research

The present study has designed to investigate relationship between emotional ambivalence and employee creativity with moderating role of emotional competence. This study was cross sectional study, the researcher in future can study this relationship of independent and dependent variables with some other design of study i.e. by using longitudinal study design. Moreover identify the peoples who are having mixed emotions through observations and conduct the study on that people which may give different results.

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