

Psychological Distance: Implicit phenomena between Connect and Disconnect

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Abstract- The implicit and explicit changes in the world have created a new work behavior of the employees and the employers which sees an overall new definition of work values. This work is a process of understanding the attitudinal phenomenon with which an employee moves between the two points of Connect and Disconnect. The two strategic point that the employee builds as a psychological reference point and the transverse between the two to determine his engagement with the organization. This is the Psychological distance. This defines the way an employee connects and disconnects with work, interpersonal relations and with the organization.. As the construal level increases in abstraction we see that the distance increase leading to the distance of the employee with the work, people and organization. A reading into this will help one to retain the employee and creating a congenial environment The conceptual work is depicted through a three phenomenon model of:

- 1: The Dimensions of Connect
- 2: The Psychological Distance
- 3: The Psychological Distance Process

I. INTRODUCTION

Distancing is a concept arising from the work of developmental psychologists Heinz Werner and Bernard Kaplan (1969) Distancing describes the process by which individual separate from everything around him/her. Their work is seen in terms of development, personality and behavior.

Psychological distance is may be or may not be egocentric: Its reference point is the self in the work and due to many reason the self is distancing himself/ herself from that point. Transcending the self from the work is a mental construal, and the farther moving out from the work and work consciousness, the higher (more abstract) the level of distance it would have. As psychological distance increases, construal's would become more abstract, and as level of abstraction increases, so too would the psychological distances people envisage. Construal levels thus expand and contract one's mental horizon. The different distances should also similarly influence prediction, evaluation, and action, in as much as these outcomes are mediated by construal. (Liberman&Trope, 1998; Trope & Liberman, 2013). Going beyond this earlier theory, this work treat temporal construal theory as a special case of a general theory of psychological distance.

Researchers indicate that the distances are cognitively related to each other, have similar influence and are influenced by level of mental construal, and that it would have prediction, preference, and actions after the distance has started.

II. THE WORK: THE FUNDAMENTALS

Based on affective events theory, the work is developed on fundamental model integrating cognitive, affective and behavioral component to construct Psychological distance while considering three work processes i.e work consciousness, interpersonal and interdependent work relations and organization in total where this all are operating.

The process of attitude formation is based on several components but the common thread appears these three where person's past experience and expectations of the results in building the conditions on which an employee is making the evaluations and judgments regarding the work. Any workplace runs very largely on the cognitive abilities of the workforce. All employees of a firm think about the job that they are doing, perceive what their boss is telling them to do, remember their training that they received before doing their job, and learn from mistakes that they have made while working. These credentials are built when employees feel they are an asset to their work place and starts developing consciousness towards work.

III. THE DIMENSIONS THAT CONNECT

Workplace attitude is the sum total of workplace attitudes of employees that reveal themselves in everyday judgments or decisions. Attitudes are revealed through statements or opinions about the challenges, comfort, self-perception, and financial considerations surrounding the three work processes:

- The Work Consciousness Process
- Interpersonal Relations Process
- Holistic Organization Process

Employee wanting to work is attributed to economic factors and employer action. There are variety of reasons, which include psychological rewards, demands of their supervisors, the desire to get ahead, and the social and occupational norms that built their expectations and obligation. This lays the foundation to work consciousness; which makes employees to get engaged to

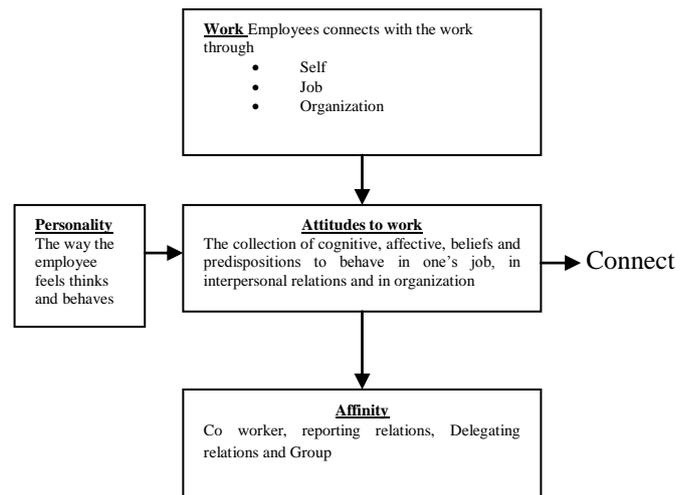
the work and the organization. *Brett and Stroh (2011)* investigated several factors that establishes that employees connect with their work for pays, psychological reward etc. Each employee looks forward to a meaningful opportunity to use their skills, develop new relationships, and fulfill the requirement of interpersonal and interdependent relationship. Employee connects or disconnect when they find what they expect from their work and the organization and what they find in reality.

Self Mastery, Job Mastery and organizational mastery develops work consciousness as there is a cognitive development and experience regarding work environment. Interpersonal and interdependence in work relations and organization connect leads to job satisfaction and commitment, which in many ways are attributed to attitudinal preposition. Cognitive development in the work, interpersonal relations and with the organization grows till the employee finds meaning to the connections. Various works of *Piaget (1977, 1987)* on cognitive development can be well fit in this study too. The four stages of schemas, assimilation, accommodation and experimenting is also well connected with work place cognitive development. At the first stage schemas employee gather the knowledge and start interpreting their work world with reference to work place relations, with work itself and with the organization where the work has rooted. As they gain experiences, new information's are used to modify add or change, this process of assimilation which is somewhat subjective, employees tend to modify experiences and information somewhat to fit in with his or her pre-existing beliefs regarding work place. This later goes to stage of accommodation as it involves changing and altering the new information and setting oneself to this new experience.

According to *Harvey & Erdos (2011)* the regularities of an employee's feelings, thoughts and predisposition to act towards organizations need are what connect the individual. This make them concern of almost anything that is there in the organization environment. It's the truth as they see it; employees believe to be true about his or her job, with the people they work with and the organization they work in. This makes them feel about they are in an environment where things are as per their beliefs. This collection of beliefs and feelings helps them to dispose a behavior which suggests that they connect with the organization. Research by *Ajzen (1991)* on planned behavior also indicates that expected outcomes of behavior and values of these outcomes form subjective norms that lead to a planned behavior. Employees thus understand what is the planned behavior that could benefit them to gain the advantages they foresee for themselves. However, the challenge in the workplace is that behaviors are tied to work functions, policy, procedures and organizational structure, as well as the people and individuals present in the organization which are very dynamic in nature.

For example, we could have thoughts or beliefs (cognitive) about managers in general, and those thoughts or beliefs could manifest themselves in not trusting a

manager (affective), and thus we would never want to develop a close relationship with a manager (behavioral).



IV. MODEL 1: THE DIMENSIONS OF CONNECT

This model suggests the employee connect because of his or her attitude regarding work, affinity and organization in total. The way the employee feels, thinks and behaves forms a basic conditions that effect work, interpersonal relations and organization in total. Better the collection of feeling, beliefs and predisposition towards job, relation and organization better would be connect. Spirit at work, at the personal level, reflects a distinct state that involves profound feelings of wellbeing, a belief that one's work makes a contribution, a sense of connection to others and common purpose, an awareness of a connection to something larger than self, and a sense of perfection and transcendence (Kinjerski and Skrypnek, 2004). Various researches indicate employees' desire for meaningfulness and fulfillment at work (Mitroff and Denton, 1999; Cacioppe, 2000a, b). The more employees experience personal purpose and meaning at work and affinity the more they are connect to the organization (Milliman et al., 2003). Connect put simply is the extent to which people feel connected with and committed to their work, people and organization. Being connected is most clearly reflected in the emotional ownership people feel; in other words how much they really care about achieving their own objectives as well as the success of the team.

V. DISCONNECT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTANCE

What makes an employee disconnect themselves from their work, from people and the organization inspite of the fact they were connected once? Studies from Cooper indicated lack of support for engagement at work, lack of fairness, lack of trust, lack of challenging and meaningful work. Research from Peter Warr (2007) describes that too much of a good thing is also bad. Too much of an

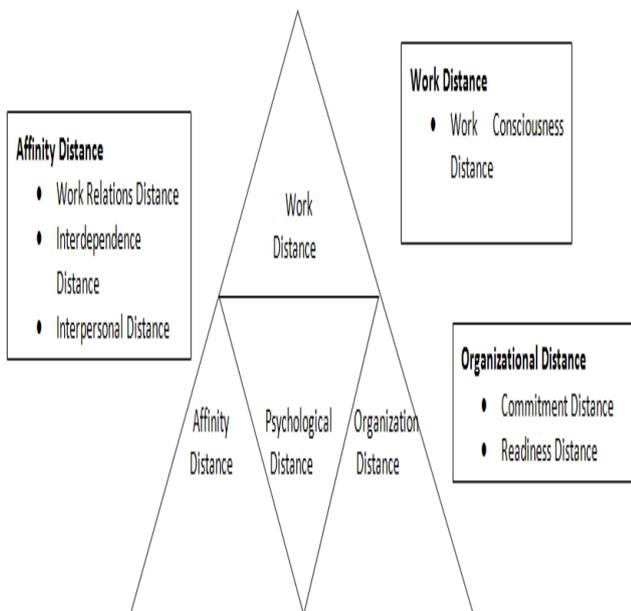
opportunity for control, to use one's skill and varieties of work have a deleterious effect.

When there is a failure on the part of the company to meet employee's expectations for challenging work and a culture of trust it anticipates in frustrations, dissatisfaction and psychological withdrawal. Emotions are the strongest factors in decision making because they have the capacity to arouse feelings to a point of awareness to take actions. Once an employee's form belief, make judgments based on those feeling that went wrong in their expectations regarding work, regarding interpersonal relations and regarding organization will lead them to the process of distancing.

The distance at work may be due to lack of interest, may be because of a gap an employee perceive between promise and reality, expectation not met.

that people can use varying degrees of their selves, physically, cognitively, and emotionally, in work role performances, which has implications for both their work and experiences disengage, or withdraw and defend their personal selves.

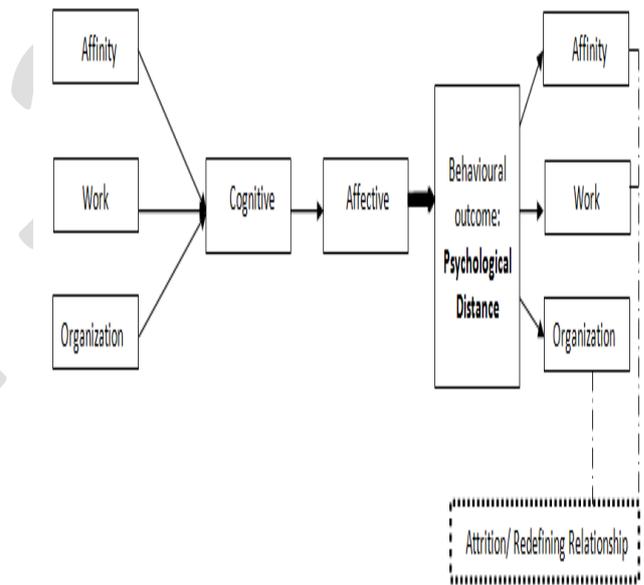
While some people will stay in a role they're not happy in, most will eventually choose to look for a new and better opportunity elsewhere. Most people move on because they are looking for something they don't have or can't get where they are. Whether it be to find a more interesting or challenging job, more money, greater work-life balance, or a healthier workplace culture the reasons people choose to disconnect are many and varied. This disconnect leads to psychological distance in work i.e creating a distance in work consciousness, affinity distance by have work relations distance, interdependence and interpersonal distance and finally distance with the organization which can be seen through attitudinal and behavioral job outcomes that include commitment distance and distance in readiness to work for organization.



VI. MODEL 2: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTANCE

The estimation of distance is subjective. What determines levels of construal is not physical distance as measured physical sciences but, rather, the subjective distances as large or small. The same objective distance may look differently due to psychological factors, some of which are "cognitive" (division into more stages may enhance perceived distances and some are motivational service of enhancements, one's pre-conceived behavior. Affect (violation and mistrust), attitude (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions), and individual effectiveness (actual turnover, organizational citizenship behavior, and in-role performance).

In all employees start believing in the psychological distance due to their attitude formation. It is not necessary that psychological distance occur in sequence of work, affinity and later to organization. Since it is attitudinal



belief of employees that's the reason the disconnect can spark in any of these process, but psychological distance has a chain effect it means if any of the work processes get effected it will affect the rest two too.

VII. MODEL 3: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTANCE PROCESS

The model 3 suggests the process of psychological distance. Initial research indicates that the outcome of psychological distance can either be attrition or the employee starts redefining the work process. The reason for redefining can be due to many practical reasons of unavailability of better jobs, getting used to the phenomena of connect and disconnect, trying once again at the process or getting counseled by the senior to do better.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The complexity of today's organization has made the task and jobs further intricate. The situations are more grievous as the employee expectations have soared and there has to be continuous effort to align them with that of the organization failing in this binding result into the psychological distances.

A noteworthy point to be referred here is that these are all the attitudinal consequences and yes there can be differences of opinion. It is one's perspective towards person or situation

The problem, though, is if employees let attitudes like this direct their personality at work, it can indeed stunt their ability to grow in an organization. Certainly having a good relationship based on a right kind of cognition, affective will lead to better behavioral outcome of:

1. *Sense of personal value.* Feeling valued, qualified, capable and successful are powerful energizers and drivers of connect
2. *Return on Relationships (ROR).* Trust and respecting the people at work would lead to better affinity at work place that would lead to better cohesiveness
3. *Purpose and meaning.* Employee contribution to their organization makes all the difference. Doing a job that has an altruistic purpose energizes many people, while for others purpose and meaning derive from the harmony between their values and those of the organization they work for.
4. *Belief.* Being hopeful, optimistic, confident and empowered will always minimize the psychological distance.

The research revealed that individuals' experiences of spirit at work are associated with:

1. Work consciousness
2. Interpersonal and Interdependence relations at work
3. And employees connectivity with the organization.
4. This connects as well as becomes reasons for disconnect.

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