

AFFECTBEHAVIOUR AS A DETERMINANT OF MOTIVATION OF MACHINE OPERATORS IN THE APPAREL SECTOR: THE MODERATING EFFECT OF EMPLOYEE CREATIVITY

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ABSTRACT

Being the largest total national export earning industry in the country, the Sri Lankan apparel industry provides more than 990,000 employment opportunities, allocating a large fraction of it to the women labour force. Through it is competitive at present, the industry has been facing a gradually intensifying competition due to the presence of efficient manufacturers in other countries. The competition is further intensified since international buyers expect a long-term partnership with fewer efficient suppliers. Being a labour-intensive industry, the labour efficiency of the sewing machine operators has become salient in order to remain competitive. This demands the industry to maintain the employee motivation that will result in an efficient and productive workforce while helping the industry address other pivotal issues including employee turnover and absenteeism. The motivation can positively be influenced by the affect behaviour in a learning setting. Thus, the main objective of this study is to investigate the influence of the affect behaviour developed through the training of the newly hired sewing machine operators on the motivation. Also, the study examines whether the operators' creativity moderates the said effect. The analysis of data, collected from 116 operators through a questionnaire, by the

regression analysis, reveals that the affect behaviour positively influences employee motivation. Further, the PROCESS tool used to examine the moderating effect of employee creativity does not indicate such an effect. Consequently, the apparel industry can use training programs in order to develop the affect behaviour of the newly hired sewing machine operators as a strategy to motivate them. Further, the operators' creativity is not an influential factor. This study identifies the affect behaviour as a determinant of the motivation of the machine operators in the apparel sector. The study also presents a scale to measure the affect behaviour. Moreover, the study provides several implications and further research opportunities.

Keywords: Affect behaviour; Apparel industry; Creativity; Employee motivation; Scale to measure affect behaviour

1. Introduction

Accounting for 44 percent of the total national export in 2018 and generating over 990,000 employments (Board of Investment, 2020), the apparel industry has become a major contributor to the Sri Lankan economy (Embaldeniya, 2015; Samarasinghe, Ariadurai, & Perera, 2015). Though Sri Lanka occupies a key position in the global apparel trade (Khattak, Stringer, Benson-Rea, & Haworth, 2015), it has frequently been challenged since other countries such as Bangladesh, Vietnam, and China have gradually been gaining the market share (Samarasinghe et al., 2015) mainly due to higher labour cost (Mataraarachchi & Heenkenda, 2012). As a result, the industry's contribution to the economy and the employment is gradually declining (Embaldeniya, 2015), demanding suitable strategies to increase the labour efficiency and productivity for the industry's sustainability. Owing to the fact that the motivation positively influences labour efficiency and productivity (Jayarathna, 2014; Locke, 1997; Saeed & Asghar, 2012), the industry should solicit the contribution from the motivated employees who determine the higher labour productivity. It helps in improving the organizational productivity in the labour-intensive apparel industry. Though the apparel industry has initiated various techniques such as lean manufacturing and total productive maintenance (TPM) to face this challenge, those strategies would be material with the motivated employees. Thus, the present and future developments of this labour-intensive industry largely depend on the motivated and skilled workforce, making a higher emphasis on the education and training.

Training the work-related capabilities in an organizational context is essential because of the various benefits such as employee motivation for higher performance (Khan, 2012). The training develops positive affect behaviour within trainees (Paulsen & Kauffeld, 2017). On the other hand, the level of employees' affect behaviour influences the work-related behaviours such as motivation (Forgas & George, 2001). Motivation acts as a key factor that influences labour efficiency thereby, organizational efficiency (Poláčková, 2016). The affect behaviour developed within the new employees ultimately determines the internal motivation (Mottet & Beebe, 2006; Wrench, McCroskey, Berletch, Powley, & Wehr, 2008). Since the apparel industry provides training for the new employees, the affect behaviour can be developed within the trainees during this initial training period. This may finally lead not only to the enhancement of the trainees' motivation thereby the efficiency and productivity but also to the achievement of other training and organizational objectives. However, the present studies do not identify developing affect behaviour during the initial compulsory training programs as a strategy of influencing the motivation of the machine operators. Hence, this study attempts to fill in this gap. Also, the effect of the trainees' characteristics may affect the influence of the affect behaviour on motivation. Among other characteristics, the employee creativity is important since it has rooted in a person. Out of the three components of individual creativity, identified by the componential theory of individual creativity (Amabile, 1997), the new employees may possess task motivation and creativity skills though they lack expertise due to less experience. Therefore, understanding whether the creativity of the new employees spurs the influence of affect behaviour over employees' motivation, is important in order to determine the hiring policy that helps the apparel industry in selecting the appropriate employees carefully. However, no studies have been piloted to investigate the effect of creativity, and thus, the present study is designed to make an attempt to fill in this gap.

On this ground, the main objective of the study is to investigate the impact of the affect behaviour developed during the training programs on the employees' motivation in the Sri Lankan apparel industry. Further, this study attempts to explain whether the creativity of the employees moderates the effect of affect behaviour over the employees' motivation.

The use of traditional and non-traditional methods to enhance the labour efficiency and productivity becomes mandatory due to the intense competition in the apparel

industry while addressing other issues such as the employee turnover and absenteeism. In this thread, the results of the study will contribute to redesign the training programs focusing on the development of the affect behaviour within the trainees thereby, positively influence the motivation. Similarly, the apparel industry can design the hiring policy, considering the creativity of the applicants. The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 of the paper discusses the literature relevant to the present study, while section 3 is devoted to describe the methodology. Section 4 presents the analysis of data followed by the discussion and conclusion section in section 5.

2. Literature Review

The export structure in the Sri Lankan economy drastically changed from the agricultural base to the industrial base, following the economic liberalization in 1977 (Deerasinghe, 2002). Since then, the Sri Lankan apparel industry began to grow (Welmilla, 2020), contributing to the national economy. The industry is recognized for providing high-quality ethical fashion apparel for iconic global fashion brands such as Victoria's Secret, Pierre Cardin, GAP, Nike, Land's End, Marks & Spencer, Liz Claiborne. During the last four decades, the industry has marked an epic growth, transforming from sewing solution provider (as a contracted manufacturer) dependent on textile quota received from the developed countries to the total apparel solution provider. Despite the fact that it has become an important sector in the Sri Lankan economy, today, the industry is facing different challenges and also gradually increasing competition in the global apparel market. Concentration on a few export markets, insufficient product diversification, lack of solid raw material base, and lack of skilled labour including managerial positions are the major challenges of the apparel industry (Deerasinghe, 2002). Curwen, Park, and Sarkar (2013) also have identified the quality of labour and high labour costs as challenges to the apparel industry. Though the present dynamic environment requires firms to be innovative in different aspects, the apparel industry lacks innovation (Samarasinghe et.al, 2015). More importantly, lack of properly trained labour, high labour turnover, absenteeism, difficulties in obtaining seasonal labour, and outsourcing labour are the main reasons for the low labour productivity (Deerasinghe, 2002). Being a labour-intensive industry, the apparel industry has continuously been attempting to boost labour efficiency thereby gain higher productivity by adopting different tools and techniques. While adopting popular methods, the novel alternatives to enhance labour efficiency are in need of the industry.

The apparel companies are searching for the alternatives to face the challenges of the industry, particularly the challenges related to labour. Some tools and techniques including new product integration, supplier integration, quick changeover, total productive maintenance, Gemba work, Yamazumi, LEAN, TPM, Dancing Floor, Pok-yoke, etc. are in place right now. Also, the proper time management, maintaining accurate work measurements, proper tools to collect information pertaining to manufacturing, close monitoring with efficient methods to detect errors and inefficiencies associated with manufacturing, quick responses to correct errors and avoid inefficiencies and use the most appropriate method to correct them are focal factors in term of efficiency improvement in the industry (Samarasinghe et al., 2015). The implementation of those improvements and solving the labour efficiency-related issues are facilitated by the training.

Being a labour-intensive industry, the competitiveness is largely determined by the efficient labour (Morapitiya, 2018) through the organizational efficiency and productivity. It is evident that the apparel industry has been using different techniques to improve the labour efficiency. The effective implementation of any such techniques is determined by the motivated labour. Supporting the claim, the literature establishes a positive effect from the motivation over efficiency and productivity (Harini, Maulana, & Sudarijati, 2020; Manzoor, 2012, Polácková, 2016). Accordingly, the motivational level of the employees has become an essential element that determines the performance of a firm.

There is a plethora of motivation literature that discusses the various aspects of the labour motivation. Scholars have identified a number of factors that determine the motivation of the employees through the theories under content and process perspectives. Also, the literature identifies training as an important motive (Güllü, 2016). Importantly, Naong (2014) concludes that the training determines the motivation of the lower-level employees. Properly designed training and development programs positively influence employee motivation (Elnaga & Imran, 2013; Naeem, Iram, & Zahra, 2014). On the other hand, two important folds of motivation include the extrinsic motivation and the intrinsic motivation which affect the individual performance (Saeed & Asghar, 2012). Extrinsic motivation is characterized by external reward-driven behaviour. Intrinsic motivation applies when an individual is motivated by the internal rewards such as personal satisfaction. It is widely accepted that the intrinsic motivation is more powerful than the extrinsic motivation (Amabile,

1997). The scholars propose that the satisfaction of the psychological needs such as the need for competence through training programs positively influence the intrinsic motivation (Buil, Catalán, & Martínez, 2019).

While influencing the motivation, the training helps the organizations in improving employees' performance through enhancing skills, knowledge, and competence (Falola, Osibanjo, & Ojo, 2014). Finally, it improves organizational performances and productivity (Gupta & Bostrom, 2006). In addition, it engenders various other benefits such as higher employees' efficiencies, innovation, invention, capacity to accept new technologies and techniques, lower employee turnover and absenteeism, etc. Training is used as an effective tool for improving job-related knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Armstrong & Taylor, 2017) thereby it changes the behaviours of the employees.

The enhanced job-related knowledge, skills, and attitudes positively influence the feeling of competency of the trainees because of the positive valence which is the positive evaluation of the training experience. The positive valence refers to the affective quality that occurs due to the intrinsic attractiveness of the trainees towards the training program (Frijda, 1986). In other words, the positive experience gained through the training due to the attainment of an individual's goals for higher competence causes a positive affect behaviour. Also, this positive affect behaviour influences the motivation intensity resulting in the higher motivation of the trainees.

The four-stage training evaluation model of Kirkpatrick also supports the argument (Galloway, 2005). Kirkpatrick model is widely accepted as a model, applicable in the manufacturing sector (Tennant, Boonkong, & Roberts, 2002). The first stage, the reaction of the model refers to the satisfaction of the trainees with the training inputs. It evaluates the participant's reactions, opinions, impressions, and attitudes towards the training program (Altarawneh, 2009). Moreover, the assessment of these affective responses in terms of the relevance of the training is a commonly used criterion in training evaluation (Passmore & Velez, 2012). The reaction in the Kirkpatrick model, which refers to the affect behaviour, explains the degree of an individual's likeness, appreciation, respect, or value of the training (Beebe, Mottet, & Roach, 2013). Accordingly, the affect behaviour of the trainees indicates the extent to which they like the training, find the training useful, and finally their perception of training (Kraiger, Ford, & Salas, 1993). Thus, designing training programs with positive affect behaviour has become essential in organizations (Naeem et al., 2014). Anderman and

Wolters (2006) also argue that the affect behaviour influences the motivation in a learning setting.

Accordingly, based on the fact that the positive affect behaviour developed through the satisfaction of the psychological need of the trainees for the higher competence positively influences the intrinsic motivation, we postulate the following hypothesis.

H₁: The affect behaviour has a positive effect on the employee motivation.

Creativity generates ideas about the practices, procedures, products, and services that are applicable in the organizational setting (Coelho, Augustor, & Lages, 2011), and it is defined according to the personal characteristics of the employees. According to Amabile (1997), creativity refers to the constellation of the personality and intellectual traits shown by the individuals. The componential theory of individual creativity identifies three components of creativity: expertise, creativity skills, and task motivation (Amabile, 1997). The experience gained through memory for factual knowledge, technical proficiency, and special talents in the target work domain determines the expertise. Less experienced, new employees may not possess a higher level of expertise. The personal characters such as independence, tolerance for ambiguity, self-discipline, etc. that the new employees may be having determine the creativity skills. Also, the task motivation, determined by the internal rewards may be higher within the new employees due to the achievement of the fresh job and the opportunity for developing competency through training. Task motivation is salient since it determines what employees are 'capable of doing' while both expertise and creativity skills determine what employees will 'actually do' (Amabile, 1997). Also, the intrinsically motivated employees will make efforts to acquire the required skills (Amabile, 1997). Accordingly, those whose creativity is high may have a higher tendency to actively take part in the training programs with the aim of acquiring new skills thereby develop higher affect behaviour.

On the other hand, the new employees develop positive emotions due to new jobs and the opportunity to enhance competency, and those emotions positively influence creativity (Kung & Chao, 2019). Also, creativity provokes the emotions of trainees (Amabile, Barsade, Mueller, & Staw, 2015), and it has a positive influence on the employees' affect behaviour (Tavares, 2016). Thus, the highly creative trainees may develop higher positive affect behaviour after the training, resulting in higher positive influence from the affect behaviour on the motivation. Accordingly, we postulated the following hypothesis.

H₂. Employee creativity positively moderates the relationship between the affect behaviour and the employee motivation.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and data collection

The purpose of this research study is to determine whether the affect behaviour developed through the training programs of the newly hired machine operators in the apparel industry determines their motivation. Further, this study attempts to investigate whether the level of employees' creativity moderates the said effect. The present study selected the apparel industry and four firms based on convenience as its empirical setting. The first 20 newly hired sewing machine operators in each firm were selected as the respondents over the period of two months, resulting in a sample of 160 operators. The data were collected after one month from the date of completion of the training program, through a questionnaire based on the cross-sectional survey method. 127 machine operators responded (yielding 79 percent response rate), and 11 responses were discarded due to incompleteness of their questionnaires. Finally, 116 useable responses were retained for the analysis (yielding 72.5 percent net response rate).

3.2 Variables and measures

The motivation was measured by adopting the six-item scale of Kuvaas (2006). Dysvik and Kuvaas (2008) used the same scale to measure the motivation of trainees. The sample items included the followings: "The tasks that I do at work are enjoyable", "I feel lucky being paid for a job I like this much", and "The job is like a hobby to me". Since there was no appropriate scale to measure the affect behaviour developed through the training programs conducted for the newly hired sewing machine operators in the apparel sector, we developed a scale. Five-item scale was developed and used. The principal component analysis was employed to validate and check the appropriateness of scales of the affect behaviour. The creativity was measured by adapting 13-item scales of Tang and Chang (2010). Jyoti and Dev (2015) used this scale to measure creativity in a setting of the learning organization. Sample items included the followings: "I can suggest new ways to achieve goals or objectives", "I am not afraid to take the risk", and "I can suggest new ways of performing work tasks". The responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale.

The regression analysis was used to assess the influence of the affect behaviour on motivation. The moderating effect was assessed by the PROCESS tool (Hayes, 2012).

4. Analysis

Both motivation and creativity have higher Cronbach's alpha values (0.84 and 0.64 respectively) than the threshold level of 0.60 (Hair, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006) confirming the reliability of scales in this exploratory study. The tests of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value (0.646) and Bartlett's (115.77, $p < 0.01$) indicate that the factor analysis can be employed to develop a scale on the identified questions on affect behaviour. The two factors suggested by the analysis possess higher cumulative variance explained (69.92%) indicating that a large portion of the variance can be explained by the indicators. All the commonalities are greater than the cut-off point (0.50) (Hair et al., 2006). Hence, all items were retained for the analysis. After applying the Varimax rotation, two factors indicate a clear factor structure. Although the higher factor loadings are desirable, the factor loading greater than 0.50 is generally acceptable for practical significance (Hair et al., 2009). Except for one item bearing 0.55 factor loading, all other items in the two factors are highly loaded having over 0.73 loadings. Thus, the results indicate that the items used to measure the affect behaviour exist and are appropriate. The first factor suggested by the analysis is labelled as 'skill development'. The higher variance explained (44.05%) indicates that this factor accounts for a large portion of the variance. This factor explains the extent to which the participants of the training programs develop the skills required to perform the respective jobs. The second factor was labelled as 'value of the program' which has 25.87% variance explained. This factor explains the extent to which the participants of the training program value the program and its contents. The Cronbach's alpha indexes of both factors are above the threshold of 0.50 (0.69, 0.56 respectively). Thus, the results of the reliability analysis confirmed that both factors possessed an acceptable level of internal consistency. Appendix 1 shows the results of the analysis.

The sample consists of 60.4 percent female respondents and their age range from 19 years to 51 years with a median of 28 years. In addition, 53.2 percent of respondents are married. Table 1 presents the results of the correlations analysis of the focal variables and indicates that all correlations are positive and significant. Accordingly, both affect behaviour and the employee creativity show significant positive associations with employee motivation ($p < .01$), supporting the posited positive effects. Also, employee creativity indicates a significant positive association with the affect behaviour ($p < .01$).

Table 1: Correlation Analysis

	Employee motivation	Affect behaviour	Employee creativity
Employee motivation	1		
Affect behaviour	.257*	1	
Employee creativity	.448*	.254*	1
Mean	3.71	4.48	4.29
Standard Deviation	0.59	0.46	0.59

Notes: N = 116; *p< 0.01

The F-test indicates that the model is statistically reliable and can be used to explain the hypothesized effect (F=8.08, p<0.01). The affect behaviour accounts for 15.8 percent of the variance in the employee motivation (p < .05). The results show that the affect behaviour has a significant positive effect on motivation ($\beta = .26$, p < .01), supporting the postulated effect in hypothesis 1. Thus, hypothesis 1 is accepted. We used the PROCESS tool to assess the effect of the moderating variable. Accordingly, two regression models were constructed with the aim of investigating whether two models are significant and whether the second model has higher R2 than the first model. The results show that both model 1 (F=16.12, p<0.01) and model 2 (F=10.72, p<0.01) are significant. However, model 2 does not account for a significantly higher R2 than model 1 (? R2 = .00). This result indicates that the employee creativity has no potentially significant moderation effect over the postulated effect from the affect behaviour of the employees on employee motivation. Accordingly, hypothesis 2 is not accepted.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of the affect behaviour of the employees on their motivation and whether the employee creativity moderates the relationship. The results of the analysis of data gathered from 116 newly hired machine operators of four apparel sector firms in Sri Lanka reveal that there is a positive influence from the affect behaviour over the motivation of the employees. Accordingly, the training experience of the participants is salient in determining their motivation. The trainees' perception of the contribution of the training programs to develop some essential skills to perform

the jobs, and the value of the program and its contents is influential in determining the motivation. The trainees' likeness to the training, their assessment of the usefulness of the training, and finally positive perception of training determine the affect behaviour. The trainees are looking for advancement in their career and the competence to perform job tasks, thus they have a psychological need for the advancement of competence. The training programs that develop the affect behaviour within employees spur this need thereby motivates the trainees. In line with the findings, Forgas and George (2001) conclude that the level of employees' affect behaviour influences work-related behaviours such as motivation. Discussing the training characters that stimulate motivation, Aziz and Ahmad (2011) concluded that the relevance of training for the job, career, and personal related needs influence the motivation of the trainees. The affect behaviour, which the present article focuses on, is closely related to the factors identified by Aziz and Ahmad (2011), thereby it supports the findings of this study. Further, the number of scholars (Mottet & Beebe, 2006; Wrench et al., 2008) support the findings by concluding that the internal motivation is determined by the affect behaviour developed within the new employees.

Though the study postulated that the trainees who are highly creative have a higher impact on the motivation than those who are less creative, there was no evidence to support the argument. Accordingly, creativity does not show any moderating effect. This may be due to the absence of creativity within the focused segment of employees who were relatively behind in terms of academic performance. Though Khaleefa, Erdos, and Ashria (1997) receive mixed results regarding the creativity of those who receive modern and traditional education, Dai et al. (2011) found a distinct effect of academic achievements on creativity. Fasko (2001) also presents evidence for a similar argument. Accordingly, the creativity of the machine operators may be lower due to their unique characteristics such as the lower educational background.

Due to the intense competition in the global market, the Sri Lankan apparel sector looks for alternative strategies to improve efficiency. Human resource has been recognized as an important determinant of efficiency in the labour-intensive apparel industry. Drawing upon the positive effect of motivation on the employee efficiency, this study investigated viable alternatives to improve motivation. Since the apparel industry provides training to new employees, the study aimed to use the training to positively influence the motivation of new employees. Thus, the present study

investigated whether the affect behaviour developed within new employees during the training programs increased their motivation. Further, the study investigated whether employee creativity could strengthen the said effect. Results of the study indicate that the affect behaviour plays an important role in determining the motivation of the machine operators but, the employee creativity does not play any salient role.

5.1 Theoretical and managerial implication

The present study makes several important theoretical contributions to the present literature. We contribute to the present literature by distinguishing the affect behaviour developed through the training programs as a determinant of the motivation of machine operators in the apparel sector. The training programs that spur certain characteristics such as likeness, the feeling of usefulness, and positive perception determine the motivation of trainees. Further, the study contributes to the existing literature by developing a scale to measure the affect behaviour. We enrich the literature by identifying two dimensions of affect behaviour: skills development and value of the program. This adds a useful scale to the literature for the use of future researchers. Apart from those contributions, this study provides important implications for the human resource practitioners and policymakers. First, the human resource practitioners can use training programs to enhance the affect behaviour of the trainees. The training programs should be designed in such a way that it enhances the trainees' likeness, feeling of usefulness, and developing positive perception, etc. Thus, the practitioners should carefully select the training components ensuring the above outcomes. Secondly, the human resource practitioners should identify the affect behaviour, developed through the training programs, as an important motivator. Thus, the well-designed training programs, conducted at the beginning of the career, can be identified and used as an important strategy for motivating employees. Third, the practitioners can adapt a relaxed policy in hiring the machine operators by excluding creativity as a criterion. This relaxed policy would help the industry to face competition in hiring by focusing on a wider spectrum of the job-seekers, and freely hiring the sewing machine operators in the job market. Finally, the policymakers should identify that the motivation enhanced through the affect behaviour spurred through the training programs helps in enhancing the efficiency and thereby the ability to face intense global pressure on the Sri Lankan apparel industry. Thus, they may design and value such programs while training essential job-skills.

Limitations and Further Research: This study has several limitations that demand further investigations. The study was limited to a sample of 160 swing machine operators in four apparel firms. Though different apparel firms and job categories share some common features, there may be some significant differences among them. This requires further investigation to identify possible differences in the results of the study across different apparel firms and job categories. Also, this study is limited to one aspect of the Kirkpatrick model. However, other aspects of the model are important in evaluating the results of the training programs. Accordingly, this study can be extended to factors such as learning and behaviour in the model. This study found out that the creativity does play a moderating role. This may be due to the unique characteristics of the machine operators such as the lower education level. Therefore, a scientific investigation is needed to understand the role of creativity.

Appendix 1: Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation

Items	Factor loadings	
	Factor 1	Factor 2
The skills developed in this training program are important to me	0.55	—
The trainer helped me to develop the skills I need to do my job	0.88	—
I can use what I learned from this training program in my present job	0.84	—
I consider the content of this training program is valuable		0.73
This training program encourages me to learn new things	—	0.88
Percentage of variance	44.05	25.87
Eigenvalues	2.20	1.30
Coefficient of Cronbach's alpha	0.69	0.56

Factor 1: Skill development

Factor 2: Value of the program

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