POSITIVE ORIENTATION AND TRAINING MOTIVATION

Małgorzata Krysa
Maria Curie Skłodowska University, Poland
malgorzata.krysa89@gmail.com

Mariola Łaguna
Institute of Psychology, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland
laguna@kul.pl

Helena Kistelska
Institute of Psychology, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland
helenakistelska@gmail.com

Abstract:
Despite the fact that over the recent years, a rapidly growing body of research has focused on human capital development, we still know little about factors that arouse employees' motivation to undertake development activities. The study investigates the role of positive orientation in relation to training motivation. Positive orientation is conceptualised as a basic disposition to view life, self and experience from a positive outlook. It is identified as the common latent factor that captures the core of self-esteem, life satisfaction and optimism. Training motivation is understood as a goal realization process and explained using goal theories. There are three stages of the goal realization process: goal evaluation, intention to undertake training and plan formulation. The data was collected in 2013 and finally the data of 155 employees (51,0% were women) was analysed. Correlation and mediation analyses were applied to identify significant antecedents of the stages of training undertaking. Findings suggest that positive orientation is correlated to motivation to training undertaking. Mediation analysis proved that evaluation of expectancy of goal attainment and intention are mediators between positive orientation and further stages of goal realization process.

Keywords: positive orientation, training motivation, learning
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1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

We can observe important transformations in the current Polish labour market. Retiring age moves forward and people work longer, relatively frequently change job and are forced to acquire new competencies. Therefore, training and development activities are welcome as tools for human capital development. Training is one of the most effective method for enhancing the productivity of employees and communicating organizational goals to new personnel (Arthur, Bennett, Edens & Bell 2003). There is a question, what factors influence the motivation of individuals to participate in trainings? The purpose of this paper is to examine relationships between positive orientation and training motivation.

1.2. Training motivation

Colquitt, LePine and Noe (2000) conducted meta-analytic review of the training motivation research. In their analysis, antecedents of training motivation and their relationships with training outcomes were included. Results showed that individual characteristics are in significant relationship with the motivation to learn and learning outcomes, while situational characteristics such as supervisor support, peer support and positive climate were only moderately related to the motivation. It revealed that personal characteristics are essential for training motivation.

In this study, training motivation is analysed as a goal realization process within integrated model of goal realization (Łaguna, 2010). The process of motivation to undertake training includes phases of goal evaluation (the evaluation of the expectancy of goal attainment and of the value of goal), an intention to undertake training and plan formulation. First one has to evaluate the goal positively (the value of training) and his or her chances to achieve the goal (expectations). When the evaluation is positive, the intention and the plan of undertaking the training might be formulated. The goal is the main factor which directs one's behaviour~~,~~; it is defined as represented cognitively, achievable, important future outcomes that one is seeking to reach (Zaleski, 1991, p. 60). Reference to the future, positive evaluation and the influence on behaviour are essential when concerning the goal. Specific, challenging goals lead to higher performance due to not only directing attention, mobilizing oneself to action, and strengthening the perseverance (Locke, et al., 1981). Moreover, in the theory of planned behaviour, goal realization intention is assumed the important motivational factor which influences behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). The intention is defined as the indicator of how person is willing to attempt in order to perform the behaviour. In situations that are perceived as being under volitional control, a general rule can be observed: the stronger the intention to engage in the activity is, the more likely its performance occurs (Ajzen, 1991). The last phase in the process of motivation to undertake training is plan formulation, understood as implementation of the intention. In the Gollwitzer's (1999) theory, implementation of the intention specifies the situation in which the goal is going to be executed. While determining how, when and where the behaviour is going to be performed, person is willing to act when the mental representation of this situation occurs. The plan formulation as implementation of the intention assumes that intentional goal-directed behaviour appears when the critical situation is encountered (Gollwitzer, 1999).

1.3. Positive orientation

Positive orientation is one of the personal characteristics, the element of human capital. It is defined as a basic disposition to view oneself, life, experience and the future from a positive outlook (Caprara, 2009). It is identified as the common latent factor that captures the core of self-esteem, life satisfaction and optimism. Self-esteem is a subjective construct based on self-evaluation and self-acceptation. High level of self-esteem leads to a belief of high self-value and being "good enough" (Rosenberg, 1965). People with a high level of self-esteem cope with risky situations differently from people with low level of self-esteem. The first group apply strategies aimed at achieving the goal, while the second group is concentrated on avoidance (Cavallo, et al., 2012). Life satisfaction in the positive orientation theory is defined as general assessment of one's activities and relationships that makes life valuable (Diener, 1984). Moreover, optimism refers to general positive expectations regarding future events. High level of optimism correlates positively with planning and effort, internal locus of control, high level of self-efficacy and self-esteem (Juczyński, 2001).

Findings show that positive orientation is a good predictor of organisational behaviours: in-role job performance and extra-role performance (Caprara, Alessandri, Vecchione, et al., 2012). Therefore it can also be significantly related to the training motivation.

2. THE STUDY

2.1. Hypotheses

According to these analyses, a model containing positive orientation and training motivation understood as a process of goal realisation is proposed. The study examines correlations between positive orientation and three stages of goal realisation process (goal evaluation, intention and plan). Following hypotheses are proposed:
H1. Positive orientation is positively correlated with the level of training motivation.
H2. There are positive correlations between the three stages of goal realization process: goal evaluation, intention and plan.
H3. The stages of goal evaluation and intention are mediators between positive orientation and further stages of goal realization process (see Figure 1).

2.2. Subjects and Procedure

In the study, four measures are used: Polish version of The Positivity Scale (α =.76) (Łaguna, Oleś & Filipiuk, 2011); two subscales from Zaleski's (1991) Goal Questionnaire GQ (with modified instruction to be adequate for measuring training motivation): Goal Value (α =.79) and Expectancy (α =.67); the scales measuring the intention (α =.92) and the plan of undertaking the training (α =.84) (Kawecka, Łaguna & Tabor 2010).

155 employees (51,0% were women) of medium size companies employing 10 to 50 people took part in the study. The mean age of the subjects was 35,99 years (*SD* = 10,17). Circa the half of the participants had master degree (74 subjects, 47,7%), less gained secondary education (58 subjects, 37,4%), only 12,9% had primary education. Majority of participants were employed (98 participants, 63,2%), 37 participants of the study were temporarily employed (23,9%), and 19 participants had other contract (17,6%). General work experience in the sample varies from one to 45 years (*M* = 13,63; *SD* = 10,65).

2.3. Results

For all the hypotheses testing correlations analysis among variables and mediation analysis are conducted. Figure 1 shows the model of relationship between study variables with results of correlations analysis. Supporting hypothesis (H1), positive orientation is significantly correlated with almost all stages of goal realization process, excluding the evaluation of the value of this goal. What is more, there are significant correlations between all the three stages of goal realization process, which confirms hypothesis H2.

Finally, the analysis to test the mediation is conducted. The three following regression equations are estimated: regressing the mediator on the independent variable (path a), regressing the mediator on the independent variable (path b) and regressing the dependent variable on both (path c). Then, the analysis is complemented with Sobel test by using electronic calculator (Preacher, Leonardelli, 2013).
Results shows that the evaluation of the expectancy of goal attainment is proved to be a significant mediator between positive orientation and intention to undertake training. In the first step, the correlation between positive orientation and intention is confirmed (*beta* = .23; *p* = .006). Then, the relation between mediator (evaluation of expectancy) and independent variable (positive orientation) is also significant (*beta* = .25; *p* = .002). Finally, when both variables, evaluation of expectancy and positive orientation are included into the equation, the effect of positive orientation is reduced (*beta* = .15; *p* = .073), while the mediator is significantly correlated with the dependent variable (*beta* = .35; *p* = .001). Significant result of Sobel test (*Z* = 2,60; *p* = .009) proves mediating role of the evaluation of expectancy of goal attainment between positive orientation and intention to undertake the training.
Next, the intention significantly mediates between the positive orientation and the plan, and between both dimensions of goal evaluation (value and expectancy of attainment) and plan of undertaking the training. In the first model with intention as mediator, regression analysis reveals positive relation

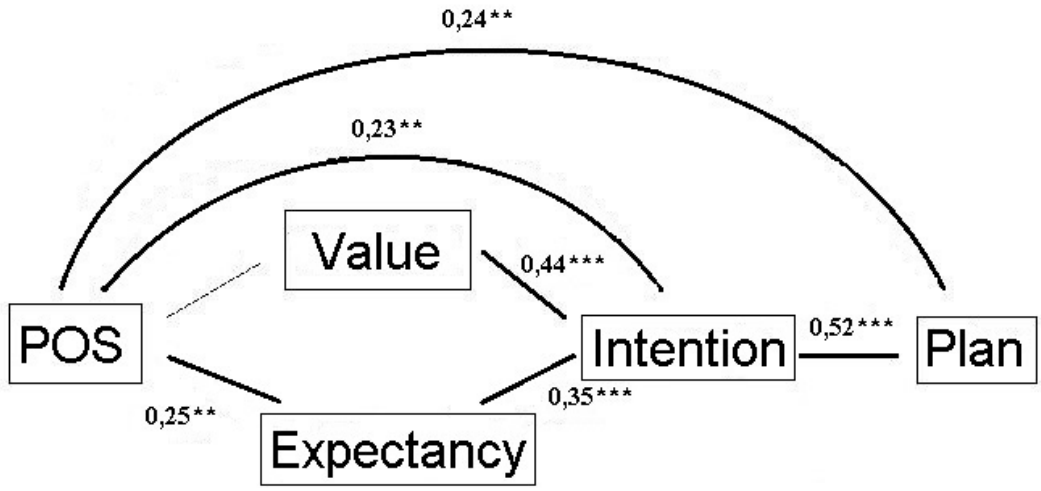
between positive orientation and plan of training undertaking (*beta* = .23; *p* = .006). Path b (positive orientation and plan) is also significant (*beta* = .23; *p* = .003). Moreover, intention and plan (path c) are strongly associated (*beta* = .52; *p* = .001). Regression analysis including the mediator in the model shows decreasing and insignificant role of positive orientation (*beta* = .13; *p* =.07). The mediation of intention is confirmed by Sobel test: *Z* = 6.64; *p* = .008.

Second model with the mediating role of intention between the evaluation of the value of the goal and the plan of training undertaking is also confirmed. In the first step, significant correlation between the goal evaluation and the plan of training undertaking is revealed (*beta* = .31; *p* = .001). The result of regression analysis of path b – the value of the goal and intention is significant (*beta* = .44; *p* < .001). Finally, when mediator (intention) and independent variable (the value of the goal) are included, the effect of independent variable is reduced (*beta* = .10; *p* = .20), while mediator is strongly correlated with dependence variable (plan), *beta* = .52; *p* = .001. Sobel test confirms mediation*:* *Z* = 4.68; *p* < .001.

The intention significantly mediates between the expectancy of attainment of the goal and the plan of undertaking the training. Correlation in path a: expectancy and intention, is significant (*beta* = .24; *p* = .003), the same in path b: intention and plan (*beta* = .35, *p* < .001). Third path c: intention and plan was examined showing strong correlation effect (*beta* = .52; *p* < .001). The regression equation including mediator shows that the effect of independence variable – expectancy of attainment the goal - is reduced (*beta* = .07; *p* = .346). Mediation is confirmed by Sobel test: *Z* = 3.91; *p* = .001.

Results show also that the goal evaluation is not a significant mediator between positive orientation and intention to undertake training. The first path a is not significant (*beta* = .137; *p* = .095). Therefore hypothesis H3 is partially supported.

Figure 1: Relationships between study variables



Note: * p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001 (two tiled)

Summing up, the results show that, basing on personality variables, we may predict training motivation to some degree. It is in line with the results of the previous studies (Łaguna, 2012) and adds to the current state of art the insight into the role of newly developed concept emerging from positive psychology field – positive orientation. The results also offer some practical implications for human resources development and trainings preparation.

3. DISCUSSION

The aim of this paper is to examine relationships between the positive orientation and the training motivation. The meta-analysis of current research shows that individual characteristics are in significant relationship with motivation to learn and learning outcomes (Colquitt, et al., 2000). Thus, positive orientation is positively correlated with the level of training motivation understood as a goal realization process within integrated model of goal realization. There is a significant relationship between positive orientation and almost all stages of goal realization process: the evaluation of the

expectancy of goal attainment, the intention to undertake the training and the plan formulation, excluding the evaluation of the value of goal. This findings demonstrate that individuals with high level of positive orientation are willing to develop, undertake trainings, they are more active. What is more, there are significant correlations between all the three stages of goal realization process, that prove the efficacy of this integrated model in training motivation. The value of this paper is its innovativeness – conducted study is the first investigating relationship between positive orientation and training motivation understood as a goal realization process. It extends knowledge in the current state of art in the field of positive psychology.

The results may be connected with a trend of lifelong learning. Commission of the European Communities joins the lifelong learning with competitiveness and employability, stresses the importance of adult learning for social inclusion, active citizenship, personal development. Adult learning is a component of lifelong learning, Commission of the European Communities defines adult learning as "all forms of learning undertaken by adults after having left initial education and training, however far this process may have gone (e.g. including tertiary education on)" (2006, p. 2). Among others, Lisbon's strategy objectives are: raising economic growth, competitiveness and social inclusion. Education and training are crucial factors to achieve these goals. Because of the fact that most of the education and training systems are reserved for young people, there is need to create new solutions to mirror the need for learning throughout the lifespan. Performed study shows that individual characteristics play a significant role in training motivation, thus external motivators such as financial rewards might be insufficient. As discussed before, the evaluation of the value of the goal is one of the first steps in motivational process. Promotion emphasizing the personal benefits derived from trainings would increase individual's subjective evaluation of the training. Phyllis Tharenou (2001) claims that perceived subjective utility of the training plays the major role in training motivation, more important than organizational factors. Her findings show that one's participation in training is greater when individual expects that skills and knowledge gained from the training will be instrumental for reaching extrinsic outcomes (Tharenou, 2001). Concerning modern management concepts, these employee's skills and knowledge gained from i.a. trainings are essential in creating business competitiveness.

Another initial step in inducing motivation is the evaluation of expectancy of goal attainment. One must believe in his ability to reach the goal. Enhancing employee's self-efficacy has influence on the positive evaluation of the expectancy of undertaking and completing the training. As mentioned above, goal evaluation is the first step in motivation understood as a goal realization process, thus intention and plan cannot be formulated without this phase. There is a particular responsibility of managers to maintain the atmosphere in their teams favourable to train and develop, by showing specific benefits of trainings and reinforcing team member's self-efficacy.

Moreover, proved relationship between positive orientation and training motivation is essential for human resources development in business. Martin Seligman (2010) shows, that individual characteristics can be even more important than education degree or skilled competences, especially in challenging jobs His research show that employees with higher level of optimism performed better than individuals with low optimism, including more experienced ones. Since optimism is one of the components in positive orientation, measuring the level of positive orientation may be crucial in recruitment processes. Findings suggest also the utility of positive orientation in predicting job performance and organizational citizenship behaviour (Caprara, Alessandri, Vecchione et al., 2012). To conclude, the positive orientation measurement in recruitment process might be extremely useful to select the most effective employees who are highly motivated to develop and undertake trainings. What is more, The Positivity Scale can be applied to select candidates for trainings when the number of participants is limited. It is predicted that employees with higher score in The Positivity Scale are more willing to participate and may be more effective after the course or training.

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