Perceptions of mandatory versus non-mandatory volunteer policies on job satisfaction and organizational identification in the workplace

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Abstract
Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is an increasingly valued business practice in contemporary American society. One manifestation of CSR is employee volunteerism (Redmond, 2003). Company volunteer policies vary greatly both in the degree of expectations for employee volunteerism, and in the way these policies are communicated to employees. This study examines possible associations between employees’ perceptions of organizational policies on volunteering (mandatory versus non-mandatory), the ways these policies are communicated, and the outcomes of organizational identification (Cheney, 1983) and job satisfaction (Smith, Kendall & Hulin, 1969).

Literature

Some companies have mandated volunteering as company policy. Mandatory policies, however, have produced negative effects (Stukas, Snyder & Clary, 1999). Willingness to volunteer is dependent upon the impact of social pressure groups, individual rewards of conducting voluntary work and the costs of volunteering (Lindenmeier, 2008). Non-voluntary work outside of normal job responsibilities leads to lower job satisfaction, especially when there are no offered rewards; voluntary work outside of normal job responsibilities was associated with higher job satisfaction even with no offered rewards (Beckers, et al, 2008).

Methods

An online Qualtrics survey investigating our research questions was distributed to participants primarily through e-mail and social media.

Sample

73 participants: 23% male and 77% female
66% were working full-time while 34% were part-time employees, all over eighteen years old
Various lengths of time both in their current profession (from 0 to over 16 years) and working for their current company (from 0 to over 11 years)
Large firms (101+ employees) was the highest-reported category at 49%.

Measures

Job in General Scale (Smith; Kendall & Hulin, 1969) contained eight sample items that used a (yes, no) scale. The scale was reliable, α=.85, M=21.59, SD=3.57.
The Organizational Identification Scale (Cheney, 1983) contained eight items that used a 7-point Likert scale. The scale was reliable, α=.85, M=30.62, SD=5.25.

Results

RQ1a: Is there a significant difference in organizational identification between employees who have a mandatory vs. a non-mandatory workplace policy of volunteerism? An independent-samples t test revealed no significance.
RQ1b: Is there a significant difference in job satisfaction between employees with a mandatory vs. a non-mandatory workplace policy of volunteerism? An independent-samples t test supported this: F(1,66)=4.53, p < .05.

Other potential indicators of pressure:
52% of respondents stated through qualitative responses that there was some form of pressure to volunteer within their workplace.
26% percent of participants indicated that, regardless of stated policy, volunteering is still something they perceive they are expected to do as part of their employee role.
7% of respondents indicated “yes” when explicitly asked if their employer/company has any policies that require them to volunteer.

Discussion & Implications

If employers are not explicitly stating that they expect their workers to volunteer or provide them with rewards that do not outweigh the costs, employees may be less likely to volunteer when asked. They may also be less satisfied with their employer for expecting them to perform roles outside of their normal responsibilities.
If employees perceive that it is not mandatory but that either rewards or punishments will ensue based on their volunteering, they may volunteer to avoid costs or gain rewards; this idea is supported by the Social Exchange Theory (Emerson, 1976).
If volunteering is an intra-role work activity, employers should explicitly state the policy and articulate the benefits of volunteering for both the company and the individual.

References