

Does Humor Predict Job Satisfaction? A Mediational Role of Self-Efficacy

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Humor and self-efficacy enable individuals to release tension, increase enjoyment, instill group cohesion, and enhance leadership. The present study aimed to explore the mediational role of self-efficacy on relationship between humor and job satisfaction amongst 200 bank officers. An opportunistic sampling technique was employed to recruit participants employed at three different banks. Relationships between self-efficacy, humor, and job satisfaction were inspected using mediational path analysis. The mediating effect of self-efficacy between humor and job satisfaction is to some extent insignificant. Humor and perceived self-efficacy have an apparent adaptive value, assist people in developing satisfaction with their work, and helps people manage work related aggravations and stressful situations.

Keywords: humor, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, demographic variables, path analysis

Humor is a universal human practice (Apte, 1985; Lefcourt, 2001). The Conceptualizations of the term 'sense of humor' have oscillated from describing it as an emotion-related personality trait (e.g., habitual cheerfulness; Ruch & Kohler, 1998) to describing it as a coping or defense mechanism; for example, the term 'sense of humor' has been described as a predisposition to sustain a humorous perspective in spite of contrary conditions (Lefcourt & Martin, 1986). In a health care context, humor can reduce tension (Vinton, 1989; Wanzer & Booth-Butterfield, & Booth-Butterfield, 1996), and laughter can improve cardiovascular functioning (Fry, 1994). The positive reactions produced by humor can have pain-relieving effects (Bruehl, Carlson, & McCubbin 1993). Displaying a sense of humor can help in reducing depression, anxiety, and stress, while increasing life/family satisfaction (e.g., Celso et al., 2003; Martin, 1996; Lefcourt, 2001; Martin, 2001; Martin & Dobbins, 1988).

Humor in the Workplace

Most studies on humor have been conducted by sociologists and anthropologists, and are qualitative in nature (e.g., Grugulis, 2002; Martin, 2004). However, humor is an emerging area of research in organizational psychology. Employees cannot avoid job-related stressors. They may encounter various forms and magnitudes of difficulties and obstacles that contribute to occupational stress that can decrease the effective and efficient discharge of responsibilities and can add to job dissatisfaction for example, decreasing positive feelings, beliefs, and behavior about the job (Weiss, 2002). It has been found that the use of humor within the workplace alleviates monotony, work frustration and stress (e.g., Malone, 1980; Pryor Singleton, Taneja, & Humphreys, 2010); it also, encourages effective communication (e.g., Sherman, 1988); and decreases social detachments, resulting in better-quality work relations (e.g., Masten, 1986; Sherman, 1988). Humor appeared to strengthen

relationship with persons in higher management, subordinates and coworkers (Martin, 2007) and contribute to Workplace harmony by expressing cohesion (Holmes & Marra, 2002). Humor also may be an effective way to express disagreements and aggressive feelings (Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999; Holmes, 2000; Holmes & Marra, 2002; Mulkay, 1988). Thus, interest in the possible benefits of introducing humor at workplace has increased. Work environments in which humor is encouraged are thought to produce a happier, healthier, less stressed, and more productive workforce as well as to promote more creative thinking and problem solving (e.g., Moreall, 1997). Thus humor reduces stress, enhances enjoyment, facilitates fun, serves as a tonic to release tension when engaged in monotonous and routine tasks, and facilitates cohesiveness among workers (Collinson, 1988; Martin, 2007).

When used in a positive way, humor carries the potential to act as a buffer against the deleterious effects of workplace stress via its use as a coping strategy, such as; encouraging relaxation, decreasing strain, and managing work-related disappointments (Lippitt, 1982). Humor has the ability to lighten and improve social interactions within stressful situations (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003). Individuals, who use humor at work place, have lower level of job related stress and higher level of organizational devotion and job satisfaction (Decker, 1987; Hurren, 2006).

Self-efficacy can be another key factor that determines job satisfaction (Cox et al., 2003). Self-efficacy can be defined as a person's beliefs about their capability to cope and produce designated levels of performance that impact events that affect their lives (Bandura, 1997). Lower levels of self-efficacy are related with lower level of job satisfaction and higher levels of physical strain. In contrast, higher levels of self-efficacy are related to less negative emotional and physical strain caused by extensive work hours and work overload. Compared with those with lower self-efficacy, persons who display higher levels of self-efficacy also display greater job satisfaction when engaged in tasks that have high significance (Jex & Gudanowski, 1992). Relationship between self-efficacy and job satisfaction is well documented (Davis, 2001; Roger & Einar,

2012). The results from numerous researches propose that self-efficacy and job culture collectively predict job satisfaction (Saddler, 2006; Viel-Ruma, Houchins, Jolivet, and Benson, 2010). Self-efficacy seemingly serves as a mediator in the relationship between a number of independent variables and job satisfaction—a dependent variable (Jex & Blise, 1999).

According to Bandura's self-efficacy model (1977), self-efficacy is positively related to life success and satisfaction and is determined by four qualities: mastery experience, social modeling, social persuasion, and psychological response. Bandura believes that a person's psychological responses indirectly contribute to their life satisfaction. Humor: a psychological response is effective in promoting one's coping strategies and reducing stress has been reported. The role of humor as a positive emotion and a determinant of self-efficacy and job satisfaction also has support from Briones (2010), and the mediating role of self-efficacy on relationships between number of independent variables (e.g., humor) and job satisfaction has been supported by (Jex & Blise, 1999; Wanzer et al., 2006). Hence this study was planned to explore the mediational role self-efficacy in humor and job satisfaction. Given this background, we constructed the following hypotheses:

H1: There will be a significant relationship between humor and self-efficacy.

H2: There will be a significant relationship between humor and job satisfaction

H3: There will be a significant relationship between self-efficacy and job satisfaction

H4: Self-efficacy will mediate the relationship between humor and job satisfaction.

The first three hypotheses were constructed to execute the requirements of mediational analysis (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Method

Participants

Sample comprised of 200 bank officers (70 from Lahore, 50 from Rawalpindi, and 80 from Multan). Their age ranged between 23 and 56 years ($M = 30.98$, $SD = 5.97$). They had at least one year of job experience, and belonged to varying socio-economic background.

Instruments

The Humor Scale (Ajmal, Illyas, Noor ul Ain, Shakeel, & Parveen, 2010) measures a sense of positive humor. This 20-item self-reported measure uses a four point Likert type scale (i.e. ranges from 1= *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*). Higher score indicate a higher sense of humor. Support for the construct and convergent validity of the scale is found elsewhere (Ajmal et al., 2010). Cronbach's alpha derived from the current data is .87.

General Self-efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) is a 10-item self-report measure, uses a four point Likert type scale (i.e., ranged from 1= *not at all true* to 4 = *exactly true*). Data from this scale correlate negatively with depression, anxiety, stress, burn out, and health complaints; and correlate positively with favorable emotions, dispositional optimism, and work satisfaction. Cronbach's alpha ranged from .76 to .90 with the majority in the high .80s. Cronbach's alpha derived from the current data is .85.

The Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 1997) utilizes 36 items to measure nine qualities that reflect worker's attitudes toward their

work (viz., pay/compensation, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating procedures, coworkers, nature of work, communication). Each quality is assessed by four items; half stated negatively and half positively. A total score is computed from all items. It is a valid and reliable measure (Spector, 1985, 1997). Chronbach's alpha derived from the current data is .78.

Procedure

Data were collected from persons working at the National Bank, Askari Bank, and Habib Bank in the cities of Lahore, Rawalpindi and Multan. Some branch managers agreed to have the questionnaires completed by their employees, while some managers did not grant this permission. Employees were personally asked to complete the questionnaires. Some refused to complete the questionnaires while other agreed initially to complete, but returned incomplete. Initially 250 officers were requested but 200 returned the complete set of questionnaires. Data collection took an average of 20 to 25 minutes.

Results

Before running the regression analysis, zero order correlations among demographic variables and study variables were calculated, and the Baron and Kenny (1986) steps to run mediational analysis were followed for the further analyses.

Correlations in Table 1 show that age does not correlate with any of the study variables and duration shows positive relationship with self-efficacy. Whereas, inter correlations among humor, job satisfaction, and self-efficacy are significantly positive, which support to run mediational analysis (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Assumption of linearity was verified before conducting a mediational analysis.

Results in Table 2 support to run the mediational analysis as there are significant linear relationships between humor and self-efficacy, humor and job satisfaction, and self-efficacy and job satisfaction.

Table 1

Correlations among Study Variables and Demographic Variables (N=200)

Source	1	2	3	4	5
1. Job Satisfaction	-	.06	.07	.34**	.28**
2. Age		-	.59**	-.00	.07
3. Duration			-	.06	.19*
4. Humor				-	.32**
5. Self-efficacy					-

Note: * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

Table 2

Summary of Regression Equations in Mediational Path Analysis

Equation	Path	β	b	se	t	R ²
1	H→JS	.34	.61	.122	5.06**	.11
2	H→SE	.32	.18	.039	4.82**	.10
3	SE→JS	.28	.89	.212	4.23*	.08

Note : ** $p < .000$, * $p < .05$. H = Humor, JS = Job Satisfaction, SE= Self-efficacy

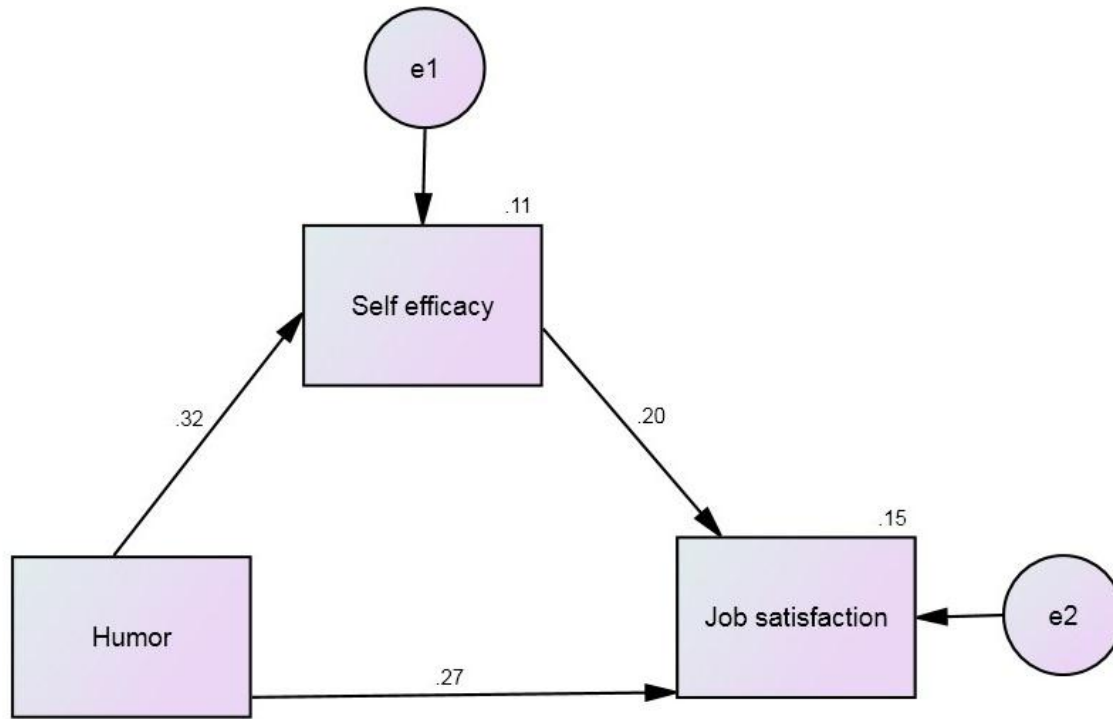


Figure 1. Mediation role of self-efficacy on relationship between humor and job satisfaction

Mediation Analysis

Structural equation modeling was used to run mediational analysis. The final mediational model represents the relationship between humor, self-efficacy and job satisfaction of bank officers. Our model measuring direct and indirect relationship between humor and job satisfaction as mediated through self-efficacy displays a good fit indices ($\chi^2 = .000$, $df = 0$, CFI = 1). A significant amount of variance is accounted for by humor in job satisfaction through the mediation of self-efficacy ($R^2 = .15$). All betas were significant beyond .05 levels.

Mediation Effects

The results provide partial support for a mediation effect in the present model. The path from humor to job satisfaction is still different from zero when the mediator (self-efficacy) is introduced.

Table 3

Decomposition of Standardized Effect in Path Analysis

Predictors	Outcome	Direct effects	Indirect effects	Total effects
Humor	Self-efficacy	.32	.00	.32
Humor	Job satisfaction	.27	.06	.34
Self-efficacy	Job satisfaction	.23	.00	.23

Results in Table 3 show that the standardized indirect (mediated) effect of humor on job satisfaction is .06. This is in addition to any direct or unmediated effect (.27) that humor has on job satisfaction.

The results of a test of the mediation effect (Sobel, 1990) found an indirect effect of the humor on the job satisfaction via the mediator (self-efficacy). This result differs significantly from zero ($t = 2.469$, $p < .05$).

Discussion

The study was to better understand the possible objective of the impact of humor in an occupational setting and to determine if self-efficacy plays a mediating role in employee's sense of humor and job satisfaction. Humor independently and positively predicted self job satisfaction and also indirectly and positively efficacy and see) efficacy-predicted job satisfaction through the mediation of self Employees who more highly value humor appear to have (Figure 2) greater job satisfaction. The results from numerous studies indicate that humor has a direct positive relationship with job satisfaction (e.g) Decker, 1987; Hurren, 2006), perhaps due to its adaptive coping mechanisms that enhances a person's capacity to regulate negative emotions (Andrea & James, 2012). People who display a sense of humor and value the concept can be seen as having enhanced social skills and better interpersonal adaptability (Masten, 1986). A sense of humor helps safeguard the effects of stress (Factor, 1997; Nezu, Nezu, & Blissett, 1988). Moreover, the use of humor offers a

way to communicate stressful ideas in a less stressful ways (Martin & Lefcourt, 1983).

Participants who reported higher self-efficacy also reported high job satisfaction. Thus, our findings are consistent with those from other studies (e.g., Briones, 2010; Cox et al., 2003; Jex & Gudanowski, 1992). The reason for this relationship may be due to the ability of those with high self-efficacy to improve quickly from setbacks and frustrations and view difficult problems as tasks to be mastered (Bandura, 1994), thus resulting in better job performance and job satisfaction.

Humor was found to contribute up to 15% variance in job satisfaction directly and indirectly through self-efficacy. The reason for small value of variance may be that humor is only one of the four qualities associated with self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Thus, the other three determinants of self-efficacy that were not explored in this study may contribute importantly to job satisfaction. Humor seemingly determines self-efficacy, which predicts employee job satisfaction. A sense of humor is assumed to reduces job stress, bring co-worker closer, and perhaps ward off burnout. Findings agree with those reported by Evans-Palmer (2010), that humor may assist in raising self-efficacy that leads to job satisfaction.

Implications

The role of humor in occupational settings deserves further research so as to promote applications of positive psychology in Pakistan. Applied methods that help promote and utilize humor in occupational setting can have a beneficial impact on commerce. The results from this study suggest that humor training can play an important role in human resource development.

Limitations and Future Recommendations

The data were collected from only four cities. Sample could be recruited from some other cities of Pakistan. The study utilized only two predictor variables and one outcome variable. More variables could be used for furthering one of four qualities (humor) that presumably determine self-efficacy was studied. Additional determinants of self-efficacy should be included in future studies. Subsequent research should explore the determinants of job satisfaction, the sense of humor in teams and by coworkers, and explore humor in its intra-psychic and interpersonal forms as a workplace moderator.

Conclusion

Humor can play a leading role in determining self-efficacy, one that may lead to greater job satisfaction. Professional programs that prepare specialists to work in human resource development should be encouraged to emphasize the importance of humor and to train students to apply humor in the workplace in ways that lead to greater self-efficacy and resulting job satisfaction. Further research on this topic may assist us in the preparation and application processes. However, the importance of humor among members of organization as an important aspect of a successful corporate culture is well established (Clouse & Surgeon, 1995). Creating humor among employees may serve as a weapon to combat the negative effects of stress. Humor consultants should be hired by organizations to conduct workshops and seminars in which they impart training to employees to become more playful and humorous at work. Efforts to

promote humor at work are considered to be beneficial and attractive for management and employees both (Gibson, 1994).

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