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Cynicism in the Indian I.T. Organizations: An Exploration of the Employees' Perspectives

Abstract

Cynicism is described as a mind-set characterized by hopelessness, disappointment, and disillusionment, and is also associated with scorn, disgust, and suspicion. This strong negative attitude has infiltrated Indian I.T organizations, and is believed to be responsible for unfavorable organizational consequences, even though, hardly any studies have explored the causes and concerns of employee cynicism about their organizations in the Indian context. The present research centers around two qualitative case studies through in-depth interviews with seventy two participants undertaken in western India to investigate the causes and concerns of employee cynicism towards employer organization. Findings of the study indicate that workplace perceptions significantly influence organizational cynicism, which is largely influenced by poor leadership, organizational politics, decisive culture, accessibility of benefits and un-met expectations. As these findings have important organizational implications, I recommend for further studies on cynicism in the future.

Keywords

Cynicism; Employee; Organization; Information technology; Culture

Employer employee relationships, in India, have been fundamentally transformed over the last thirty years. In the eighties and nineties, Indian organizations have had growth opportunities domestically, and faced tremendous competition from global competitors outside India. In this munificent setting, researches on employee attitudes have focused on understanding the “commitment” of employees to their employers. Researchers have focused on employees’ “citizenship behaviors,” which scholars attribute to employee efforts exceeding

organizational inducements. The nineties and early two thousands have seen a dramatic change in the notion of employee-organization relationships. This has been specifically due to the boom in the Indian Information Technology (I.T) industry. Rampant mergers, acquisitions, quality initiatives, and reengineering programs have often resulted in mass layoffs, euphemistically labeled “rightsizings”, “downsizings,” and organizational restructurings. Unethical corporate leadership, corporate short-sightedness and greed have further contributed to employee negativity. As a result, many employees have begun to reexamine corporate life and the worth of corporate loyalty, leading to the development of cynical attitude towards employing organization.

Organizational cynicism (OC), which has been defined as ‘a negative attitude toward one’s employing organization, comprise three dimensions: (1) a *belief* that the organization lacks integrity; (2) negative *affect* toward the organization; and (3) tendencies to disparaging and critical *behavior* toward the organization that are consistent with these beliefs and affect’ (Dean et al. 1998). Its core belief is that principles of honesty, fairness, and sincerity are sacrificed to further the self-interests of leadership, leading to actions based on hidden motives and deception (Abraham 2000). Cynicism is an attitude characterized by hopelessness, frustration and disillusionment. It is also related to contempt, disgust, and distrust (Andersson 1996; Andersson and Bateman 1997). The central belief associated with cynicism is that principles of honesty, fairness, and sincerity are sacrificed to further the individual’s self-interest. This underlying self-centered purpose is believed to lead to actions based on hidden agendas and deception (Abraham 2000).

It is argued that organizational cynicism has only increased in recent years (Bommer et al. 2005). Research findings suggest that organizational cynicism is associated with a variety of undesirable outcomes. Literature reviews by Andersson (1996) and Dean et al. (1998) mention relationships with apathy, resignation, alienation, hopelessness, distrust of others, suspicion, contempt, disillusionment, and scorn, as well as poor performance, interpersonal conflict, absenteeism, job turnover, and burnout.

This strong negative attitude permeates India’s corporations and is currently blamed for a multitude of unfavorable organizational outcomes. Thus, cynicism in the Indian context is recognized as a growing problem in the workplace that calls for immediate and detailed attention.

Though large number of studies with relation to organizational cynicism has been done internationally (e.g. see Qian and Daniels 2008; Brandes, et al. 2008; Bernerth, et al. 2007; Carr, Napolitano and Keating 2007; Cartwright and Holmes 2006; Kosmala and Herrbach 2006; Gall 2006) hardly any research has been carried out understanding the Indian scenario.

Hence, this study intends to delve the experiences and reports on discrepancies in the employees’ expectations of the world of work and the reality of the I.T organization and/or work leading to the development of cynical attitude towards employing organizations. It tries to explore the causes and concerns of cynicism from the employees’ perspective in the Indian context. We start this study with a brief review of research in the related area.

Literature Review

The word *cynicism* has its roots in the ancient Greek cynics. The two cynics most often mentioned are *Antisthenes* and *Diogenes of Sinope*. The cynics held individual wisdom to be the highest virtue, and were often known to question and criticize the values of the majority, as well as laws and customs (Copleston 1962). Cynicism nowadays is not quite what it used to be 2500 years ago. While the ancient cynics were known as relentless critics, the concept of cynicism nowadays has the flair of inherent pessimism and distrust.

Cynicism literature has been varied and rather scanty (Andersson 1996). The concept of cynicism has been around for centuries; however, the systematic study of organizational cynicism is still in its infancy (Wanous et al. 2000). Scholars have explored numerous theoretical approaches, and examined a variety of potential causes and effects of cynicism in their attempts to gain deeper insight into cynical attitudes in the workplace. However, few studies have built upon previous work, and there have been only modest attempts to integrate findings from one study to another. Thus, the body of cynicism research can be characterized as informative, yet fragmented.

In the organization sciences, two major lines of research into work-related cynicism have appeared. One has concentrated on the development and function of cynicism during the work career, particularly in occupational socialization processes. In their first work encounters, students and starting professionals frequently experience a series of unmet expectations and unexpected events, causing what is aptly referred to by Blau (1964) as a "reality shock." As a reaction to this experience, workers may get less involved and adopt a distant, cynical attitude toward their clients. Studies in this line of research, referred to as *occupational cynicism*, have primarily focused on the helping professions, in particular health care (Becker and Geer 1958), social work (Blau 1964; Meyerson 1990), and the police (Niederhoffer 1967; O'Connell, Holzman, and Armandi 1986).

A second line of research has focused on cynicism among employees responding to certain adverse organizational circumstances. Similar to occupational cynicism, unmet or frustrated expectations as well as unexpected organizational characteristics or events are the key element. This form of cynicism, referred to as *employee cynicism* or *organizational cynicism* (OC). While cynicism is often attributed a negative bias, many authors concur that cynics may also represent the "voice of conscience" for the organization and, thereby, question the suitability of poor strategic choices in the organizational context (Dean et al. 1998; Cutler 2000).

The presence and effects of cynicism in the workplace, as well as the need for knowledge related to the causes and effects of organizational cynicism, long have been recognized and initial conceptualizations have been offered (Andersson 1996; Dean et al. 1998; Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly 2003). Even though these conceptualizations have been largely formed on the basis of the research carried out in the American and the European organizations, they have provided only partial insight into the phenomenon of cynicism within organizations. Unfortunately, this is the case because such conceptualizations do not reflect an integrated, systematic approach that conceptually and empirically explores the process of organizational cynicism development and its effects on the organization and employees.

Concept of Organizational Cynicism

Dean et al. (1998) conceive of organizational cynicism as an attitude, thereby adopting a 3-dimensional cognitive, affective, and behavioral structure of the cynicism construct. The cognitive dimension, referred to by Dean et al. (ibidem: 346) as “cynicism being thought and experienced through cognition” is expressed as *denial* of the sincerity of the organization (Goldner et al. 1977; Urbany 2005), as the *belief* that selfishness and fakery is at the core of human nature (Kanter and Mirvis, 1989, 1991; Mirvis and Kanter 1991), or that organizations are unscrupulous and self-serving (Valentine and Elias 2005) and fall short of integrity (Dean et al. 1998; Johnson and O’Leary-Kelly 2003) or, alternatively, as the *disbelief* of stated motives (Stanley et al. 2005). The affective dimension of cynicism “being felt” is represented in emotionally flavored conceptualizations, such as *frustration and disillusionment* (Andersson 1996; Andersson and Bateman 1997; O’Leary 2003), or *pessimism* (Reichers et al. 1997; Wanous et al. 1994). Finally, the behavioral dimension of employees overtly or covertly ‘acting out’ their cynicism is key to conceptualizations such as *hostile impugning and vilification* of motives (Turner and Valentine 2001), *alienation* and *psychological exit and disengagement* (O’Brien et al. 2004), a *loss of faith* in leaders of change (Reichers et al. 1997; Wanous et al. 2000, 2004), or as *distrust* of a person, group, ideology, social convention or institution (Andersson 1996; Andersson and Bateman 1997; Bateman et al. 1992; Turner and Valentine 2001).

Some amount of research has also tried to explore the consequences of cynicism. Most frequently mentioned are affective and behavioral consequences, such as a decrease in organizational commitment, motivation and job satisfaction (Abraham 2000; Goldner et al. 1977; Johnson and O’Leary-Kelly 2003; Reichers et al. 1997; Turner and Valentine 2001; Urbany 2005; Wanous et al. 1994, 2000), an increase in suspicion, distrust and contempt of the organization (Kanter and Mirvis 1989, 1991; Reichers et al. 1997; Thompson et al. 2000), and other forms of psychological disengagement and detachment (Andersson 1996; Feldman 2000; Fleming 2005; Guastello et al. 1992; O’Brien et al. 2004; O’Leary 2003). Two studies showed that cynicism is associated with a decrease in self-esteem (Fleming 2005; Guastello et al. 1992), and another study revealed that even the new employer may experience the cynicism among employees, resulting from maltreatment by their former employer (Pugh et al. 2003).

Research Design and Methods

Due to the exploratory nature of the research question, and the number and complexity of factors contributing to employees’ attitude towards organizational cynicism, this study was done using a case study format (Merriam 1998; Stake 1997). The case study research design was selected to create boundaries and structure for the investigation, while still allowing for rich description and the inclusion of context. Qualitative methodologies are appropriate to be used when there are large numbers of variables in an area where much is still unknown (Creswell 1998). One of the strengths of a qualitative case study is its openness to generating new knowledge without having a predetermined hypothesis or theory; rather, understanding or meaning emerges from the data (Patton 1990). Specifically, the

concern of the article is to explore, investigate and examine the nature and causes which leads to cynical attitude of the employees towards their employing organizations. In this regard, an in-depth understanding of causes, values and behaviors of individuals is crucial as is an appreciation of the context of being cynical towards the employing organization. A case study method provides a suitable structure for the in-depth analysis of illicit behavior and the context for such activities (Miles 1979). Therefore, the research reported here centers on two in-depth qualitative case studies. The two case companies are identified by the pseudonyms "Raj Technologies" and "Xion India Ltd."

Strength of "Raj Technologies" is around eighteen thousand employees with a turnover of \$ 6.5 billion dollars and strength of "Xion India Ltd." is around seventeen thousand employees with a turnover of \$ 9 billion dollars. Both the firms may be described as Indian MNCs having a significant emphasis on rules and procedures across all manners of organizational activities.

Theoretical Framework

The research described here was based upon social constructivism. The interest of social constructivism is to discover the ways social reality and social phenomena are constructed. Social constructivism states that knowledge is actively constructed by each individual and that this process is socially mediated (Tobin and Tippins 1993). There is an emphasis on the importance of culture in the context of understanding what occurs in society and construction of knowledge based on this understanding (Derry 1999; Kim 2001; McMahan 1997). There are three main premises that underlie social constructivism: reality, knowledge, and learning. Reality does not exist prior to its social intervention. Members of society invent the properties of the world and reality is constructed through human activity (Kim 2001; Kukla 2000). In terms of knowledge, individuals create meaning through their interactions with each other and with the environment in which they live. Lastly, learning occurs when individuals are engaged in social activities. Learning neither takes place only within an individual, nor as a passive development of behaviors that are shaped by external forces (McMahan 1997). The data gathered from this study was a collection of participants' varied experiences leading to cynical behavior towards employing organization, depending upon how each individual constructed his understanding and justification of the behavior. It is assumed that cynicism is a learned behavior that is constructed through social interactions.

Participants

Since the recruitment process involved a request for voluntary participation, it was difficult to accurately predict the number of staff who would participate in this study; as many as ninety employees from both the organizations were approached. However, seventy two participants agreed to volunteer.

The participants were employed as Project Managers, Team Leaders and Executives in these organizations operating in Pune and were selected via randomized quota sampling to reflect a mix of age, positions, genders and experience with organization. At both the organizations, 36 interviews each were conducted. Across the two cases, the majority of the respondents were males (53%).

Demographic details have been summarized into Table 1 to provide a broad outline of the distribution of some of the relevant characteristics of the sample.

Distribution	Name of the Company		Total
Age Wise	Raj Technologies	Xion India Ltd	
21 - 24	16	14	30
25 - 28	17	15	32
29 - 35	3	7	10
Experience Wise			
0 - 3	13	11	24
4 - 7'	20	20	40
8 - 10'	3	5	8
Gender Wise			
Male	20	18	38
Female	16	18	34
Position Wise			
Manager	6	8	14
Team Leader	14	14	28
Executives	16	14	30

Table 1: Demographic details of the Participants ($n=72$)

Data Collection

The data was obtained from seventy two in-depth interviews with individual participants over a period of 6 months. Conducting in-depth interviews with people who have direct, first hand experience with the phenomenon of interest is believed to be the most effective way to gather such data (Patton 2002). Varied experiences leading to cynical behavior towards employing organization were studied in a non-manipulative and non-controlling method with no preconceived constraints on what the outcomes of the research should be.

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide, which served to guide but not govern the discussion. Questions were open-ended in order to provide participants with the opportunity to fully explain their experiences. Individual interviews were conducted either at a restaurant situated near the participant's organization or at his home or also in a private area, often chosen by the participant. Interviews generally lasted one hour, were tape recorded, and transcribed verbatim. Participants were made aware of the recording and transcribing procedures prior to their involvement with the study. After the interviews, memos and notes were written about questions, impressions, and feelings researcher had during the interviews.

For the in-depth interviews, availability of the informants were checked, and after mutually deciding the time and date, meetings were held. In order to maintain the confidentiality of all recorded material, appropriate safeguards were taken to ensure that this material is protected. At the conclusion of the individual interviews, participants were asked to allow the researcher to contact them for follow-up

verification of the transcription and interpretation of the data. The anonymity of the participants was protected by referring to each participant only as a *participant*. The first five minutes of each interview were devoted to developing trust and creating an informal atmosphere.

Data collection stopped at the point of "Theoretical Saturation", the point in data collection at which no new themes or insights are revealed (Flick 1998). Data collection and analysis used a thematic analysis approach to derive patterns in informants' perceptions and experiences in recruitments (Miles and Huberman, 1984). No preliminary hypotheses were offered and data was analyzed continuously to identify common themes.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the data was done following the procedure recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Typed transcripts were analyzed thematically. Repeated readings of transcripts enabled successive waves of data to be condensed into coherent clusters (Miles and Huberman 1994). The data was displayed visually and systematically in a clustered matrix. Reading across the rows provided me with a brief profile of each participant and offered an initial test of the relationship between responses to different questions (Miles and Huberman *ibidem*). Reading down the columns enabled me to make comparisons between participants' responses. By analyzing the information in the matrix, conceptual or theoretical coherence was established. With respect to establishing patterns, I sought added evidence of the same theme from different participants whilst remaining open to disconfirming evidence, advice offered by Miles and Huberman (*ibidem*).

Clustering is used to better understand a phenomenon by grouping and then conceptualizing objects that have similar patterns (Miles and Huberman *ibidem*). It is the activity of conceptualizing the grouped data that takes clustering one step further in analysis than simply noting patterns. In the present study, clusters were employed around events such as experiences leading to the development of cynical attitude. After clustering was employed to group variables together logically, analysis in the present study was taken one step further.

Subsuming particulars into more general classes is a conceptual and theoretical activity (Miles and Huberman *ibidem*). By employing this technique, fewer classes of variables are obtained as a precursor to attaining theoretical coherence. Finally, the process of analyzing and interpreting data in the present study progressed to interpreting the results in light of existing theory in the field. In addition to verifying much of the existing theory in the field, further insights are also offered by the research in the form of recommendations to parties engaged in early work adjustment.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers endeavor to achieve what Lincoln and Guba (1985: 290) call trustworthiness in their work. They have framed the notion of trustworthiness as a question: "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?" They have presented four

criteria for the purpose of evaluating the goodness and rigor of qualitative work. The criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility, or truth-value, as defined by Maxwell (1996) is the correctness of a description, conclusion, explanation, or interpretation. Credibility is parallel to internal validity and provides assurances of the fit between respondents' views of their experiences and the researchers' reconstructions and representation of the data (Guba and Lincoln 1989). As defined by Maxwell (1996), credibility is the correctness of a description, conclusion, explanation, or interpretation. Techniques used to establish credibility of the current study included data triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking. Data triangulation included the use of multiple data sources to reach conclusions (Polit and Beck 2004). In addition to data collected during the personal interviews, field notes, as written by myself, served as another layer of data for the study. Discussion with colleagues acted as a major source in this regard. The text from all transcribed interviews were reviewed by and discussed with an experienced phenomenologist. Interview techniques I used also were reviewed by the phenomenologist. While these practices are consistent with opening up the inquiry (Cohen et al. 2000), they are also referred to as peer debriefing. This is when peers review aspects of the inquiry (Polit and Beck 2004).

Additional approaches to establishing credibility included collecting data through personal in-depth interviews, and using non-leading questions during the interviews to facilitate the expression of rich data by the informant. Audiotaping the interviews, using one interviewer to collect the data and one trained transcriptionist for transcribing the audiotapes and comparing transcribed data with the audiotapes to ensure accuracy, also aided in establishing credibility.

Transferability, parallel to external validity, addresses the issue of generalization in terms of case-to-case transfer. The findings of this study may or may not be transferable to certain other settings. Dependability was assured through planning a suitable research methodology to address the specific question posed by the study. This methodology was undertaken in a rigorous manner as planned. To establish Confirmability, rich and thick description of the setting, program, participants, procedures, and interactions were provided so that readers could understand the specified boundaries and parameters of this study. In addition, participants were allowed to read and confirm interview transcripts.

Findings

Discussion with the participants indicates that the cynical attitude towards employing organizations developed amongst the employees due to the negative experiences while being associated with the organization. Analysis of the data uncovered varied reasons which led to the development of cynical views amongst the participants. Analysis of the interviews uncovered five main reasons behind cynicism in the organization: Poor Leadership, Organizational Politics, Decisive Culture, Accessibility of benefits and Un-met expectations. To help the readers to understand the various themes in a better way, direct quotes are used for illustration.

Theme 1: Poor Leadership

The first theme that emerged from the discussion was with reference to “Poor Leadership”, which led to the development of cynical attitude amongst the employees about their organization. Poor leadership could be understood as may be abusive, passive, aggressive, or punitive, and leaders may simply lack appropriate leadership skills. Poor leadership could be evidenced within the organization in different forms like “workplace harassment” (e.g., Rospenda 2002), “emotional abuse” (e.g., Keashly 1998, 2001), “bullying” (e.g. Einarsen 1999; Hoel et al. 1999), or simply “workplace aggression” (for a review, see Schat and Kelloway 2003). It has been also seen from leader’s passive attitude from decision making and the responsibilities associated with their position (Bass 1990; Hater and Bass 1988).

Discussion with the participants revealed that they had experienced poor leadership quality within their reporting heads.

An example is quoted as under:

Leaders in our organization set wrong examples. Our manager never comes to office on time. However he expects us to be at our desk before time. Quiet often, he takes the rules and regulations for granted and violates them..... But when anyone of us makes such mistakes, he immediately starts talking about discipline and its importance in life.

Another respondent quotes her views as under:

I feel sorry to say that our leader is of passive nature. She is not capable enough to take any decision on her own. ...for every small thing, she discusses the matter with the delivery head and then passes the decision to us. She always tries to play a safe game and whenever something wrong happens, she immediately says that it was not her decision and indirectly puts the blame on her superior. With such people at a senior level, I don’t know how long this organization is going to survive.

Leadership issues were found to be one of the major causes amongst the employees leading to lower motivation level; ultimately leading to the development of cynical attitude amongst the employees.

Theme 2: The Perceived Political Threat

Meaning of politics in an organization could be conceptualized as the exercise of power to negotiate different interests among members while maintaining one’s interests in certain organizational issues. In this regard, the perceived political threat refers to the impact that the employees have in their mind when they realize that something “wrong” is happening which they are not able to understand. Such situation is created due to the politically disturbed environment prevailing in the organization. It particularly refers to the psychological hassle that goes on in the mind of the employees while working in such an environment. In a politically disturbed situation, people seemed to be quiet scared and threatened. They were very well able to sense some danger but could not pinpoint it:

Quiet often I have faced a situation where though I realized that things are not the way they appear, still it’s pretty difficult to make out what’s going around. Things become even more complicated and threatening when we

realize that our curiosity to know, enquire or comment on that matter may bring unwanted problems for us.

The perception of working in such an environment has also found to be affecting the participants psychologically:

Often, such an environment in the organization has given unnecessary tensions to me. Many times, I feel scared and really do not understand what to do. Most importantly, many a times, I am not able to make out as what is actually going around and that too what for. I get really disturbed because of this and am not able to sleep at night.

Respondents shared that they not only had to go under immense stress and pressure under such a situation but also they did not know what to do. According to them, it was an invisible attack, which they could only sense but could not do anything, but suffer. This made them feel even more uneasy and scared. Some of the participants agree to the fact that such people, who are involved in organizational politics, get a kind of label and are known for that. Being involved in politics had developed mixed feelings amongst the participants against the players:

Look... I know that "Roy" (name changed) is a useless fellow.... what does he do other than sitting at the boss's chamber and gossiping useless things for hours. Most of the time, I do the work, which he is supposed to do. Still I have to support him and be in good terms as when I am in need of getting some help, which too out of the way... he is the only person who can help. He has that capability.

Such experiences led to the development of cynical behavior amongst the employees. These employees were found to be helpless and victims of the prevailing politics within their organization. This not only created fear in the minds of the employees ultimately leading to a high amount of mental stress.

Theme 3: Decisive Culture

Every organization wishes to be called as a value based organization, having an open and transparent culture. However, how far the organization is actually value based and is open in terms of its cultural aspects, is an area of concern; leading to the generation of the next theme i.e. "Decisive Culture".

Discussion with the participants reveals that the organizations talk a lot about the prevalence and promotion of Open culture and being a value based organization. However, while working with the organization, the employees experience the decisiveness of the prevailing culture. An example is quoted as under:

The buzz word of today's organizations is to talk about 'value based organization', 'ethics', 'corporate values', ...etc...Our operations manager always talks about 'following the value system at all times'....BUT actually this does not happen every time. At critical times, when he finds that it is difficult for him to get a business from the client, in joint consultation with the top management, he uses all means to get the project At that time he has only one thing in mind...i.e. to get the business by any means.

Another respondent quotes as under:

We have an open door policy in this organization where anybody can approach the management and point the prevailing inefficiencies and give recommendations for improving the same. However, my experience in this organization has been quiet opposite. When I tried to point out some of the prevailing inefficiencies existing in this organization and gave some suggestions to improve the same, I was informally warned to concentrate on my work only and nothing else!

It was understood that the open culture was the term quiet often used by the organization to create a hyped image. However, in reality, the employees had opposite experiences which made them realize the decisiveness of the prevailing culture, reducing their level of enthusiasm and spirit, ultimately leading to the development of cynical attitude.

Theme 4: Accessibility of Benefits

Tough competition and societal pressure for the introduction of family friendly work practices have led to an increased demand for availability of a gamut of family friendly work practices within the I.T organizations. However, how far these available practices are actually accessible, has led to the generation of the next theme, which is termed as accessibility of the available family friendly work practices. Discussion with the participants revealed that their organization has introduced quite a number of family friendly work practices. Some of them, for example, are: Parental Leave, Work from home, Saturday and Sunday off, Job sharing, Paid leave at a short notice, Work place nursery, a short vacation after the completion of a long project etc... However, how far these available benefits are actually accessible is a concern for some of the participants, leading to the development of negative views about their organization. One such experience has been narrated as under:

I have been continuously working on this project since the last three months without any breaks. Since we do not have adequate number of team members, our work load has doubled. Hence, to do that, we have to come on weekends also. Our company boasts of two days holiday in a week...BUT actually are they accessible....I don't think so!

Another respondent quotes as under:

We have the provision of going on a short vacation (around 1 week) after the completion of a long project. Till now, I have completed 3 critical projects one after the other....but still have not got the short paid vacation even for once. Every time before our project is complete; another is ready in the pipeline to be executed. Since I am the only person with such project execution experience, I am not able to avail leave even for my personal life. These things were not conveyed to me at the time of my recruitment. Now I realize them one by one. This is really absurd.

Discussion with the participants revealed that the problem of accessibility of the available benefits were largely due to inadequate team size causing extra burden on the existing team members. While during the selection process, the organization did all its best to highlight the available family friendly work practices, creating a hyped image of the organization, however, not a single word was mentioned about their accessibility. Once after joining the organization, when the employees confront the

realities, it created negative impression about the organization leading to the feeling of distrust.

Theme 5: Unmet Expectations

“Unmet expectations” refer to the high expectations that the candidates had developed from the image that the organization had portrayed to them and the big promises that they had made during the time of their recruitment, which were not met as per their (employees’) expectations. The unmet expectations had been experienced by the employees in different ways as mentioned below:

Phony designation

“Phony Designation” refers to the situation where the employee feels that the designation of the job given to them is superior as compared to the profile of the job. This is a case when the title of the job position speaks “dynamic” about the nature of the job, however, when actually doing the job, the employee feels nothing as such. Discussion with the participants indicated that they were highly impressed with the designation that they were offered and hence, accordingly, they were made big promises about the nature of the job. However, while actually working on the job they realized that the profile was much lower as compared to the designation that they were holding. An example has been narrated below:

I am working in this organization as a ‘Sr. Research Analyst’...doesn't it sound great....but actually since the last six months, I have not done any type of research or analysis. ..I am still waiting to do any such kind of work. I simply collect the data and arrange /segregate them as per requirement. Is this what a Sr. Research analyst does...? I think this company has actually made me a data entry coordinator!

Discussion with the participants indicated that the designation given to them didn't make much sense as they felt them to be phony; reducing their level of morale. This made them feel inferior when asked about the nature of their job. Participants felt that, somewhere, the organization had not done justice with them by portraying a hyped image of the job profile and giving them a phony designation, which actually had little or no relevance with the actual nature of job. This led to the development of some kind of negative feeling about the organization amongst the participants.

Difference in Salary

“Difference in Salary” refers to the employee's expected salary, as per the commitment made by the organization and the actual salary that they receive. Discussion with the participants revealed that some of them experienced a shock when they came to know the actual salary they got at the end of the first month. This difference in expected vs. the actual salary was due to the lack of proper communication between the organization and the employee. It was understood that when a job applicant negotiates his/her salary with the organization (i.e. before joining) he/she presumes that the negotiated salary would be his/her actual salary (i.e. the net salary that the candidate is going to get at the end of every month) whereas, the company talks in terms of ‘cost to the company’ (i.e. C.T.C); which is the aggregate amount that the company spends on the candidate and not the net amount that the candidate is going to get at the end of the month. Discussion with the

participants revealed that the gap between the expected and the actual salary was because of some of the components in the salary structure which inflates the salary figure. However, in reality, these components are not disbursed at the end of the month. One such component is 'the performance incentive'. An example is quoted as under:

When the company negotiated the salary with me, it spoke in terms of my cost to the company. They included my performance incentive which is approx. one third of my salary. Now...an important aspect of the performance incentive is that you get this amount at the end of the year, after your appraisal. This amount is variable and subject to your performance. But while calculating your C.T.C, the company considers the full amount of incentive. Secondly, if you leave the company in between, you lose the incentive of those many months. Don't you think that the company should have explained all these jugglery to me at the time of my recruitment...? They tell me all these things when I get my first salary, which is 2/3rd of the expected salary, that too when I ask them the reason of this difference!

It was understood that such problems occurred because of the improper communication during the salary negotiation between the organization and the candidate. Since the company is always in a hurry to fill the vacant position, at times, it neglects these important aspects to discuss with the prospective candidates and at other times, the HR/recruiter themselves are not completely aware of them. These things not only created uneasiness amongst the participants but also led to development of withdrawal behavior.

Limited Scope for Growth

"Limited scope for Growth" in the present context refers to the situation when the employees realize that their career goals cannot be achieved in the present organization. During the discussion, it was understood that in order to attract a good candidate, the organizations made big promises of showing a very bright future and a very dynamic career growth to the prospective applicant. However, on the basis of the hyped image, thus created, when a candidate joins the organization and realizes the limited scope of growth in his/her domain area of specialization, he/she gets a reality shock. An example has been quoted as under:

I am specialized in the field of networking and wish to build a career in the same area. While joining this organization, I was told that I am going to have a dynamic career and have very bright prospects in this organization. However, within three months of joining, I realized that in my area, I have a very limited scope of growth in this organization. In the field of networking, I could grow only upto a certain level and not beyond that. Though our organization requires networking professionals; it is not a domain expert in my field. If I had been told about this during the time of my interview, probably, I would have not joined this organization. I think I have made a big mistake"

It was understood that once the organization realized the potential of the prospective candidate, it made every effort to make that candidate join the

organization, however, in this process they ignored their moral responsibility of informing the different aspects of the candidate's job profile which he/she is supposed to do and the growth opportunities within the organization. Non fulfillment of this responsibility led to the development of inflated image of the job profile creating high expectations amongst the applicants. However, on joining the organization, their confrontation with the reality gave them the feeling of being cheated.

Discussion and Implication

The aim of this study was exploring the reasons which lead to the development of cynical views amongst the employees about their organization. The exploration of causes reveals that employees develop cynical attitude towards their organization on the basis of the experiences that they have while being associated with the same. These and other findings suggest that generating greater insights into the various facets of organizational cynicism with specific reference to the I.T industry in the Indian scenario is important for both the development of knowledge regarding constructs of organizational cynicism and conceptualizing contemporary organizational life.

Till date, studies on organizational cynicism has been largely on, for instance, due to broken promises leading to perceptions of psychological contract violation or breach (Abraham 2000; Andersson 1996; Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly 2003; Pugh et al. 2003), organizational politics in which power play and self-serving behavior may go at the expense of uprightness (Davis and Gardner 2004), the feeling of being disregarded by the organization and not being treated with respect and dignity (O'Brien et al. 2004), the absence of meaning in work (Cartwright and Holmes 2006), a lack of sincere participation in decision making processes and the absence of genuine support by management (Fleming 2005; O'Brien et al. 2004; Wanous et al. 2000), the deficient quality of leader-member exchange (Bommer et al. 2005; Cole et al. 2006; Davis and Gardner 2004), a history of failed change attempts (Reichers et al. 1997; Wanous et al. 1994, 2000, 2004) and everyday workplace events and practices such as high executive compensation, restructurings, downsizings and layoffs (Abraham 2000; Andersson 1996; Andersson and Bateman 1997; Bateman et al. 1992). However, these have been largely focusing on the American and European organizations in the manufacturing setup and have been quantitative by nature. Against this, in the present study, I have tried to highlight the causes of employee cynicism in the Indian context with specific reference to the I.T industry using qualitative methods.

This is an important contribution because the existing research provides a general overview of all the sectors and not I.T industry specifically as such. Since, in India, I.T industry has brought a revolution in developing the Indian economy, understanding the employees' perception towards organizational cynicism increases the importance of this study. Previous research has already highlighted the adverse consequences of employee cynicism. Most frequently mentioned are affective and behavioral consequences, such as a decrease in organizational commitment, motivation and job satisfaction (Abraham 2000; Goldner et al. 1977; Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly 2003; Reichers et al. 1997; Turner and Valentine 2001; Urbany 2005; Wanous et al. 1994, 2000), an increase in suspicion, distrust and contempt of the organization (Kanter and Mirvis 1989, 1991; Reichers et al. 1997; Thompson et al.

2000), and other forms of psychological disengagement and detachment (Andersson 1996; Feldman 2000; Fleming 2005; Guastello et al. 1992; O'Brien et al. 2004; O'Leary 2003). Hence, understanding the antecedents of Organizational cynicism in the Indian context will help the organizational forerunners and business leaders to take proactive measures in order to curb the same.

Since one of the striking aspects of India's recent speedy growth has been the dynamism of the service sector, particularly information technology (I.T) industry, this industry has been considered as the prime helping in the growth and development of India (see Nasscom 2003). However, the I.T industry in the Indian sector has also been found to be known for its high attrition rate (as high as 30 percent at the junior programmer level according to the "NASSCOM-Hewitt total Rewards Study 2005"). Hence, exploring the employee perceptions of organizational cynicism in the I.T industry becomes crucial as this will inform organizational literature and management practice in important ways.

A key contribution of this study is the provision of empirical insights into the causes that lead to the formation of cynical views amongst the I.T professionals. It further adds the dimension of "Decisive culture", and "Accessibility of benefits" as a construct of organizational cynicism.

Analysis of the data revealed that poor leadership quality in the I.T organizations was one of the significant causes of cynicism in the present context. Previous research has highlighted the shortage of qualified I.T professionals in the Indian scenario. In such a situation it is logical to understand that the I.T organizations have no option but to compromise with the low quality of available professionals for their vacant positions at senior level and tend to put the most suitable amongst the available person in those positions. This ultimately has led to the filling of vacant positions by less capable persons; causing unrest and dissatisfaction amongst the employees. Since, previous research has already shown that poor leaders rely on the laissez-faire style to avoid decision making and the responsibilities associated with their position (Bass 1990; Hater and Bass 1988), this may be a source of employee stress (see Podsakoff et al. 1996) and retaliation (Townsend, Phillips, and Elkins 2000) ultimately resulting in cynical behavior (e.g. see Cole et al. 2006; Stanley et al. 2005; Bommer et al. 2005; Davis and Gardner 2004; Wanous et al. 2004, 2000; Reichers et al. 1997); hence, my present findings support the previous results obtained in different settings.

The prevalence of organizational politics was found to be another important reason which led to the development of cynical attitude amongst the I.T professionals. Such a climate created fear and distrust amongst the employees ultimately leading to helplessness and formation of cynical views about the employer organization. Similar results have been also observed by other researchers in various other contexts (e.g. see Davis and Gardner 2004; Ferris et al. 2002; Abraham 2000; Dean et al. 1998; Andersson and Bateman 1997; Andersson 1996; Kanter and Mirvis 1989). Hence, these findings strengthen the results of previous research and further add the Indian I.T industry.

Unmet expectations were found to be a third reason leading to cynicism amongst the employees. Three different causes were found that could be covered under this construct. The first could be referred to as "*phony designation*". It was understood that in some of the cases, the organizations had given such a designation to the employee that did not have much relevance with the actual job profile. Such phony designations created a feeling of inferiority amongst the employees while discussing their roles with others.

The second reason was relating to the “*salary difference*” that the employees experienced after receiving their first salary. It was understood that the organization, while negotiating the salary with the prospective applicant, did not explain all the components of the salary in detail. Some of the components in the salary structure were paid annually and that too on the basis of performance. Other components such as petrol allowance, mobile expenses etc. were included in the salary structure, which the employees got for doing company’s work. Such components unnecessarily inflated the salary figure. In absence of proper communication during the time of recruitment, the employee perceived them to be a part of their monthly salary, leading to reality shocking experience after getting the first month’s salary.

The third reason explored was relating to the realization of the “*limited scope of career growth*” for the employees. Discussion with the participants revealed that the organizations made big promises relating to their career growth within the organization, during their recruitment process. However, after spending some time with the organization, these employees realized that the scope of their growth in the organization was limited only to a certain extent. This realization gave them a shocking experience leading to the development of the view of their career getting blocked.

Decisive nature of the prevailing organizational culture was found to be yet another construct leading to the formation of cynical views amongst the I.T professionals, which was presumed to be open and value based. However, with passage of time, the employees realized that the prevailing culture was pretty decisive by nature. It was understood that though the organization spoke a lot about the prevalence of open culture and promoting prevalence of the same, however in reality, the employees had opposite experiences, leaving them with the impression of everything being fake.

Lastly, another important construct identified during the study was relating to accessibility of the available benefits given by the I.T organizations to its employees. It was understood that the I.T companies had implemented a number of family friendly work practices for its employees, which they very successfully propagated to attract job applicants. However, in reality, how far those available benefits were actually accessible was an area of concern for some. Due to tight project schedules in combination with inadequate team size, the I.T professionals were found not able to use those benefits. This made them feel these work practices to be superficial, leading to reduced job satisfaction. They perceived them to be like a mirage, having no significance in reality. These findings may be a manifestation of the research focus adopted. This study has tried to highlight the fact that employees are highly sensitive to their work environment and their views and perceptions get influenced by the culture prevailing in the organization. These finding suggest that the I.T professionals are not simply passive agents or chattels, but rather instrumental and deliberately self seeking.

This study has also tried to focus some light on the work culture of Indian organizations. Previous research on work culture of Indian organizations has already shown the presence of “fulfilling social obligation by giving undue favor” (e.g. Sahay and Walsham 1997; Sinha 1997), “preference for personalized relationship” (e.g. Kanungo and Mendonka 1996), “presence of checks and balances which slow down decision making” and “adaptation to social circumstances” (Narain 1990). Kanungo and Mendonca (1996: 283) mention that the environment of developing countries are characterized by high complexity due to presence of heterogeneous elements, low predictability due to presence of unstable and turbulent elements and low

munificence due to the scarcity of needed resources. Monetary form of compensation and job security are therefore highly valued by Indian employees (Gopalan and Rivera 1997). Sinha et al. (2004) have identified the impact of societal culture on organizational culture in India. They found four major pan Indian societal dimensions: hypocrisy, corruption, inaction and respect for power. Three dimensions: quick rich disposition, non-work orientation and face keeping were differently endorsed at different location. Infrastructural facilities have sweeping impact on societal, organizational and managerial dimensions of beliefs, preferences and practices. People from infra-structurally adequate place rated themselves, the people and the organization more positively. Hence, the results of the present study extend to work of the previous findings by adding varied reasons which ultimately lead to the formation of cynical attitude amongst the employees towards their organization.

On a more practical level, this study also raises implications that are directly relevant to human resource practitioners, organizational decision makers and I.T professionals.

Firstly, the organization should focus on having transcendental leaders. Previous literature has shown the impact and importance of leadership in such type of organizations (e.g. Bass and Avolio 1993; Bass 1990; Kotter and Heskett 1992). Specifically, this research adds to the picture by a weak leadership with negative implications, affecting the morale of the employees. While the leadership style followed in the case organizations was found to be of passive nature having a very poor insight and poor follower acceptability. Leaders with greater amount of dynamism are found to be needed in the present state of the organization who could have higher acceptance amongst the team members.

Secondly, In order to have a control over the political environment prevailing in the organization, management should encourage equity and transparency and promote a culture of organizational support amongst the employees. Earlier research has demonstrated how politics in organizations can be helpful for members of the organization and for its strategic decisions. (e.g. Kumar and Ghadially 1989). Concurrently, the human resource department should adopt a proactive approach in implementing performance based career growth and succession planning. This not only helps in strengthening employer employee relationship but also motivates employees to focus on productive activities, leading to growth of the organization. Emphasis should focus on motivating managers and above to discourage such activities and providing juniors with equal opportunities, discouraging politically motivated actions. Induction programs should clearly state that such behaviors are not encouraged or rewarded.

Thirdly, since salary is one of the most important aspects for an employee, the organization should be very careful and transparent about explaining all components of the salary structure in a detailed manner to the prospective employee, leaving no confusion about the same.

During the interviews conducted with applicants, realistic job previews should be presented. These previews should emphasize the nature of the duties to be performed and a clear message should be sent to the applicant around the volume of paperwork required. If possible, shortlist candidates should be demonstrated a brief overview of the nature of job. Similarly, the designations given by the organizations should be according to the content or profile of the job.

A comprehensive profile of the individual's career aims compared with the organization's goals may reveal potential congruence between the two. Strong evidence from this research indicates that the good financial rewards on offer from

the organization are not always the most valued aspect of work for I.T professionals who primarily seek challenging tasks and a defined career path.

Fourthly, the organizations should not only preach about the prevalence of a free and open culture but also try to implement the same in order to get maximum output from their employees. The advantages of having an open culture have already been proved in previous researches. Similarly, the family friendly work practices should not only be available to the employees instead, they should also be made accessible to them. The benefits should be designed in such a manner so that the employees can get the most out of them.

These approaches may require changes in disciplinary codes. While such changes may prove an effective means of increasing employee morale, I recognize that such issues are likely to be difficult to both implement and police.

Limitations

This study has number of limitations that should be highlighted. In particular, two restrictions deserve individual mention. First, the research design was explanatory and descriptive in nature. While this approach has allowed us to illuminate and more clearly define the concepts and constructs involved in organizational cynicism, the nature of the design precludes causal claims. The evidence from the interviews strongly indicates that I.T professionals, human resource managers and project heads all believe that such factors eventually lead to lower job satisfaction, lack of commitment, alienation, and negative citizenship behavior which has been highlighted in previous research (see e.g. Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly 2003; Abraham 2000; Reichers et al. 1997; Andersson and Bateman 1997; Wanous et al. 1994). Thus, although this research precludes causal claims, the presented empirical evidence and extant theory is sufficient to enable us tentatively to suggest the existence of such association.

This study is also limited to the extent that I had to rely on informants' past experiences, perceptions and self-reporting. As with all studies that rely on informants I am unable, conclusively to exclude the possibility that informants (intentionally or otherwise) supplied inaccurate or misleading responses (either for the reason of social desirability bias or simply to conceal other acts). Although I designed this research to limit such bias, the possibility of such issues must be acknowledged.

Second, the focus of this study has primarily been on the employee's perception of organizational cynicism with specific reference to the I.T industry in the Indian scenario and not on the overall industry's perception as a whole, as conventionally discussed in the literature. (e.g. Eisenberger et al. 1986). Although I feel that such an approach has generated deep, rich and interesting insights into these phenomena, this focus limits the extent to which I am able to comment on the full range of factors leading to employee cynicism in the Indian context. Similarly, I am unable to comment validly on the antecedents of cynicism with specifics to the I.T industry. Such issues require further research which, given the likely time lags, is unlikely to be coming for a number of years.

The limitations and contributions of the study lead to a number of potentially fertile opportunities for further research. While this research has described many interesting factors, the research design adopted limits my results and the contributions of my work. In particular, although the research design and methods

develop rich insights, the extent to which these results could be empirically generalized is constrained by the selected context of the research. As stated by Brantlinger et. al. (2005: 203), "qualitative research is not done for purposes of generalization, but rather to produce evidence based on the exploration of specific context and particular individuals". Hence, in this regard, further research in varying context is needed to gauge the generalizability of the insights gained in the current study. The methodological approach may also have constrained the findings. That is, I uncover five causes primarily leading to employee cynicism in the I.T industry using qualitative methods. Thus, further studies wishing to extend my findings may benefit the adoption of quantitative methods of data collection. Further, I believe that it would be advantageous to adopt a different approach in future studies by exploring these phenomena over a longer period, probably involving data collection at numerous points in time. Such an approach should yield valuable insights into not only the determinants of organizational cynicism but also of the relationship of particular determinant with respect to the organizational cynicism in any particular industry. While the current study supplies evidence on the causes that lead to development of cynical behavior, further research could explore the intensity of these identified factors, measuring the impact of each of these factors on the I.T professionals; helping the management of these organizations to take immediate corrective actions against those first. Without further study, such issues will remain speculative, so I strongly urge my colleagues to pursue this topic.

It is hoped that the present results contribute not only valuable insights into perceptions of employee cynicism in the I.T industry, but also provide a tentative starting point towards the greater understanding of the employees' behavior and perceived notions with regards to organizational cynicism.

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