

Let's be friends: State of workplace loneliness, Job commitment, and Wellbeing after the befriending intervention

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Abstract: *This study is aimed to find out the effect of befriending intervention on workplace loneliness, psychological well-being and job commitment. In this study, the sample size was 20 and the sample was taken from Jalandhar (Punjab). Subjects were working on different job profiles in both public and private organizations. For obtaining data UCLA loneliness scale, Ryff's psychological well-being scale and organizational commitment scale by Upender Dhar, et al were used. Paired Sample t-test was applied to get the result. The findings of the study revealed that experimental group who received befriending intervention gained from it as compared to the controlled group. Overall befriending intervention worked well to minimize loneliness; it has also been beneficial for improving psychological wellbeing respectively. But in case of job commitment befriending was not effective.*

Key Words: *workplace loneliness, psychological well-being, job commitment and befriending.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Be-friending and Loneliness

Adults spend most of their time at their job. Indirectly, the job has become the first home and our actual home has become a second home in today's world. As people are spending more time at their job, the proper healthy environment is very much required for the physical as well as the psychological health of the workers. Strong connection or friendship is very important to keep oneself emotionally healthy and motivated in a job. Humans are social being, according to Adler we are born with the social interest. Healthy surroundings do help people to deal with demanding situations well. For the betterment of the organization, now a days more focus has been given to make connections with co-workers and with seniors. Making strengthening connection should be one of the first priority of any organization. Keeping this in mind , in many countries, the service of befriending has been introduced to minimize the loneliness feelings in people. In the beginning, it was started for the older population but now anyone can avail this service. A study report by Joyce Siette, Megan Cassidy and Stefan Priebe (2017) on the effectiveness of befriending service a meta-analysis, revealed that befriending service provided by the staff of the hospital showed improvements in overall symptoms in the patient in the hospital but the effect size was small. Price, Bob (2014) conducted a study to find the different approaches to counter loneliness and isolation. With case studies, the study summarized that befriending with older patient helped them to rebuild the social network which further helped in sustaining well being. Another study done by Gavin J. Andrews, Noel Gavin, Sheila Begley and David Brodie (2003) has revealed that the befriending service combats the loneliness of people who were using it. The users in this study reported positive image of befriending services in combating loneliness and inculcating the real friendship and engagement in social activities.

1.1. JOB COMMITMENT

Job commitment is very much required for the growth of the company. There are many factors which plays an important role in inculcating and in minimizing the commitment in the employees. Workplace loneliness is one of the important factor to be taken into consideration. People who feels connected with their co-workers and subordinates have more committed towards their job and company. Lack of connection and less interpersonal communication between workers directly effects the commitment. Workplace loneliness makes people sadder and less interested in showing the dedication towards the job or company. Kukkar, Nitika Ahuja and SimarPreet (2017) did a study to find out the relationship between three variables i.e., loneliness, job commitment and emotional intelligence. Private organization workers were taken as a sample for the study. It was found that negative correlation was there in loneliness and job commitment, as further positive correlation was found between normative commitment and emotional intelligence. Gokhan Ayazlar, Berrin Guzel (2014) study stated that the workplace loneliness negatively effect the organizational commitment. Erkan Tabancali and Mithat Korumaz (2014) find out the regression level of supervisors' loneliness at work and their organizational commitment. It was done on 123 supervisors, who were working for Guidance and Supervisory Board in Istanbul. It was clearly revealed that loneliness of supervisors predict significantly the organizational commitment, especially in those who were into more administrative duties where the social interaction was limited. Oznur Gulen Ertosun, Oya Erdil (2012) did a study to find out the effects of loneliness on employees' commitment and intention to leave. The study revealed the loneliness feeling significantly

effect the intentions to stay in an organization, less commitment towards the organization and in intentions to leave the organization.

1.2. PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING

Loneliness is a feeling which makes people unhappy and sad. As a result, it effects the psychological state of a person. A study revealed a positive correlation between happiness and psychological well-being (Kumar, M Vinothk 2015). Sia, Niranjana (2013) who examined the association between perceived loneliness and psychological well being with its several dimensions, state that negative correlation was found between loneliness and psychological well-being and also with dimensions of psychological well-being. Doman, Lovina CH, Le Roux, Anda (2012) did research to find the relationship between psychological well being and loneliness among third-year students. It was a cross-cultural investigation. The result showed that two scales of psychological wellbeing i.e. depression and sense of positive wellbeing affect loneliness significantly and secondly, culture plays a significant role according to this study.

2. MATERIALS:

- UCLA loneliness scale was developed by Russell, Peplau, and Cutrona (1980) to measure individual levels of loneliness. UCLA scale includes 20 statements and evaluation is based on a 4-point Likert scale. The reliability and validity of the scale were done by Demir (1989) and it was found Cronbach’s alpha to be .96 and the .94 correlation coefficient.
- SPWB scale by Ryff, 1989 was applied to get the psychological well being of workers. This scale consists of 84 items. 14 items are there for each dimension which includes positive and negative items.
- Organization commitment scale developed by Upender Dhar, et al which is 8 item scale was used to measure the organizational commitment of the sample.

3. METHOD:

The sample taken was 20 workers working in private and public organizations in or near city Jalandhar. Purposive and convenient sampling methods were used to get the sample.

The total number of the sample taken was 20, which was further divided into two groups, experimental group (10) and control group (10). Purposive and Convenient sampling were applied to get the sample. Data collection process was done in Jalandhar, Punjab, as the population includes sample units from different states of India, working in different job profiles. Paired comparison t-test to get the pre and post result after giving befriending intervention was used.

3.1. Objectives of the study

- To investigate the effect of befriending on workplace loneliness.
- To investigate the effect of befriending on psychological well-being.
- To investigate the effect of befriending on job commitment.

3.2. Hypotheses:

- There is no effect of befriending on workplace loneliness
- There is no effect of befriending on wellbeing.
- There is no effect of befriending on job commitment.

4. FINDINGS:

TABLE 1: Shows the work place loneliness of experimental group before and after befriending. Here L1 indicates before intervention and L2 indicates after intervention scores.

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	
Pair 1	L1	51.6	10	8.002777	
	L2	42.1	10	7.665942	

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	L1 - L2	9.5	3.27448	1.035482	7.157578	11.84242	9.174475	9	.000

The above table revealed that there is significant difference in work place loneliness of an experimental group, because stated that befriending service decreases loneliness.

TABLE 2: shows the score of organizational commitment of experimental group before and after befriending. Here O1 indicates before intervention and O2 is after intervention scores.

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	O1	20.6	10	2.1187	0.669
	O2	21.4	10	2.75681	.871

Paired Samples Test											
		Paired Differences					T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)		
				Lower	Upper						
Pair 1	O1	-	-0.8	3.32666	1.051982	-3.17975	1.579749	-	0.76047	9	.466
	O2										

The above table showed no significant difference in organizational commitment of an experimental group after befriending because the significance value is ($>.05$). Here we accept the hypothesis 2, which states that there is no effect of befriending on organizational commitment. From the means of both pre and post scores of experimental group values we can state that scores are not much deviated in pre and post values of work place or organizational commitment.

TABLE 3: shows the score of psychological wellbeing of experimental group before and after befriending. Here P1 indicates before intervention and P2 indicates after intervention scores.

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PW1	121.6	10	10.88526	3.442
	PW2	132.4	10	9.359487	2.959

Paired Samples Test											
		Paired Differences					T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)		
				Lower	Upper						
Pair 1	PW1	-	-10.8	5.51362	1.74356	-	14.7442	-	6.85579	9	.000
	PW2										

Table no. 3 reveals that there is significant difference in psychological well being of an experimental group after befriending because the significance value is ($<.05$). Hence, we reject the hypothesis 3 which states that there is no effect of befriending on psychological wellbeing. From the means of both pre and post scores of experimental group we can state that scores are deviated in pre and post of scores of psychological wellbeing after providing the befriending intervention.

TABLE 4: shows the pre and post scores of workplace loneliness of control group. Here CL1 indicates pre scores and CL2 indicates post scores.

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	CL1	57.7	10	5.375872	1.700
	CL2	53.2	10	6.460134	2.042

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	CL1 - CL2	4.5	5.582711	1.765408	0.506369	8.493631	2.548985	9	.031

Table no.4 reveals that there is significant difference in workplace loneliness of a control group because the significance value is (<.05).Where no befriending was given to the participants. This may be because of any other factor/factors.

TABLE 5: shows the pre and post scores of organizational commitment of control group. Here CO1 pre scores and CO2 indicates post scores.

Paired Samples Statistics						
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
Pair 1	CO1	21	10	1.563472	.494	
	CO2	20.8	10	1.75119	.553	

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	CO1 - CO2	0.2	1.135292	0.359011	-0.61214	1.012139	0.557086	9	.591

Table no. 5 reveals that there is no significant difference in organizational commitment in participants of control group because the significance value is (>.05) and no befriending service was provided to the participants. And the mean scores of the organizational commitment in control group does not deviate much as the means values are 21 and 20.8 for pre and post respectively.

TABLE 6: shows the pre and post scores of psychological well being of control group. Here CPW1 indicates pre scores and CPW2 indicates post scores.

Paired Samples Statistics						
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
Pair 1	CPW1	128.3	10	10.75019	3.399	
	CPW2	126.9	10	9.267026	2.930	

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	CPW1 - CPW2	1.4	2.951459	0.933333	-0.71135	3.511347	1.5	9	.168

Table no. 6 reveals that there is no significant difference in psychological well being in participants of control group because the significance value is (>.05). where no befriending was given to the participants and is also stated by the mean scores of the organizational commitment in control group which does not deviate much as the means values are 128.3 and 126.9 for pre and post respectively.

DISCUSSION

The study was quasi-experimental in nature. The major focus was to find the beneficial role of befriending service on loneliness, psychological wellbeing and job commitment. As can be observed in the data above, significant results are found about how these variables are linked with one another. In this study, the findings were validated by including both experimental group and control group which was further examined by pre and post study. As shown by the findings of present study, it was examined that there is significant difference in work place loneliness and psychological well-being of experimental group, as the significance value is ($p < .05$) in both workplace loneliness and psychological well-being. While, it was found that befriending does not have effect on organizational commitment ($p = .466$) of an individual. As in case of control group no difference was found in psychological well-being and organizational commitment in both pre and post examination but a slight decrease in workplace loneliness was also found in control group. The intervention used in this study was befriending, which was provided to them once a week for one month and it was found to have an influence on these variables. As we are social being and need social support for the overall development and healthy living. when one is lonely , it will have its negative effect on the general productivity as a whole, be it the student's academic life, one organizational work or day-to-day dealings. Hence, we can conclude that befriending is good intervention to reduce loneliness among people and to promote wellbeing. This technique is used in developed countries in various organizations under trained mentors such as, old age homes, marriage counseling centers, security force etc and was seen to have significant influence in reducing loneliness and developing better relationship among socially isolated people as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

For generalization it will be better to take large number of sample and to provide more intense befriending services for longer period to get the long lasting impact of it.

5. CONCLUSIONS:

Being a social being, we always require social support for our wellbeing and once we are getting it , it will immune us from the mental illness and makes us more committed towards our goals. This study showed the positive impact of befriending services on psychological wellbeing and in minimizing loneliness.

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