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## THE EFFECT OF ORGANISATIONAL CYNICISM ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: TESTING THE AFFECTIVE, COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIOURAL DIMENSIONS

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### **Abstract**

Organisational cynicism is one of the understudied topics, which is being overlooked in organisations for a long period of time. This has three dimensions: cognitive-lack of sincerity, honesty in organisation; Affective: emotional and sentimental responses towards the workplace; and Behavioural: showing negative attitude within workplace. Moreover, it results in decreased motivation, interpersonal conflicts, absenteeism, low organisational commitment, and low efficiency, dissatisfaction in work, unethical behaviour and reluctance in organisational citizenship behaviour. The Antecedents and consequences of organisational cynicism can be taken into account while calculating the turnover of the employees, efficiency and overall productivity of the organisation. Organisational cynicism can also be considered as one of the important factors to study whether an employee is happy with their organisation, their team mates, managers and the organisational climate. This study compares this variable with the performance of the employees. In the previous studies, job satisfaction was studied as one of the consequences of the study. There are only a few literatures which study the impact of organisational cynicism on performance. And most of these researches were conducted in either teaching or banking industries across the world. In the last three decades, IT industry has been the most outsourced industry from India. This Industry also contributes about 7.7% towards the GDP in India. From the studies of the performance of the employees in the IT industry, it has showed that lack of proper leadership, over-timing,

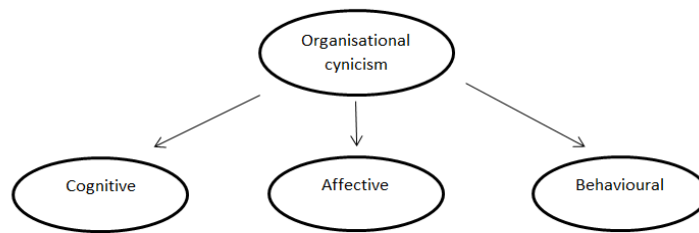
inefficiency of the manager were some of the major sources of stress to the employees. This links the external factors of performance with consequences of organisational cynicism, which is employee burnout. So it is about time that a study analyses whether there is existence of organisational cynicism in the Industry, and relate it to the performance of the employees and the demographic factors which might also contribute to it. A conceptual model of organizational cynicism was developed as a result. This study focuses on the IT employees from one of the major software Hubs in India, which is Bangalore.

**Keywords:** Cynicism, Performance, IT, Affective, Cognitive, Behavioural

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## 1 ORGANIZATIONAL CYNICISM

Over decades, cynicism has been considered only at an individual level, and looked up on as a negative personality trait, which is present in an individual since birth. But if we look closer at history, organisational cynicism has existed as long as organisations have existed. Just that, it was viewed just as a negative trait of an individual. The external factors such as the environment in which the individual lives, the interaction with other members of the organisation, and conflicting values with the organisation were never taken into consideration. Then it slowly developed into work cynicism, where the personality trait and its relation with the task performance are studied. Again it focused too much on the individual self, and external factors were ignored. Then the term “employee cynicism” was coined. This defined the negative attitude towards the higher ups in the organisation and other authoritative figures. This is one of the first researches by Andersson, in the year 1996, which discarded it as a personal trait and defined it on the basis of the reaction exhibited by the individuals towards the organisation. They study the attitudinal aspect of the term and look deeper into different levels of attitude. It studies the interface between the organisation and the individual, but doesn't look into values, and expectations of an individual. They took the environment into consideration. And on the basis of this definition, the study focused on situations such as poor performance, organisational layoffs, organisational change, pay cuts etc. Another aspect of this is the non-conformity to the organisational citizenship behaviour. In the year 1998, Dean et al, one of the pioneers in the field, gave terminology and tried to define the term by analysing its nature, antecedents and consequences. They gave a conceptual definition to organisational cynicism. They totally neglected the chances of organisational cynicism being just an individual personality trait. Rather they took the external factors, interfaces, effects of behaviour; reaction and response of an individual to such behaviour were taken. His definition gave a totally new perspective on organisational cynicism and influenced a lot of researchers to look beyond the personality of a person. They started taking external factors into consideration. Figure 1 shows the dimensions of organizational cynicism.



**Figure 1: Dimensions of Organisational Cynicism**

Source: Retrieved from Dean et al (1998)

Dean et al 1998, defines organisational cynicism as “a negative attitude towards one’s employing organisation, comprising three dimensions. They are cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions. Cognitive dimension is a belief that the employing organisation lacks integrity. Affective dimension is the negative affect toward the organisation. Behavioural dimension is the tendency to disparage and critical behaviours toward the organisation that are consistent with these beliefs and affect”. This definition looks upon the interface between organisation and the individual. Here the dimensions may vary from positive to negative, thereby eliminating the biases. The positive instances such as expectations and personal values are also considered. They also don’t take the individual personality trait as a factor. They take that humans change over time, whether they are born cynical or not. Thus they take situation of the individual into account. And it is targeted towards the environment of the organisation that such individual works in.

**Table 1: Dimensions of Organisational Cynicism**

Dimension	Concept
Cognitive/ Belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believe that organisation lacks integrity, honesty, fairness and sincerity.</li> <li>• The decisions made or the initiatives taken by the organisation are highly self –oriented.</li> <li>• Ignores employee interests</li> <li>• Lack of trust in other employees.</li> <li>• Believe that their peers are unreliable.</li> </ul>
Affective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They feel anger or contempt towards the organisation</li> <li>• They experience powerful emotions which can be positive or negative</li> <li>• Negative emotions include distress, disgust, shame</li> <li>• Positive emotions include joy, happiness</li> <li>• These are elicited from past experiences</li> </ul>

Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often in the form of criticism</li> <li>• Come up with negative predictions when an organisation takes a initiative.</li> <li>• Sarcastic humour</li> <li>• Non-verbal cues include rolling of eyes, knowing looks etc.</li> <li>• This behaviour is exhibited regardless of whether the opposite individual belongs to the organisation or not</li> </ul>
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Source: Retrieved from Dean et al (1998)

Table 1 shows the dimensions of organizational cynicism. These three dimensions, provides a tripartite frame-work and completely eliminates the concept where Organisational Cynicism is due to individual or personality trait which is someone born with. This frame-work integrates the individuals past experience, the emotions invoked, the behaviours displayed, the environment, the peers and also the values of the individual. This gives a clear understanding that organisational cynicism is a state and not a trait of an individual. This framework has relied heavily on the realms of attitude and the range of emotions they elicit upon an individual. It focuses on the basics, which is the environment and the individual. Thus, this frame-work can be set into any organisation, be it religioned, governmental or private, to measure the organisational cynicism.

A study by Chibaru et al (2013) aims to analyse the relationship among antecedents such as demographics, employee dispositions including positive affectivity, negative affectivity, trait cynicism, positive/negative work experiences and outcomes such as job satisfaction, job performance with organisational cynicism and organisational trust, then to find out the relative importance of organisational cynicism and organisational trust. It uses literature search method, following the inclusion and exclusion criteria. After the selection of the literatures, a meta analytic study is conducted which uses Schmidt-hunter's psychometric random-effects method to find out its effect size estimates.

The results found out that organisational cynicism is slightly more important than trust in predicting the job performance and the intent to quit. Some of the important findings are: organisational cynicism is enhanced by individual negative affectivity and trait cynicism, while diminished by positive affectivity. Further, organisational cynicism was negatively related to job satisfaction and commitment, while positively related to employee turnover. It also found out that organisational cynicism has modest negative relationship with employee performance, when the performance was non-self -reported. The study found out negative correlation between organisational trust and organisational cynicism. From the above, we can also infer that an employee with negative, cynical attitude is more than enough to result in low job performance or withdrawal from the organisation as a whole.

Another research shows that motivational factors such as meaningfulness, self-determination and hygiene factors such as working conditions is not significant in predicting the employee performance of these bank employees (Muhammad, H. L et al, 2017). It also found that there

is significant relationship between work intensity and employee performance. The employees tend to take more work load in order to avoid being labelled as poor performer. Along with work intensity, job security also has a significant impact on predicting and influencing performance. Arslan, M (2018) tried to establish a relation between cognitive cynicism, behavioural cynicism, affective cynicism and employee engagement on performance of the employees. He proved the existence of negative relationship between employee engagement and employee performance with behavioural, affective and cognitive cynicism. It also implies that employee performance can be increased with the help of employee engagement. It further states that about 53% of change in employee performance was due to the various dimensions of organisational cynicism while the rest was due to other factors. It can also be inferred that employee engagement has a moderating effect on the relationship between employee performance and organisational cynicism. Moreover the findings reveal that the employees are unsatisfied with the career development as it takes 10 to 15 years to get promoted to the next grade. The study also discusses the presence of other factors such as existence of politics and corruption and the frustration caused from these contributing to organisational cynicism. Affective and behavioural dimensions showed significant and negative impact on emotional pride, whereas cognitive dimension had no impact. This reflects the feeling of employee's tension and anger towards organisation that does not fulfil their promises. Affective cynicism has negative impact on attitudinal pride, and the other two dimensions have no significant impact on it. It can be inferred that when the events in the organisation are viewed pessimistically, the organisational identification and organisational pride reduces (Durrah, 2019). From the review of literature, it can be seen that the most of the quantitative studies in this topic are done in the hospitals, and teaching industry. In India, qualitative studies are done in the area of Organisational Cynicism in the IT industry. The job performance, job dissatisfaction, low levels of commitment, intention to quit and turnover are always studied as an outcome due to low efficiency, improper job role, stress and organisational climate. The values of the individual, the alignment of their values with organisational values, the feelings the individual has with respect to the organisation, are not studied in a larger context. IT industry being the greatest contributor to Indian GDP growth (7.7%) has brought lot more opportunities to Indian software engineers, however, this industry suffers from huge attrition and skill gap (Aishwarya, 2017). Hence, it becomes imperative to take a quantitative study which investigates the impact of organisational cynicism on performance among IT employees.

### **Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study are

1. To find the level of organisational cynicism among the employees in the IT industry in India
2. To find the relationship between organisational cynicism and performance of the employees in the IT industry
3. To find the relationship between cognitive cynicism, affective cynicism, behavioural cynicism and performance

## 2 EXPERIMENTAL, MATERIALS AND METHODS

Bangalore being a major IT hub is chosen as a prime location for the study. The sub-location is the ITPL tech-park, which houses more than fifteen software companies. Snow ball sampling method is adopted as each employee referred other employees in the IT industry to take part in this study. This study was conducted on 124 IT employees from the software companies in ITPL tech-park. This is calculated by keeping 8.5 as the confidence interval and 95% as the confidence level, for the population of 1.5 million software employees in Bangalore. The questionnaire was distributed to the employees from IT industry.

The questionnaire is developed with the help of Organisational cynicism scale developed by dean et al (1998) which consists of twelve questions on the three dimensions: affective, behavioural and cognitive. This is a highly used scale while studying the organisational cynicism due to its reliability and validity. The performance scale is made by the researcher and a pilot study was conducted test the reliability to of the scale. The pilot study was conducted on a population of 35 people who work in the IT industry. Upon analysis of the results from the pilot study, it had a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.93 and thus was taken as the scale for the final questionnaire. Apart from the Organisational Cynicism and performance scales, the questionnaire consisted of demographics such as educational qualification, age, gender and experience in the industry. The questions were asked with the help of five point Likert scale, where strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. This questionnaire is then distributed online with the help of google forms to collect the responses.

### Hypothesis

1. H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between organisational cynicism and performance  
H<sub>1</sub>: There is significant relationship between organisational cynicism and performance.
2. H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between cognitive cynicism, affective cynicism, behavioural cynicism and performance.  
H<sub>1</sub>: There is significant relationship between cognitive cynicism, affective cynicism, behavioural cynicism and performance.

## 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics for Cognitive Cynicism**

Cognitive Cynicism	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I believe that my company says one thing and does another.	1	5	3.06	1.099

In my company I see very little resemblance between the events that are planned and the events which are executed	1	5	3.15	1.155
Expects one thing and reward another	1	5	2.68	1.04
My company's policies, goals, and practices seem to have little in common	1	5	3.19	1.054
If an application was said to be done in my company, I'd be more skeptical whether it would happen or not.	1	5	3.13	1.082
Valid N (listwise)				

Table 2 shows the Descriptive statistics for Cognitive Cynicism. The statement “My Company’s policies, goals, and practices seem to have little in common” has the highest mean among all and therefore can be the representative of the entire variable. The table reveals that the organisations in the IT industry may align their rewards with the practices and the respondents feel the same. Most importantly the respondents believe that the organisation doesn’t keep with the implementation of the goal. Due to the poor execution, or false promises, the employees are sceptical about the actual implementation of the said goals and practices. Though this belief is not much reflected; in the reward section to that extent. The other questions very much relate to the main variable we have chosen.

**Table 3: Descriptive statistics for Affective Cynicism**

Affective Cynicism	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
When I think about my company, I feel a sense of anxiety.	1	5	3.05	1.05

When I think about my company, I experience aggravation	1	5	3.32	1.04
When I think about my company, I experience tension.	1	5	3.21	1.084
When I think about my company, I get angry	1	5	3.54	1.047

Valid N (listwise)

Table 3 shows the Descriptive statistics for Affective Cynicism. It shows the distribution of respondents on questions representing the first independent variable of the study, Affective cynicism. The statement “When I think about my company, I get angry” has the highest mean among all and therefore can be the representative of the entire variable. The table reveals that the respondents are highly affected emotionally and this poses affective cynicism. In this section, four of the negative emotions were given. Though most of the questions have very similar results as to the other, we can see that most people felt anger. When tension and aggravation can be associated with the job related or task related emotions, anger and aggravation are the high powerful emotions of cynicism. On the other hand mild emotions such as tension and anxiety are seen less compared to the other two emotions. Most of the respondents in the IT industry are negatively affected by their respective organisation.

**Table 4: Descriptive statistics for Behavioural Cynicism**

Behavioural Cynicism	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
My colleagues and I share a meaningful relationship	1	5	2.19	0.852



I criticize the practices and policies of my company to people outside the company	1	5	3.48	1.078
I talk with others about how work is being carried out in the company	1	5	2.68	1.04
Valid N (listwise)				

Table 4 shows the Descriptive statistics for Behavioural Cynicism. It shows the distribution of respondents on questions representing the first independent variable of the study, behavioural cynicism. The statement “I criticize the practices and policies of my company to people outside the company” has the highest mean among all and therefore can be the representative of the entire variable. The table reveals that most of the respondents don’t have a meaningful relationship with each other. This is one of the important findings, as this might either indicate peer cynicism or any other issues such as the relationship with the boss. We can also see that the behaviour in the form of criticism is the most common method or the outburst of an employee in the IT industry in India. We can also see that the employees don’t tend to talk much about how things are done in the company to the outsiders compared to criticising the company.

**Table 5: Correlation Test between Organisational Cynicism and Performance**

		Organisational Cynicism	performance
Organisational Cynicism	Pearson Correlation	1	-.221*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.014
	N	124	124
performance	Pearson Correlation	-.221*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014	
	N	124	124

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 shows the correlation between organizational cynicism and performance. It shows the correlation between Organisational Cynicism and performance. The significance level is 0.014, which is below than 0.05. The table shows that the variables Organisational Cynicism and performance are in a significant relation with each other. Thus, null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted. Organisational Cynicism has negative low correlation

with performance. This means that if there is high cynicism, then there will be low performance.

**Table 6: Correlation test amongst Dimensions of Organisational Cynicism and Performance**

		Cognitive Cynicism	Affective cynicism	Behavioural Cynicism	performance
Cognitive Cynicism	Pearson Correlation	1	.690**	.488**	-.132
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.142
	N	124	124	124	124
Affective cynicism	Pearson Correlation	.690**	1	.415**	-.256**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.004
	N	124	124	124	124
Behavioural Cynicism	Pearson Correlation	.488**	.415**	1	-.059
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.516
	N	124	124	124	124
performance	Pearson Correlation	-.132	-.256**	-.059	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.142	.004	.516	
	N	124	124	124	124

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 table shows the correlation between Cognitive cynicism, Affective Cynicism, Behavioural cynicism and performance. The significance level between cognitive cynicism and performance is 0.142, which is above than 0.05. The table shows that the variables cognitive cynicism and performance are not in a significant relation with each other. Thus, null hypothesis is accepted and alternate hypothesis is rejected.

The significance level between affective cynicism and performance is 0.004, which is below than 0.05. The table shows that the variables Affective cynicism and performance are in a significant relation with each other. Thus, null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted. Affective Cynicism has a negative low correlation with performance. This means that if there is high Affective cynicism, then there will be low performance.

The significance level between Behavioural Cynicism and Performance is 0.516, which is above than 0.05. The table shows that the variable Behavioural cynicism and performance are not in a significant relation with each other. Thus, null hypothesis is accepted and alternate hypothesis is rejected.

**Figure 2: Conceptual Model of Organizational Cynicism**

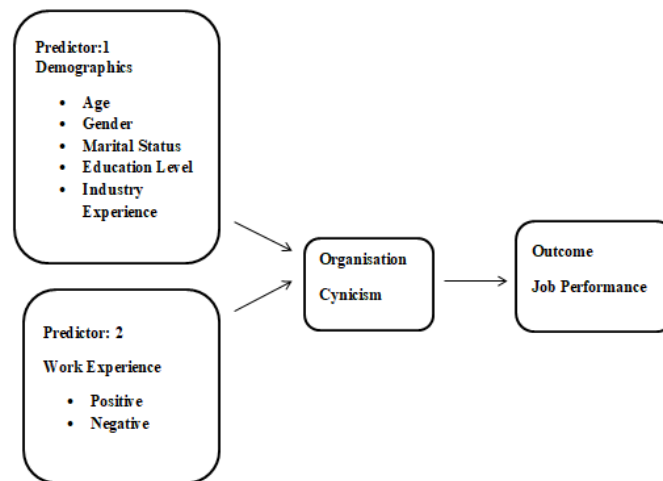


Figure 2 shows the conceptual model of organizational cynicism, It was developed based on the results from the study and it shows the demographic factors and work experience being a predictor for organizational cynicism and job performance being the outcome.

#### **4 IMPLICATIONS**

Organisational Cynicism has negative low correlation with performance. This means that if there is high cynicism, then there will be low performance. Cognitive Cynicism and Performance are not in a significant relation with each other. Affective cynicism and performance are in a significant relation with each other. Affective Cynicism has a negative low correlation with performance. This means that if there is high Affective cynicism, then there will be low performance. Behavioural cynicism and performance are not in a significant relation with each other. Also, there is a linear relationship between organisational cynicism and Performance. Cognitive cynicism has non-significant and weak correlation with Performance. This is because the employees might not strongly feel that their organisation lacks honesty, integrity and sincerity. Affective cynicism has a significant negative correlation with Performance. The employees in the IT industry feel a wide range of negative emotions when associated with their organisation. This gives another major finding which is industry specific. The high affective cynicism might be job-related. Most of the companies in this industry exploit their employees. Though the companies give more benefits, the employees are made to over-work a lot to meet the deadlines. The strenuous job pressure might have led to high levels of Affective cynicism among the employees. This is in line with a study which showed the positive relation between Organisational Cynicism and burnout. This burn-out reflects the affective cynicism. Behavioural cynicism has non-significant and weak correlation with Performance. This is because the employees might not strongly exhibit behaviours such as criticism and other non- verbal behaviours.

## 5 CONCLUSION

According to the study conducted among the IT professionals in Bengaluru, Organisational Cynicism has a negative impact with Performance. There is a linear relationship between Organisational Cynicism and Performance. The results from this study are in accordance with the studies which have been conducted in this area before. One major finding from this study is the significant relationship between Affective Cynicism and Performance of the employees in the IT industry. This means that the employees in this industry experience negative emotions with respect to their company. This could be further explored in the future studies.

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