Thriving at Workplace: Contributing to Self-development, Career Development, and Better Performance in Information Organizations

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The purpose of this study is to empirically examine the relationship of thriving with self-development, career development initiatives and individual performance in the setting of information industry. The research is empirical in nature. Data has been collected through questionnaire from the librarians working at middle and top level positions in the academic and research libraries of Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar and Karachi. A questionnaire was distributed through email and in person. SPSS (version 20) is used for descriptive, correlation and regression analysis. The findings revealed that workplace, having elements of zest and learning, can predict self-development, enhanced performance and career growth. The highest correlation was found between thriving and individual performance. The empirical result depicted that mostly information professionals working in libraries have their own personal career goals and they are continuously making efforts to extend their skills needed for future career growth. The study contributes to a better understanding of thriving at workplace by relating it to both theoretically and empirically important organizational and personal outcomes. Practically, the study will help leadership to pay more attention towards adding vitality and learning experience at workplace, evaluating the inter organizational skills inventory, devising stimulating training programs and making suitable adjustments for utilizing existing and extended competencies. Thriving has been considered a most recent concept in the positive organizational research and behavior movements. There are few studies discussing the conceptual ground of thriving at work place but very few empirical researches could be found in this context. Current study will be an addition to the scholarship of management, organizational behavior and information management by discussing thriving at work place and predicting its outcome among information professionals of Pakistan.

Keywords Thriving, Self-Development, Career Development Initiatives, Performance, Information Organizations.

Introduction

Today's information industry offers advanced technology-based career development opportunities which enforced information organizations to hire and retain skilled personnel. In the same time allied information professions have also augmented the competition for information management professionals (Sayers, 2007). In a competitive work environment, organizations expect their employees to be innovative and willing to take initiative for better performance at workplace.

The literature demonstrated that quality services depend on professionally competent and efficient library personnel. However, the importance of continuous education and initiatives for training and development of library staff remained the less addressed issue in Pakistan (Sharif & Mahmood, 2001; Bhatti, 2009). During the early years of Pakistan, there was severe shortage of skilled and qualified staff in the field of Librarianship. However, during1990s, the opening of public and private sector universities and colleges not only filled this gap but also posed challenge of providing competent professionals for growing LIS job

market (Mahmood, 2003). Haider (2004) highlighted the problems of academic libraries; inadequate library collections, less financial and physical resources, absence of competent leadership in job market and limited application of IT. The answer to all problems lies in the recruitment of competent personnel in top-level positions. However along with the heedful recruitment, providing learning environment is also prerequisite for achieving long-term goals. Munde (2000, p. 175) highlighted the importance of training and development opportunities for sustaining in the career. The author further expressed his views regarding entry-level positions without promise of development and growth as "How does one climb a ladder when there are no rungs?" Ameen (2009; 2011) also discussed that employers are not interested in investing on training and development activities of library staff while making self-learning efforts is also not common.

Emery (2012) stated in the debate on "Are libraries thriving?" that libraries are not attached to the printed world only but Therefore, current fast-paced and competitive work environment of information industry demands information professionals to not only retain their jobs but also experience learning and zest at work.

The objective of this study is to empirically examine the relationship of thriving at work with self-development, career development initiatives and individual performance in the setting of information industry. The study is mainly based on identity theory. The identity theory suggests that individual behaviors are not only affected by roles but the saliency of role (Burke, 1991). The greater importance of role leads to greater change in behavior. In this way organization can get the desired behavior by increasing the saliency of roles in the organization. When employees feel their role important, they put more efforts to gain desired outcome which lead self-development and enhanced performance. The study is also based on theory of self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001). The employees who sustain the

psychological state of thriving are more alert and determined at work which leads them to behave agentically at workplace (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein & Grant, 2005). Further the study presents the insight of thriving practices across information organizations and its impact on employee's self-development and individual performance. The study will help top management to formulate policies in managing diverse human capital, better understanding of their thriving needs and creating an environment where employees can learn and practice new knowledge and skills.

Paterson, Luthans and Jeung (2014) have considered thriving as most recent concept in the positive organizational research and behavior movements. Thriving concept as a joint experience of learning and vitality is discussed in socially embedded model of Spreitzer et al. (2005). There are few studies discussing the conceptual ground of thriving at work place but very few empirical researches could be found in this context. Current study will be an addition to the scholarship of management, organizational behavior and information management by discussing thriving at work place and predicting its outcome among information professionals.

Literature Review

Thriving: Spreitzer et al. (2005) gave the several reasons of exploring the concept of thriving like addition in self-adaption theories, positive impact on health, reduction of health care cost and avoiding absenteeism. Self-adaption posits that individuals regulate their behavior by setting goals, adopting self-reward and punishment mechanism and focusing on self-observation. While thriving is based on how people feel about their own selves, which further help them in self-regulation. Thriving is a psychological sate, comprised of joint experience of vitality and learning. Vitality represents a sense that one is energized and has a zest for work. Vitality also reflects the feelings of aliveness while the learning dimension indicates the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills to build capability and

confidence at workplace (Spreitzer et.al, 2005). Both components of thriving play important role in forward movement of individual's self-development (Paterson, Luthans & Jeung, 2014).

Thriving occurs in a social system because social interaction with other members gives more likelihood of individual's to learning and zest. In social interaction process individuals observe other employees while working and handling job related issues. Hellawell (2012) suggested that making work more exhilarate for employees is the finest way to stimulate growth at workplace. Further he presented the list of key points on "how to kill a young librarian's love of librarianship" including; not allowing them to think out of box, limiting their initiative, strict departmentalization, rewarding on the basis of sustaining status quo and ignoring their potentials.

To measure the organizational learning and individual learning in academic libraries, conducted a study on five university libraries of Taiwan. Results depicted that most of the librarians considered "people empowerment" as an important facet in learning. Varlejs (1999) also discussed that zest for learning is a main element of professional development.

Career Development Initiatives

Changing working conditions demand librarians to extend their existing skills and knowledge. Bertolino, Truxillo and Fraccaroli (2011) stated that for achieving new jobs and projects, employees required to engage in career development process that involves "periodic cycles of skill learning, mastery, and re-skilling''. Career development initiative comprises of tasks like setting specific career goals and objectives, acquiring relevant skills and continuously seeking career development plans (Porath, Spreitzer, Gibson & Garnett, 2012).

The current employment settings offer many opportunities of training and development for individuals. The increased number of choices for career development demand individuals to take responsibility of their own career growth. Employees who involve in enhancing and

acquiring new skills are more successful. The employees who are motivated toward their career growth are in a better position to update their knowledge and skills relevant to their subject field. They not only focus on exiting trends in the market but also foresee the upcoming changes and innovation in the field.

Porath et al. (2012) stated that when employees get the momentum of career development by continuous learning and moving upward, they are in a better position to take more initiative and seeking out opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills. In this process along with the learning component, vitality helps them to set exciting career goals and adopt innovative ways to achieve those goals. Thus in view of above discussion we can hypothesize the following statement:

H1: Thriving is significantly related with career development initiatives.

Individual Performance

Learning at workplace has been considered as an important tool of managers to achieve competitive advantage. The debate about learning and performance has also been fundamental in the studies of human resource development. Modern knowledge based organizations put more focus on their human capital to gain sustainable competitive advantage. Performance has been defined in many contexts however the general definition describe performance as based on behaviors relevant to the goals of organization (Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmit, 1997). In this study performance is taken in the sense of quality, quantity and accuracy of the work. Individual performance assumed as a general effectiveness of employees in meeting the expectation of work (Porath et al., 2012). Literature reported that organizations may advance job performance by controlling individual behaviors.

Individual learning at work place does not automatically results in organizational learning. However, learning organization provides a feasible platform for individual learning. Individual learning leads to change in employees'

behavior which ultimately enhances the organizational performance. It has been theorized that thriving help individual in self-regulation for taking responsibility of their own career development. Thriving process also help employees to behave agentically at workplace that further develop strong relationship among workers and increase knowledge at work place. Vitality produces the psychological, social and physical resources that cause increase in performance (Fredrickson, 2001). Hence we can hypothesize the following statement:

H2: Thriving is significantly related with individual performance.

Self-Development

In order to meet the needs of hypercompetitive market, the organization require those type of employees who not only meet the needs of today's work environment but also make themselves ready for future needs. As Ameen (2011) discussed that the formal education never been sufficient to sustain in the market, individuals should update their skill and knowledge to meet the future challenges. Self-development includes the activities of seeking and using feedback from supervisors and peers, engaging in developmental activities, setting development goals, and tracking progress of their own development (London & Smither, 1999). Spreitzer et al. (2005) discussed the relationship of thriving with self-development based on the theories of self-determination

(Ryan & Deci, 2000) and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001). Farr, Hofmann and Ringenbach (1993) discussed that employee having learning goal orientation, mostly follows self-development practices. The work-based learning involves the activities that link learning to the work. Work-based learning proposes a strategy for staff development in libraries due to its linkage with library needs and engagement of library staff members. The central point of work-based learning demands employees to take the responsibility of their own learning (Allen, 1999).

Employees who are self-regulated and agentic are more inclined toward learning new and innovative way of work. In the process of learning, individual's enthusiasm increases on continuous pace and they take corrective action to boost their learning and vitality which advance their self-development (Paterson, Luthans & Jeung. 2014). Hence we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Thriving has a positive and significant relationship with self-development.

Conceptual Framework

Research model depicts that thriving has a positive relationship with career development initiatives, individual performance and self-development. The study will answer the question whether thriving at work place effect career development initiatives, individual performance and self-development of information organization personnel?
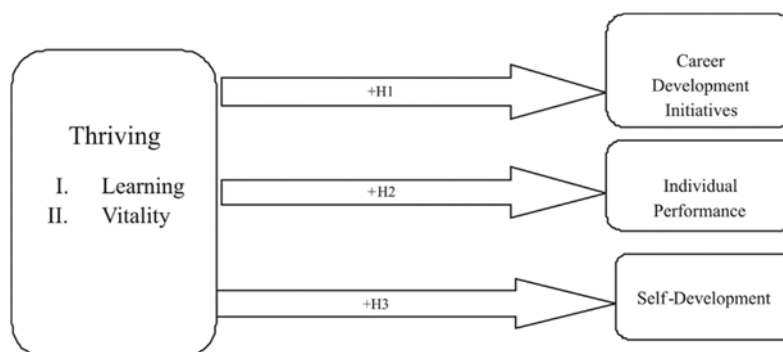
Figure. 1

Methods

Sample. Data has been collected through convenient sampling from the librarians working at middle and top level positions in the academic and research libraries of Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar and Karachi. Eleven Coordinators from Lincoln Corners and Reading Rooms; Islamabad, Muzaffarabad, Sargodha, Faisalabad, Bahawalpur, Hyderabad, Khairpur, Larkana, Karachi and Peshawar also participated in the survey. In this study libraries have been taken as information organizations. However, there are several other organizations involved in information creation, storage and dissemination of information which might get accommodated in author's future studies. Online survey has been designed on Google docs. 230 questionnaires were distributed through email, social media websites (facebook, linkedin) and in person. 146 filled questionnaires were received with the response rate of 63 %.

Measures The questionnaire was designed to get the demographic information and data against each variable. In the first division, the respondents were asked to give the information about gender, age, qualification and work experience. In the second half of the questionnaire 28 questions were asked. The respondents were required to submit their response on five-point likert scale ranging from 1-5 (1=strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree & 1=to very little extent, 5=to very great extent)

Thriving Porath et al. (2012) developed the 10-item scale of thriving. The measure contains five questions each to gauge learning and vitality. The items included statements like "I see myself continually improving" and "I have energy and spirit". The reliability test showed significant reliability and internal consistency with the value of .76.

Career development initiatives. Established 4-item scale of Welbourne, Johnson and Erez (1998) was used to measure the career development initiatives. The respondents were asked to respond against statements like "I am developing skills needed for my future career"

and "I am continuously making progress in my career". The alpha reliability coefficient was .74

Individual performance. The author used 4-item scale of Welbourne et al. (1998) to measure individual performance at workplace. The items measured level of quantity, quality, accuracy and service at the workplace. Sample items included were "The quality of my work is much higher than average" and "My efficiency is much higher than average". The evaluated coefficient score of the scale was .64

Self-development. The 10-item scale of Tsui, Pearce and Porter (1997) was used to evaluate the extent to which librarians seek feedback and development at their work places. The respondents were asked to report their response on five point Likert scale (1= To very little extent, 2= To a small extent, 3= To some extent, 4= Quite a bit and 5= To a very great extent). Reliability test depicted the value of .80 on Cronbach's alpha.

Analysis

Data has been analyzed using SPSS (v.20) software. Information toward age, gender, qualification and job experience was collected through self-reports and incorporated in the research as control variables. As displayed in demographic statistics (Tabel.1) 69 percent of the respondents were male and 31 % were female. Contrary to this result, LIS schools are getting more intakes of female students as compared to male students. It has been reported that clash between career and home responsibilities of women and limited mobility caused a major individual factor influencing on career progression (Greiner, 1984).

With regard to qualification of respondents, 60 percent had master degrees, 36 percent having MS/MPhil degrees, 2 percent each Ph.D and BLIS/BA degrees. Significantly increasing percentage of MS/M.Phil. degree (Shan, Ishaq & Shaheen, 2015) showed encouraging trend of continuous personal and career development among information professionals.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics psychology

Demographic		Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	69%
	Female	31%
Qualification	BLIS/BA	2%
	MLIS	60%
	MS/M.Phil	36%
	Ph.D.	2%

The age and job experience statistics are shown in Histograms (Figure.1, Figure.2). The result revealed that majority of the respondents were of age group between 31-35 and majority were having job experience of 5-8 years. Descriptive analysis is shown in Table.2 displaying the mean, standard deviation, correlation and alpha values. The means for thriving was 4.22 (S=0.46), for career development initiative 3.91 (S=0.59), for individual performance 4.09 (S=0.60) and for self-development 3.82 (S=0.59). Thriving showed the highest values of mean which comprehend that librarians are experiencing learning and vitality at their workplaces. One-way-ANOVA analysis revealed insignificant values of control variable against all dependent variables.
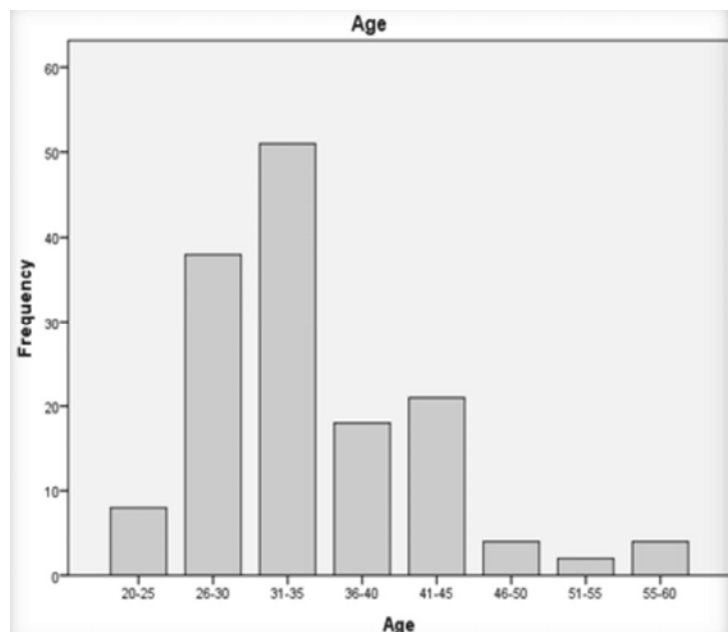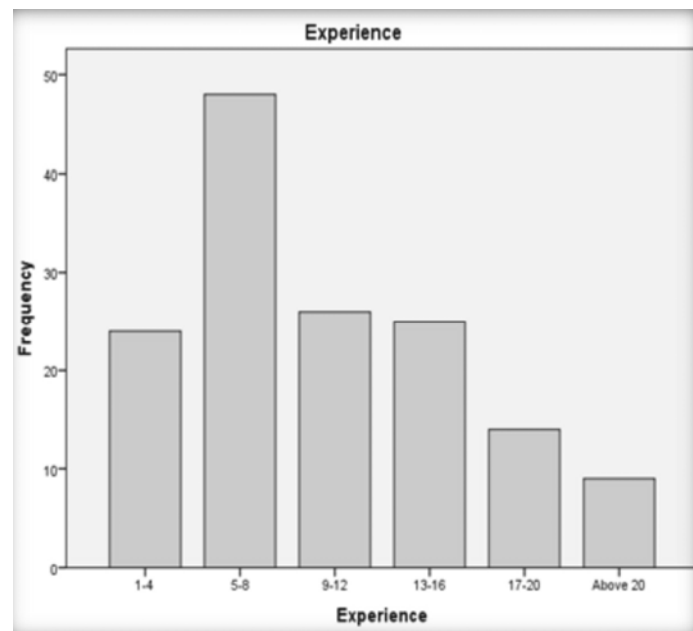

Figure. 2

Figure. 3

Bivariate Correlation

All correlations—values were above .10 which showed significance at p < .001 (see Table 2.). Thriving found a significant and positive relationship with career development initiatives (0.43; p < .001), individual performance (0.47; p < .001) and self-development (0.25; p < .001) that proved the all three hypothesis. The results also revealed the positive and significant relationship of career development initiative with individual performance (0.34; p < .001) and self-development (0.17; p < .001).

Table 2. Standard Deviation, Mean, Correlation Analysis

Variables	S.D.	MEAN	1	2	3	4
1.TH	.467	4.22	(.76)			
2.CDI	.596	3.91	.438**	(.74)		
3.IP	.600	4.09	.476**	.341**	(.64)	
4.SD	.591	3.82	.256**	.171*	.389**	(.80)

(TH=Thriving, CD=Career Development Initiatives, IP=Individual Performance, SD=Self Development)

a. Alpha reliabilities are given in parenthesis.

b. **correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

c. *correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was adopted to test the hypothesis. The effects of thriving on career development initiatives, individual performance and self-development were tested by entering the control variable at first phase with each dependent variable separately. The results of control variables were insignificant with all three dependent variables. In the second step, separate three tests of regression revealed the direct effects of thriving with predictors.

Table 3 displayed the value of β and coefficient of determination. The relationship examining the effects of thriving on career development initiatives (β= .43, p < .001), individual performance (β= .43, p < .001) and self-development (β= .25, p < .001) showed positive and significant relationship. The value of coefficient of determination showed that thriving explained 19 % of the variance in career development, 22% of the variance in individual performance and 06% of the variance in self-development. The result of multiple regression analysis supported the H1, H2 and H3 to confirm that thriving has a significant and positive relationship with all three dependent variables.

Table 3. Regression Analysis

Career Development, Individual Performance, Self-Development				
Career Development				
Independent Variable	Standardize Beta	R^2	ΔR^2	Sig.
Thriving	.438	.19		.000
Individual Performance				
Independent Variable	Standardize Beta	R^2	ΔR^2	Sig.
Thriving	.476	.22		.000
Self-Development				
Independent Variable	Standardize Beta	R^2	ΔR^2	Sig.
Thriving	.256	.06		.002

Discussion

The empirical research demonstrated support for hypothesized relationships. The demographic statistics revealed percentages and frequency of gender, age, job tenure and qualification of the sample. In Pakistan women career progression is lower as compared to men. The comparative study of Greiner (1984) regarding public library directors revealed that women as compared to men reported fewer employers. Women prefer to remain in one library and try to reach on top position through internal promotions while male librarians are more likely to be hired on top level position through outside recruitment. However, 21st century brought significant change in this area as well. Women's increasing interest and involvement in practical education credentials and career development activities indicated that they are more aware about self-development than before. Moreover, they are in a better position to accept the higher-level positions now.

The correlation table showed significant correlation among all independent and

dependent variables. The highest correlations found in this study were between thriving and individual performance (r = 0.47) which showed that the managers can enhance the individual performance by giving more meanings to the jobs and creating more learning opportunities. The study of (Batti, 2009) revealed that the most important way of retaining good relationship with library users is "by proving the significance of the job that librarians can do for supporting the teaching and research program". The importance associated with the roles of library personnel encourages information professionals to render better services and enhancing organizational performance.

Regression analysis confirmed hypothesis HI stating that thriving has a positive relationship with career development initiatives. Result showed that mostly information professionals working in libraries have their own personal career goals and they are continuously making efforts to extend their skills needed for future career growth. It has been suggested that libraries need to create an environment which encourage broadness and promote learning activities. In such environment, leadership can collaborate with other employees to share their knowledge and expertise. This sharing of knowledge enhances the skills of personnel which facilitate them to excel in their career.

The finding supported hypothesis H2 stating that thriving has a positive relationship with individual performance. Most of respondents gave satisfactory response regarding their performance at workplace. The results showed that employees' energy and spirit for learning enhance their overall performance at work. The quantitative result also confirmed hypothesis H3 stating that thriving has a positive relationship with self-development. The information professionals, who feel enthusiastic and learnt at their work, are more conscious about their own self development. The results showed that mostly information professionals are regularly seeking feedback at workplace from their supervisors and peers for continuous development.

Conclusion

The study contributes to a better understanding of thriving at workplace by linking it to both theoretically and empirically important organizational and personal outcomes. The findings revealed that workplace, having elements of zest and learning, can predict self-development, enhanced performance and career growth. Since the allied information professions increased competition among LIS professionals hence it is mandatory for senior library professionals to educate themselves of latest trends for sustenance in the market whereas new professionals required continuous learning to survive in the long run. Mahmood (2003) predicted the threat of librarians' job market to be taken over by other disciplines if LIS schools didn't update their curricula and cope with change.

In consequence of various studies (Sharif & Mahmood, 2001; Haider 2003; Mahmood 2003, 2009) LIS schools have included various courses on business communication, information technology, personality development (Ameen, 2011). Currently majority of professionals are using seminars, lectures, social media websites, workshops, formal and informal gatherings as a mean of updating their skills and getting information on latest trends. However, it is a dire need of time to design short courses for senior and mid-career professionals to advance their existing skills.

Implication of the Study

The findings of the study will encourage managers and supervisors to devise suitable learning and career development interventions for early and mid-career professionals. The study is beneficial for information organizations to adapt and meet the needs of rapidly changing environment which demands skilled human resource. Practically, the study will help leadership to pay more attention towards adding vitality and learning experience at workplace, evaluating the inter organizational skills inventory, devising stimulating training

programs and making suitable adjustments for utilizing existing and extended competencies.

Limitation and Future Research Recommendation

The specific type and limited size of sample are possible limitations of the study. Future research may involve more organizations dealing with creation, storage and dissemination of information. The cross sectional design of the study is also a limitation in terms of drawing inferences regarding variance in thriving level at different span of time.

Future research may be conducted on exploring the antecedents of thriving like agenetic behaviors (task focus, exploration, heedful relating etc.) in the context of information industry of Pakistan. Secondly more organizational and individual outcomes of thriving can be explored in future studies.

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