A STUDY OF THE INNOVATIVE WORK BEHAVIOR OF ACADEMIC STAFF: FOCUS ON ETHIOPIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

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Abstract

This main objective this study was to study the innovative work behavior of academic staff in some selected Ethiopian Public Universities. This research is descriptive in nature, which follows deductive approach with descriptive research design. The researchers used proportional stratified sampling, out of 340 respondents sampled, only 301 has returned the valid questionnaire. The respondents of this study were only academic staff selected from the selected universities. The data were analyzed by SPSS version 20 to show statistical out puts of descriptive statistical results. The major finding of this study indicated that there is upright initiation of innovative work behavior of academic staff in some selected Ethiopian Public Universities. The response of respondents on the positive questions asked were strong in positive manner. We strongly recommend other scholars to consider factors which can affect the innovative work behavior of employees in future.

Key Words: Academic Staff**,** Innovative Work Behavior, Universities

Introduction

Innovative and Competent employees are the greatest assets of any organization. The abilities of employees play a vital role in the context of solving the diverse problems faced by the modern organizations. Just as it is possible to determine the climate of environment through parameters developed by modern sciences, it is possible to determine the behavior of an organization through parameters developed by behavioral scientists (Harish,2013).

According to Kanter (1988) investigation on innovation behaviour is a multistage process in nature. The model of innovative work behavior specifically labels the work behaviours of an individual employee involve in at each stage of the innovation process. This model frameworks the discrete tasks involved in; idea generation and beginning of the drivers of the innovation; alliance building and gaining of the power necessary to move the idea into realism; idea realization and innovation production, turning the idea into a model; the adoption of the idea and the implementation of the innovative idea.

The concept of innovative work behavior remains neglected as fundamental research area in the country in general and higher learning institutions specifically. As the researcher align the man power along with the growth and transformational plan of the country employees are expected to be innovative in their work in which the knowledge workers are expected be to be the role model for others. Many scholars (Koen N.,2015; Bari'ah et al,2013; Bekele,2014; Betül B.,2015; Rabia et al 2010) had conducted researches in areas of organizational climate, psychological capital and innovative work behavior in different organizations at different period. These findings were base for up-to-date research and investigate those variables in Ethiopian setting especially in higher learning institutions.

The major variable of this research was Innovative work behavior measured in dimensions of opportunity exploration, idea generation, championing, and implementation. The output of the study helps the institutions to take corrective actions about employee's innovative work behavior enhancement strategies and to understand the inclination of employees within an organization considering organizational vision and mission accomplishment.

Literature Review

The epistemology of innovative work behaviors was derived from the term innovation. A behavioral theory such as expectancy theory of motivation is the earlier model of Innovative work behaviors. The innovation as has been defined generally by scholars is comprised from both ideation and the application of new ideas, whereas the ideation is originated from creativity component (Mclean,2005; Goepel and Zu (2012). In extent, Shalley & Zhou (2008) explain creativity as an iterative process that involve reflection and action, seeking feedback, experimenting, and discussing new ways to do things rather just relying on routine deeds.

 Innovative work behaviors have focused mainly on individual outcome expectations when explaining the intermediate process that lead to the emergence of the behavior. However, this focus on individual's outcome expectation falls short in explaining the effect of innovation barriers. The past research also lacks explanation of different behavioral strategies associated with successful innovation implementation within organization (Goepel and Zu ,2012).

According to McLean (2005) the terms of creativity and innovation are often used interchangeably in research studies. Creativity has to do with the production of novel and useful ideas meanwhile; innovation has to do with the production or adoption of useful ideas and idea implementation (Amabile T. et al,2005; Khan and Fatima,2009).   Meanwhile, Amabile found that in the componential theory, creativity is influenced by three components within the individual; 1) Domain relevant skills, 2) creativity relevant processes, 3) intrinsic motivation and one component outside the individual- the work environment.

Upon the diversification of judgment, scholars had agreed that creativity is closely related to innovative behavior (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2007; García M. et al ,2008). Creativity is intended to produce benefits and has clearer applied component since it is expected to result in innovative output (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2007). It can be concluded that innovative work behaviors do not only require the generation of idea but also requires behaviors to implement the ideas that ultimately achieve improvement for business performance in long run.

Individual innovation has been studied in terms of personality characteristics, outputs, and behaviours. For instance, Hurt, Joseph, and Cook (1977) focus on generalized willingness to change, a personality-based aspect of individual innovation. West's (1987) measure of role innovation captures how many changes an individual has initiated in his or her job in comparison to the last role occupant. Similarly, Axtell et al.'s (2000) measure assesses individuals' self-ratings of their suggestions and realized innovations. Both take an output-based view of individual innovation. Others conceptualize individual innovation as a set of discretionary employee behaviours (Scott & Bruce, 1994). Here, my study also considers this behavioural approach.

Innovation theory has repeatedly stressed that innovation is broader than only creativity and also includes the implementation of ideas (King & Anderson, 2002). Thus, IWB does not only include idea generation, but also behaviours needed to implement ideas and achieve improvements that will enhance personal and/or business performance. Following Farr and Ford (1990) innovative work behaviour can be defined as an individual's behaviour that aims to achieve the initiation and intentional introduction (within a work role, group or organization) of new and useful ideas, processes, products or procedures.

The construct of IWB is closely related to employee creativity. Creativity is defined as the production of new and useful ideas concerning products, services, processes and procedures (Olham & Cummings, 1996). However, some differences between the constructs exist (West & Farr, 1990; Scott & Bruce, 1994). Unlike creativity IWB is explicitly intended to provide some kind of benefit. It has a clearer applied component and is expected to result in innovative output. Creativity can be seen as a crucial component of IWB, most

evident in the beginning of the innovation process, when problems or performance gaps are recognized and ideas are generated in response to a perceived need for innovation (West, 2002).

Research Methodology

Sampling and Population: This research is descriptive in nature. Out of the four public universities considered in this study as population, four universities were selected by stratified sampling, the strata were made depending up on the university generation (the year that university opened), four generation were identified; first, second, third and fourth generation universities. 340 respondents were selected from the total population of the academic staff, and only the response of 301 respondents analyzed and reported.

Data Collection: Data were collected from the selected universities by self-administered questionnaire.

Design: The descriptive reseach design was used to describe the innovative work behavior of academic staff in some selected public Universities.

Questionnaire: In answering the questionnaire, the respondents asked to indicate their responses to the questions on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Analyses: The SPSS version 20 statistical software package were employed for data analysis. The descriptive statistical outputs were used to investigate innovative work behavior academic staff in Ethiopian higher education institutions.

Analyses and discussion

Gender Distribution: the gender distribution of respondents questioned in this study 69.1% were Males and 30.9% were Females. The higher education working environment were highly influenced by Males in Ethiopia. Currently due to high emphasis of government on gender equality and good social awareness on gender equality the number of females in higher learning institutions are increasing at increasing rate. On the other hand, Ethiopia is a country dominated by people at productive age group.
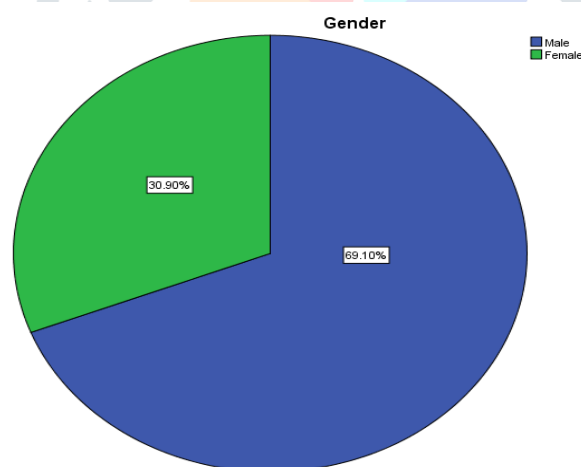
Source: SPSS output

Figure 1: The Gender distribution of respondents

Age Distribution: According to data collected from the four public universities 15.95% were below age of 30 years old, 71.43% were from 31-40 years old, 9.967% were from 41-50 years old, and 2.658% of the academicians covers greater than 51 age group. This indicates at higher learning institutions more than half of the instructors were people at productive age.
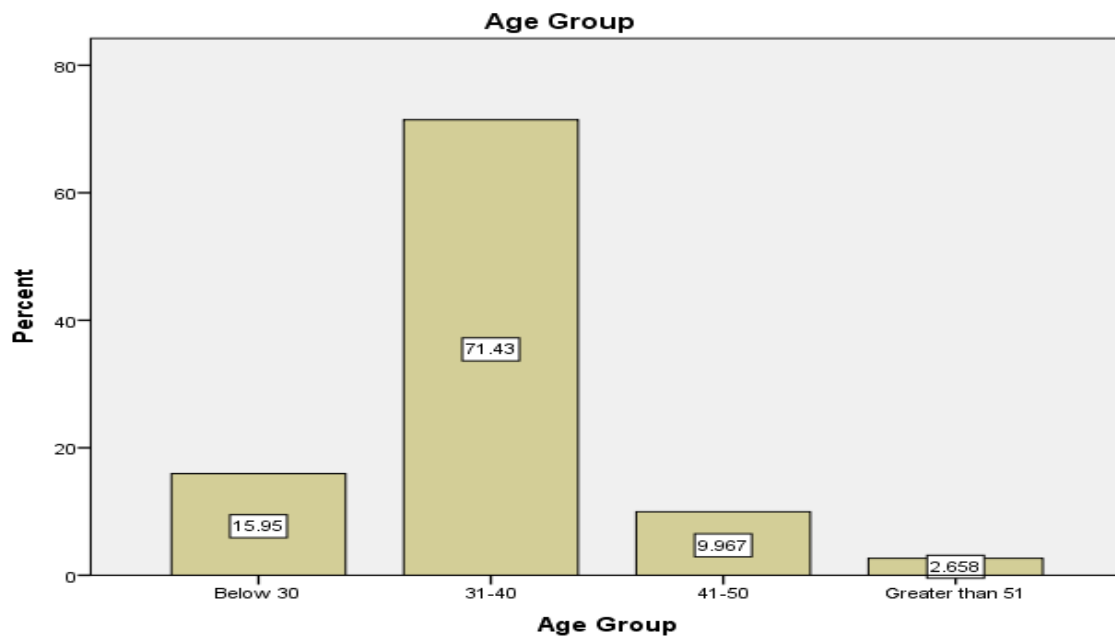
Source: SPSS output, 2018

Figure 2: The Age distribution of respondents

Marital status: In this research marital status was considered as one element of demographic variables. The result indicates most of respondents were married (54.5%), 33.6% were single, and the other percent were divorced and widowed. Due to high cultural value for marriage most of respondents were married and as indicated in table 4.2, 14% were fresh graduates and junior instructors, who didn't join marriage.

Table 1: Marital Status of Respondents in Percentage

| Scale		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Single	101	33.6
	Married	164	54.5
	Divorced	21	7.0
	Widowed	15	5.0
	Total	301	100.0

Source: SPSS output, 2018

Discussion and Analysis

Innovative Work behavior and its measuring items were discussed in this part by using tables, histograms, mean, and standard deviations depending on the response of respondents(n=301), data collected from four public universities in Ethiopia.

Innovative Work Behavior

To measure the Innovative Work Behavior the following items were given to respondents: I pay attention to issues that are no part of my daily work, I wonder how things can be improved, I search out new working methods, techniques or instruments, I generate original solutions for problems, and I find new approaches to
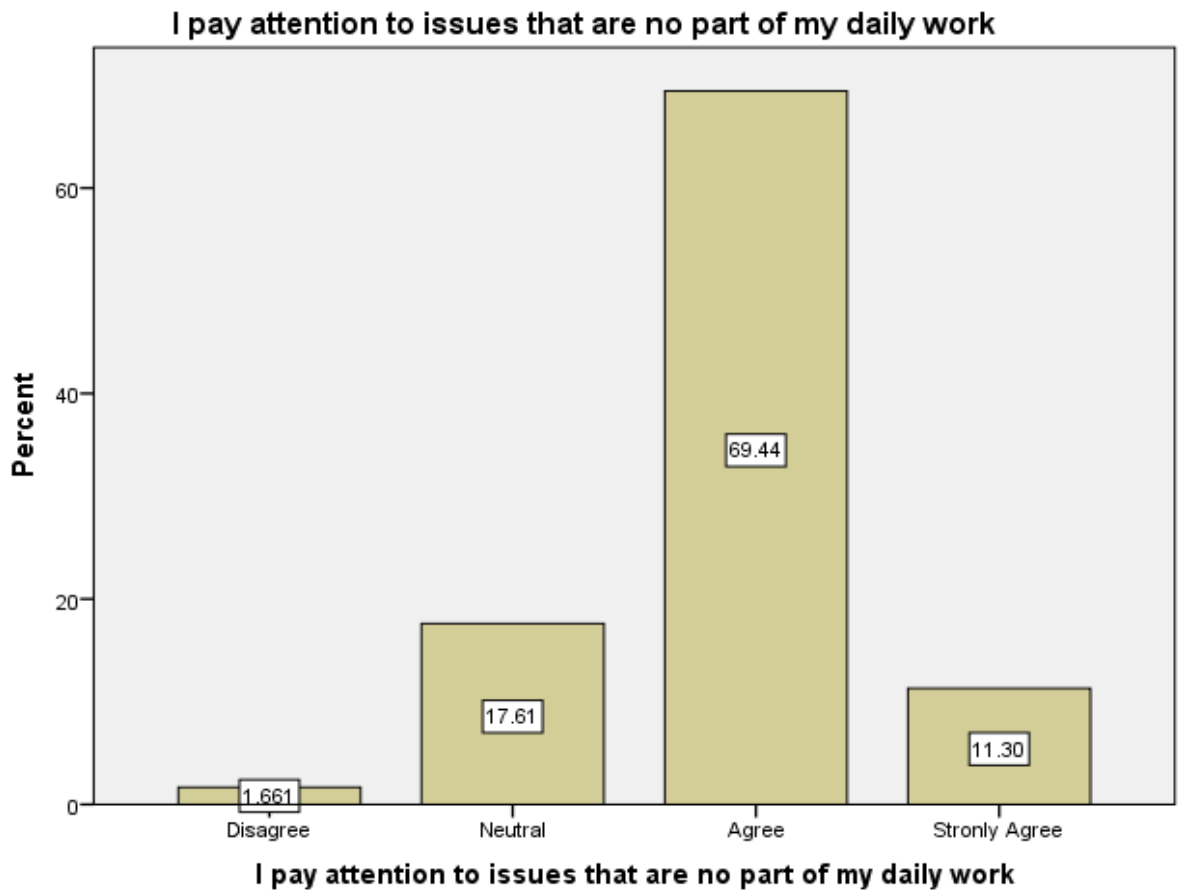
Figure 3: IWB1

execute tasks.

Regarding the first question, 69.44% agree and 11.30% strongly agree about employees/ they pay attention to issues that are no part of their daily work. But 1.661% disagree about employees/ they pay attention to issues that are no part of their daily work, while 17.61% were neutral (mean= 3.90, standard deviation= 0.589). So, it can be concluded that majority if the respondents believe that they pay attention to issues that are no part of their daily work for the betterment of their knowledge and organizational productivity as well.
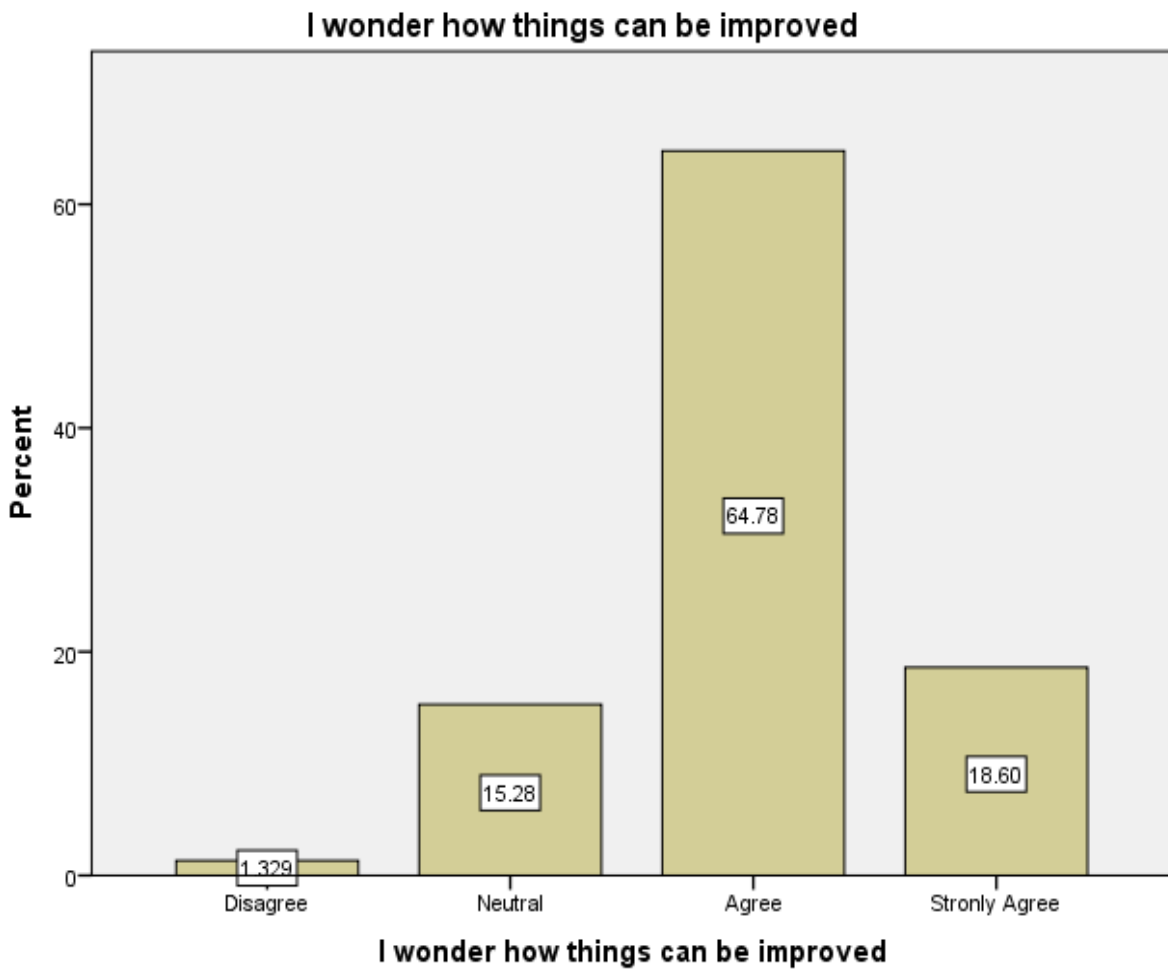
Figure 4:

IWB2

Out of all respondents included in this study more than half 64.78% agree and 18.60% strongly agree that they wonder how things can be improved, 15.28% neutral, and 1.329% disagree with the idea (mean= 4.01, standard deviation= 0.627). Therefore, employees/instructors wonder how things can be improved and the developmental progress in the universities were promising.
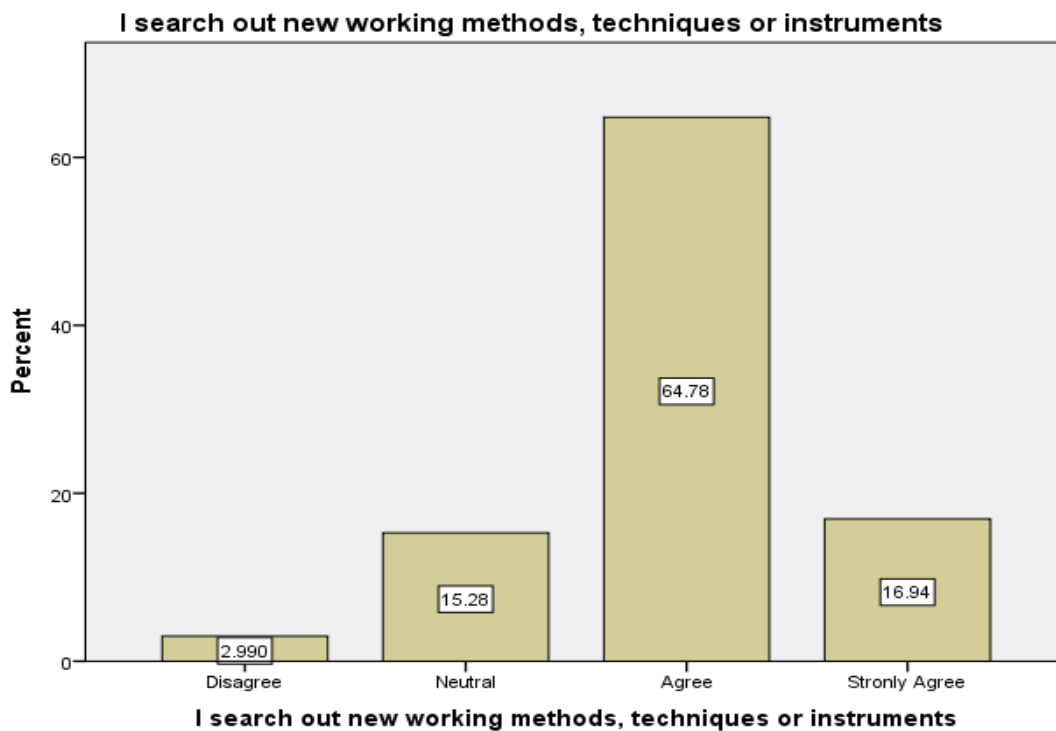
Figure 5: IWB3

The productivity of organization could be maintained when employees search out new working methods, techniques or instruments, in this construct 64.78% agree, 16.94% strongly agree that they search out new working methods, techniques or instruments, but then 15.28% were neutral about the issue. On the other hand, 2.990 % disagree on search out new working methods, techniques or instruments for an organization (mean= 3.96, standard deviation= 0.664). Thus, it can be concluded that more 50% of the respondents search out new working methods, techniques or instruments for their organization and their career development.
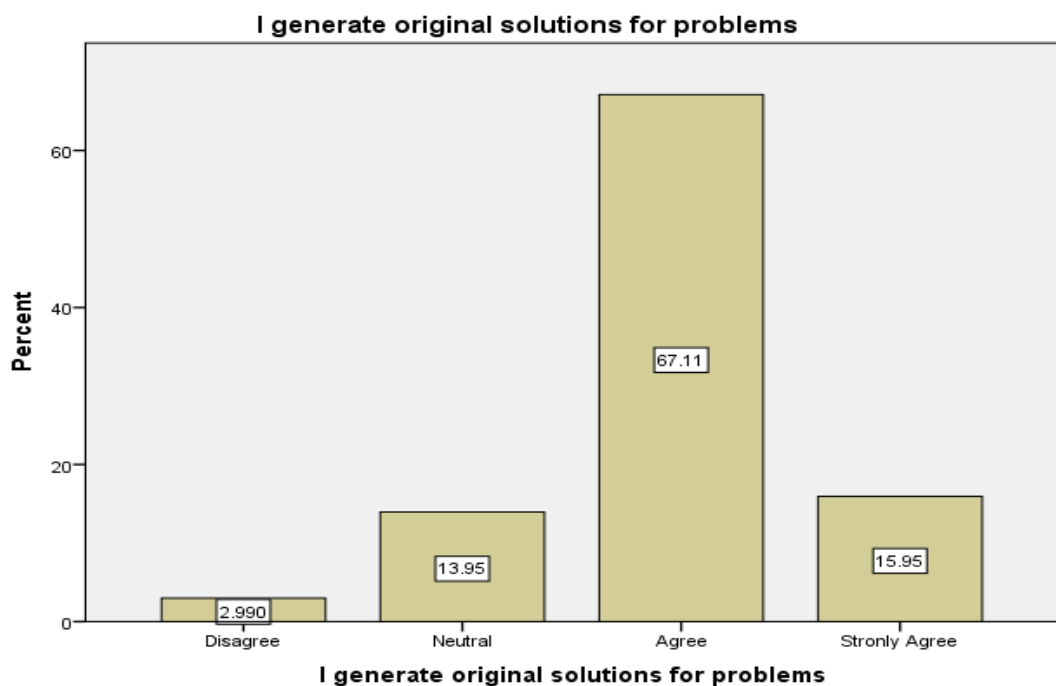

Figure 6: IWB4

Regarding generation of original solutions for problems 67.11% agree, 15.95% strongly agree, 13.95% neutral, 2.990% disagree on generation of original solutions for the organizational problems around them (mean= 3.96, standard deviation= 0.647). More than 60% believe in generating original solutions for problems.
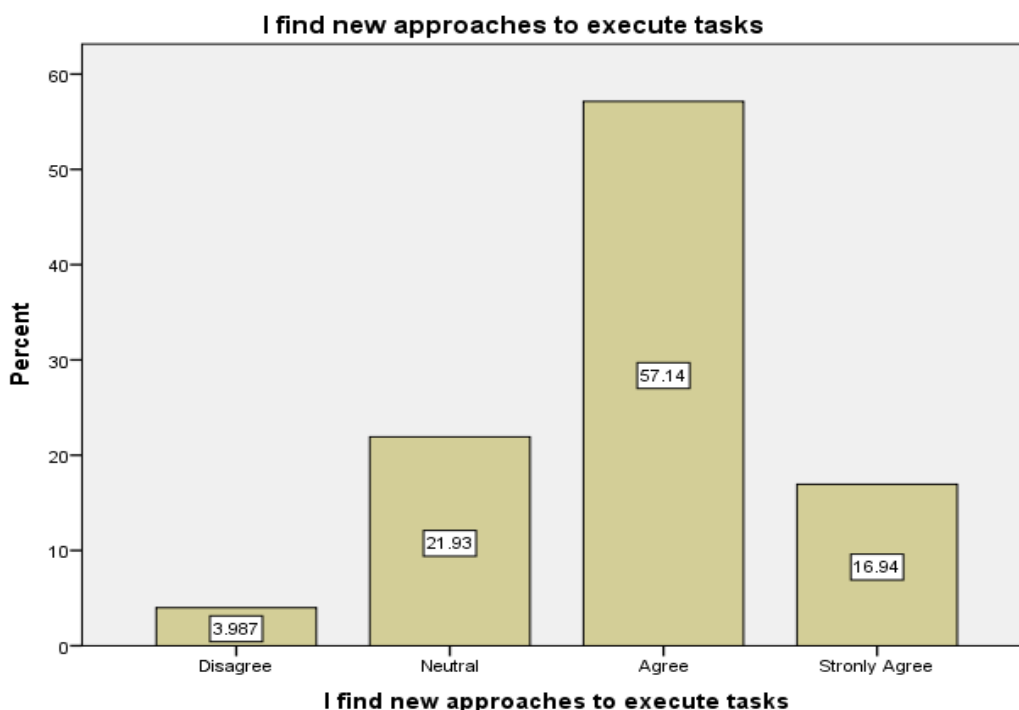

Figure 7: IWB5

Finally, 57.14% agree and 16.94% strongly agree that they find new approaches to execute tasks in their organization, and 3.987% disagree on finding new approaches to execute tasks in their organization, while 21.93% were in neutral position on this idea (mean= 3.87, standard deviation= 0.730). Hence, more than half of respondents were good in finding new approaches to execute tasks in their respective organization.

Table 2: Summary of Response of Respondents regarding Innovative Work Behavior (n=301)

Items	Scale	N	%	Mean	SD
I pay attention to issues that are no part of my daily work	Strongly disagree	-	-	3.90	.589
	Disagree	5	1.7		
	Neutral	53	17.6		
	Agree	209	69.4		
	Strongly agree	34	11.3		
	Total	301	100.0		
I wonder how things can be improved	Strongly disagree	-	-	4.01	.627
	Disagree	4	1.3		
	Neutral	46	15.3		
	Agree	195	64.8		
	Strongly agree	56	18.6		
	Total	301	100.0		
I search out new working methods, techniques or instruments	Strongly disagree	-	-	3.96	.664
	Disagree	9	3.0		
	Neutral	46	15.3		
	Agree	195	64.8		
	Strongly agree	51	16.9		
	Total	301	100.0		

I generate original solutions for problems	Strongly Disagree	-	-	3.96	.647
	Disagree	9	3.0		
	Neutral	42	14.0		
	Agree	202	67.1		
	Strongly Agree	48	15.9		
	Total	301	100.0		
I find new approaches to execute tasks	Strongly disagree	-	-	3.87	.730
	Disagree	12	4.0		
	Neutral	66	21.9		
	Agree	172	57.1		
	Strongly Agree	51	16.9		
	Total	301	100.0		

Source: SPSS output, 2018
Note: N= number of respondents, %= percentage, SD= Standard Deviation

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, as the objective of this article was to investigate the innovative work behavior of academic staff in some selected public universities in Ethiopia, the following conclusions were given;

➤ Among the gender distribution of respondents sampled in this study 69.1% were Males and 30.9% were Females.
➤ According to data collected from the four public universities 15.9% were below age of 30 years old, 71.4% were from 31-40 years old, 10% were from 41-50 years old, and 2.7% of the academicians covers greater than 51 age group.
➤ The result indicates most of respondents were married (54.5%), 33.6% were single, and the other percent were divorced and widowed.
➤ More than 60% of the respondents were on the position that they pay attention to issues that were no part of their daily work. They invest more of their time on such activities.
➤ Out of all respondents involved in this research more than half 64.8% agree and 18.6% strongly agree that they wonder how things can be improved in the organization personally and organizationally.
➤ The efficiency of organization could be upheld when employees search out new working methods, techniques or instruments, in this aspect 64.8% agree, 16.9% strongly agree that they search out new working methods, techniques or instruments in their respective organization.
➤ The problem-solving capacity of workers determine the success of an organization and career of each employee. Regarding generation of original solutions for problems 67.1% agree, 15.9% strongly agree, 14.0 % neutral, 3.0% disagree on generation of original solutions for the organizational problems around them in different situations.
➤ Lastly, the employees of the organizations were highly dedicated on finding new approaches to execute tasks in their department/organization. 57.1% agree and 16.9% strongly agree that they find new approaches to execute tasks in their organization, and 4.0% disagree on finding new approaches to execute tasks in their organization.

Recommendations

Based on the data analyzed about the innovative work behavior of academic staff in Ethiopian higher education institutions the following recommendations were given;

- Since the existence of an organization is determined by the human resources working for that organization developing the innovative work behavior of employees has high significance, mainly in order to achieve the organizational vision, mission, goals, and values in short and long term.

- The organizations should assist the employees to act out of the box and pay attention to issues that were no part of their daily work in developing the innovative work behavior of employees.

- The commitment of employees on improving things in an organization should be encouraged in an organization to upgrade the innovative work behavior of employees.

- Universities should motivate instructors to deploy them selves on searching out new working methods, techniques or instruments in their respective organization as to achieve an organizational vison and mission.

- The organization should stand with openness with the solution of employees to the organizational problems. Considering the importance of developing the problem-solving staff generation of original solutions for the organizational problems should be integrated resourcefully.

- In changing and challenging organizations, the commitment of employees to find new approaches to execute tasks in their department/organization should be welcomed by the respective universities.

Future Implications

The researchers strongly recommend the prospective scholars to work on very important aspect of organizational leadership and organizational success, which is innovative work behavior of workers. This article has focused mainly on the descriptive part innovative work behavior and in the future the association and influencing factor with and on innovative work behaviors should be investigated scientifically. Also, this study targeted only the universities in Ethiopia only and the innovative work behavior in different organization should be researched.

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