

## ABSTRACT

There is much discussion of employees' 'personal responsibility' in the organizations and literature, but the research has produced no clear, widely accepted definition of the term. The unclear and inconsistent use of the term calls for additional research on its conceptualization and its means of assessment in an organizational context. This study seeks to illuminate the research addressing these questions: What is 'personal responsibility' and how can it be conceptualized in an organizational context? What are the components of 'personal responsibility' and how can the term be captured empirically? How do certain job characteristics (namely, job meaningfulness, role ambiguity, and job control) affect this concept? And, how does 'personal responsibility' influence the work-related outcomes of performance, satisfaction, tension and work-family interference?

Starting with a literature review, the study concludes that the term 'personal responsibility' has three core, connected meanings. These meanings, identified as dimensions of employees' 'personal responsibility', are: agency (i.e., 'personal initiative'), accountability, and obligation. The study places these dimensions in an organizational context and names the new, conceptualized term 'Employee Responsibility'. The proposed conceptualization is validated empirically using the statistical methods of Mokken scale analysis and factor analysis applied to the responses of 677 employees at a Swedish multinational organization.

The study also proposes (partial) models for the determinants and outcomes of the 'Employee Responsibility' dimensions. The empirical analysis of the responses of 275 employees in managerial positions and 402 employees in non-managerial positions indicates that (1) role ambiguity has a U-shape relationship with 'personal initiative' and negatively affects the feeling of accountability in the two occupational categories; (2) job meaningfulness positively affects the three dimensions in the non-managerial occupational category while it influences only accountability and obligation feelings in the managerial category; and (3) job control has an indirect influence on 'personal initiative' via job-related self-efficacy. Concerning the outcomes affected by the feeling of 'personal responsibility' among the employees, the study reaches the following conclusions. (1) 'Personal responsibility' has a positive impact on managers' and non-managers' performance. (2) Accountability increases employees' feelings that work interferes with family life; accountability at very high levels, negatively affects the performance of the managers and positively affects the performance of the non-managers; the feeling of accountability tends to escalate the feelings of tension among the non-managers, and when accompanied with high job autonomy, it tends to positively affect the job satisfaction of non-managers. (3) The impact of 'felt obligation'

on performance is mediated by 'personal initiative' in the two occupational categories; it intensifies the feeling that work interferes with family life, but this effect can be mitigated in the managerial group by increasing managers' job autonomy.

The conclusions of the study have theoretical, empirical, and practical implications. Both researchers and practitioners may find the study's tool that is developed to measure 'Employee Responsibility' helpful. Using this measurement tool, it is possible to assess 'personal responsibility' in an organizational context and to investigate how 'personal responsibility' influences certain work-related concepts as well as how organizations can enhance this feeling. Moreover, in a broader application, the tool can be used to compare the responses of different groups, units, and organizations, as well as individuals.