

Original Research Paper

Leader's Support-an Organisational Asset

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Abstract: In a rapidly changing world of work, leaders face increasing challenges in understanding what motivates and enhances organisational performance. The support from the leader has become essential for the employees and the teams to perform. This study aims to study the level of leader's support and the various aspects of leader's support existing in the selected Information Technology (IT) organisation. It also strives to assess the relationship between leader's support and factors of employee performance and team performance. Primary data was collected from executives, software engineers and senior software engineers who were reporting to a leader from selected IT organisations in Chennai city, India. A well structured questionnaire was administered for the purpose of the research and the responses were recorded. It was found that most of the men working in IT organizations are getting high support from their leaders and most of the employees with total experience in the organization of less than 3 years are getting high support from their leaders. It was also evident that the main factors of Leader's support are that the leader helps to find meaning in my work, provides suitable working environment and provides solutions for my work related problems. There is also a significant positive relationship between leader's support and factors of employee performance and team performance. Therefore leader's support has a major impact on the organisational performance as a whole.

Keywords: Employee Performance, Leader's Support, Organisational Performance, Team Performance

Introduction

To be an effective leader, a leader must be empathetic to a diverse array of needs. They should not only examine their success but also look on ways to enable their employees for better performance. The ability to influence individuals and team members to organisational performance is complex in the organisational goal achievement process. Another major responsibility of the leader is motivation. It is necessary to identify what motivates the employees and provide it to them at a satisfactory level. It is essential to offer support to employees at appropriate levels and encourage their involvement. This will create confidence and positive attitudes which in turn will improve individual results. Thus, leader's support is seen as an important variable affecting organisational performance. Employees will perform with excellence when they get the right support from their leader.

A leader's support can be in the form of creating vision, making employees understand the organisational

culture, focus on performance development, concentrate on relationships, effective delegation, coaching and encouraging innovation. The other important aspect of leader's support is trust. The improvement in daily work can be assured if the leader has a trust on the employees. A leader can also provide support by understanding the personal lives of their employees. If a leader finds an opportunity to help an employee outside of work, it pays. This builds a loyalty with the employee and they tend to show it off to other members in the team. A leader should also give recognition when employees do something extraordinary. It gives them a sense of achievement and acts as an inspiration for others to follow.

Leaders in the Information Technology environment face the challenge of fast changing technology, inadequate budgets, legal changes, globalization, competition and many more. They should possess the talent, qualities and skills to respond to these drivers. They tend to face these challenges along with their subordinates as individuals and team. The employees are ready to face these

challenges too. But their requirement is an additional support from their leader by listening to them so that they will build up their confidence. Also leaders in the IT industry can empower the employees to do what they are good at but still make them accountable to the accomplishment of the goal. This will appeal the employees as most of them are in the mindset to protect their work as they believe that if anyone touches their work it might get messed up. The best leaders can be the ones who are able to support the employees when problem arises and help them come out with a solution. Therefore, leader's support acts as a moderator to employee and team performance.

Review of Literature

Leader's Support

According to Path goal theory formulated by (House, 1971), the leader's job is to assist his followers in accomplishing their goals, specifying direction, providing support and to ensure that their goals are well matched with organization goals. One important aspect of the path goal theory is leader's support. It is necessary in all dimensions of the employees work. Leader's support is defined here as the availability of broad helping behaviors from the direct supervisor (Anderson and Williams, 1996). There is a strong need for a leader, when there is a situation where someone is required to bring a change and provide guidance (English, 1992). When a leader supports an employee in his work and is able to influence them, he is called supportive leader.

Rafferty and Griffin (2004) have defined supportive leadership as behaviour that expresses concern for followers and their individual needs'. Supportive leaders create conducive working environment to foster respect, trust, cooperation and emotional support (Daft, 2004; Gibson *et al.*, 2000). Supportive leadership consists of being friendly and approachable as a leader and includes attending to the well-being and human needs of subordinates (Northouse, 2013). This type of leader is needed and successful when the organisation's employees are lacking in confidence, creativity and positive attitudes. When the workplace is added with leader's support, it paves way for well-being of the employees as well as the organisations.

According to Lussier and Achua (2009) Supportive leadership is appropriate when task is simple, formal authority is weak and the work group does not provide job satisfaction. Leaders must have the ability to engage their workforce (Denton and Wisdom, 1991). Showing support and care for employees as a leader facilitates a caring and open group climate and cohesive relations among team members (Chen *et al.*, 2002; Hurst *et al.*, 1978; Wester and Weiss, 1991). Leadership is positively related to job engagement (Andrew and Sofian, 2011).

When a leader exhibits support to his team members, there will be more cohesive behaviour in completion of the work and there will be effective communication.

Leader's Support and Organisational Performance

Oluseyi and Ayo (2009) discussed leadership in terms of the leader's role and ability to get the work done by subordinates in an effective manner. Researchers like (Dumdum *et al.*, 2002; Judge *et al.*, 2004) also assured the direct effects of consideration (supportive leadership) on performance. It was found that leader support to be associated with higher levels of self-reported employee satisfaction and lower levels of intentions to leave (LaRocca and Jones, 1978). When employees receive support from the leaders and have low job stress they are better able to achieve their goals. Studies also found that the employees who lacked sufficient support from their leaders did not show better performance (Imtiaz and Ahmed, 2009). It is also found that the higher degree of trust from leaders to employee will cause the higher performance on employees' creativity thinking and action (Chen *et al.*, 2011).

Leaders have also been shown to influence team members through hands-off consultations by means of encouraging behaviors that signal them the right way of doing things in the team (Manz and Sims, 1987). Emphasis is on the leader's role in building team trust, caring for team members and coaching (Druskat and Wheeler, 2003). Hui (1994) his research found that by expressing confidence in high performance, leaders foster confidence in employees and display their belief in employees' abilities. Managers' supportive behavior could increase staffs awareness of self-determination and their job proactiveness (Olham and Cummings, 1996). When organizations have managers empower their employees they are more productive (Carter, 2009). Thus leader's support plays an active role in employee and team performance.

Objectives

For the purpose of the study, the following objectives are taken:

- To find the level of leader's support in the selected information technology organisations
- To find the aspects of leader's support in the selected information technology organisations
- To assess the relationship between leader's support and factors of employee performance in the selected information technology organizations
- To determine the relationship between leader's support and factors of team performance in the selected information technology organisations

Hypotheses

- H₀1: There is no significant association between Gender and leader's support.
- H₀2: There is no significant association between total experience in the organization and leader's support.
- H₀3: There is no significant association between frequency of meeting deadlines and leader's support.
- H₀4: All the aspects of Leader's support plays equal role.
- H₀5: There is no significant relationship between Leader's support and employee's performance in IT organizations.
- H₀6: There is no significant relationship between Leader's support and (a) Team Collaboration (b) Communication (c) Skills (d) Role identity (e) Attitude and Commitment in IT organizations.

Research Methodology

The researcher selected five IT organisations in Chennai for the study. A representative sample of 207 was drawn from the universe using simple random sampling technique. A well-structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of questions to assess the leader's support in various aspects of the employee's job and also to find the employee and team performance. Likert's five point scale was used to measure the items. Primary data was collected from executives, software engineers and senior software engineers who were reporting to a leader from selected IT organisations in Chennai city, India. The researcher collected the responses from the respondents in person and through mails. The reliability of all the items in the questionnaire was tested and it was found to be above 0.8. The period of study was March 2014 to June 2014.

Two hundred and eighty five (285) questionnaires were distributed and two hundred and seven (207) were received in usable condition at 70.2% response rate. Data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive Statistics was used to analyse the demographics of the respondents. Friedman test and Chi square analysis were used to test the research hypotheses. All statistical tests were performed at 1% significance level.

Results

The descriptive statistics of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

About 62.50% of the respondents are in the age group of 21-30 years, 22.50% of the respondents' falls in the age category of 31-40 years and the remaining 15.00% of the respondents are in the age group of 41-50 years. This shows that most of the respondents (62.50%) working in IT organizations are in the age group of 21-30 years which shows the youth population has a great influence in the selected IT organisations.

About 57.60% of the selected respondents are males and the remaining 42.40% of the selected respondents are females. This shows that majority of the selected respondents (57.60%) working in the selected IT organizations are men.

About 61.50% of them are living as single and 38.50% of the respondents were married. It is observed that most of the respondents (61.50%) working in the selected IT organizations are living as single.

About 36.80% of the respondents are possessing B.E/B. Tech degree as their educational qualification, 24.60% of the respondents are having M.E/M. Tech as their educational qualification, 23.50% of the respondents are possessing M.Sc/MCA degree and 15.20% of the respondents are having B.Sc/BCA degree. It is observed that majority of the respondents (36.80%) working in the selected IT organizations possesses B.E/B. Tech degree as their educational qualification.

About 50.40% of the selected respondents are having less than 3 years of experience, 30.40% of the selected respondents are having total experience of 4-6 years and the remaining 19.20% of the selected respondents are having total experience of more than 6 years. It is clear that majority of the respondents (50.40%) in the selected IT organizations are having an experience of less than 3 years.

About 95.10% of the selected respondents are employed as full time employee, 2.80% of the selected respondents are working as part time employee and 2.10% of the selected respondents are working in contract basis. It is observed that majority of the respondents (95.10%) working in the selected IT organizations are full time employees.

To assess the association between Gender and leader's support, Chi-square test was performed. The cross tabulation between Gender and leader's support is presented in the Table 2. The hypothesis was framed as below:

Null Hypothesis H₀1: There is no significant association between gender and leader's support.

Table 2 shows that there is significant association between gender and leader's support. Chi-square value (1.343) shows that the null hypothesis is rejected at 1% level. Hence it is concluded from the analysis that leader's support and classification based on gender are well associated.

From Table 2 it is evident that most of the men (25.9%) working in IT organizations are getting high support from their leaders.

Chi-square test was performed to identify the association between total experience in the organization and leader's support. The cross tabulation between total experience in the organization and leader's support is presented in the Table 2 below is the null hypothesis.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the respondents

Particulars	Classification	Number of employees	Percentage
Age	21-30 years	129	62.50
	31-40 years	47	22.50
	41-50 years	31	15.00
Gender	Male	119	57.60
	Female	88	42.40
Marital status	Single	127	61.50
	Married	80	38.50
Education	M.E/M.Tech	51	24.60
	B.E/B.Tech	76	36.80
	M.Sc/MCA	49	23.50
	B.Sc/BCA	31	15.20
Total experience	Less than 3 years	104	50.40
	4-6 years	63	30.40
	Above 6 years	40	19.20
Employment status	Full time	197	95.10
	Part time	6	2.80
	Contract	4	2.10

Source: Primary data

Table 2. Association between gender and Leader's support

			Leader's support			Total	Chi-square value
			Low	Moderate	High		
Gender	Male	N	32	33	54	119	1.343** (p = 0.001)
		%	15.8%	15.9%	25.9%	57.6%	
	Female	N	22	16	50	88	
		%	10.4%	7.9%	24.1%	42.4%	
Total		N	54	49	104	207	
		%	26.2%	23.8%	50.0%	100.0%	

**Significant at 1% level

Table 3. Association between total experience in the organization and Leader's support

			Leader's support			Total	Chi-square value
			Low	Moderate	High		
Total experience in the organization	Less than 3 years	N	29	28	47	104	6.530** (p = 0.001)
		%	13.8%	13.5%	23.1%	50.4%	
	4-6 years	N	17	9	37	63	
		%	8.2%	4.2%	18.0%	30.4%	
	Above 6 years	N	9	13	18	40	
		%	4.2%	6.1%	8.9%	19.2%	
Total		N	55	50	102	207	
		%	26.2%	23.8%	50.0%	100.0%	

**Significant at 1% level

Null Hypothesis H_02 : There is no significant association between total experience in the organization and leader's support.

From Table 3 it is observed that there is significant association between total experience in the organization and leader's support. Chi-square value (6.530) shows that the null hypothesis is rejected at 1% level. From the analysis it is evident that leader's support and the classification based on total experience in the organization are well associated. Most of the respondents (23.1%) with total experience in the organization of less than 3 years are getting high support from their leaders.

The association between frequency of meeting deadlines and leader's support was found out by Chi-square test. The cross tabulation between frequency of meeting deadlines and leader's support is presented in the Table 4.

Null Hypothesis $H_0 3$: There is no significant association between frequency of meeting deadlines and leader's support.

Table 4 clearly shows that there is significant association between Frequency of meeting deadlines and leader's support. Chi-square value (65.524) shows that the null hypothesis is rejected at 1% level. It can be

concluded from the analysis that leader’s support and frequency of meeting deadlines are well associated. Most of the respondents (15.9%) who are getting high support from their leaders are usually meeting deadlines.

Leader’s support is very important for the respondents to get desired output in the organizations. Selected respondents working in IT organizations expressed their opinions regarding different aspects of their Leader’s support in their organizations. Testing the significance of various aspects of Leader’s support, Friedman’s test for k-related samples was applied to study the relationship between various aspects of support given by the Leaders to the respondents in IT organizations.

Null Hypothesis H₀ 4: All the aspects of leader’s support plays equal role.

The results in Table 5 show that the null hypothesis H₀ is rejected at 1% level. All the aspects of Leader’s support in IT organizations are not playing equal role.

Further the mean ranks in the Table 5 shows clearly that “Helps to find meaning in my work”, “Provides suitable working environment” and “Provides solutions for my work related problems” are the main factors of Leader’s support and “Offers the necessary resources needed to do employee’s work”, “Motivates employees” and “Personally involved with employee’s job” are the least factors of Leader’s support in IT organizations.

To test the significant relationship between Leader’s support and employee’s performance of employees working in IT organizations, Bi-variate correlation was applied to ascertain the significant relationship between Leader’s support, involvement and factors of employee’s performance. The following null hypotheses were framed:

H₀5: There is no Significant Relationship between Leader’s Support and Employee’s Performance in IT organizations.

From Table 6 it can be inferred that there is positive significant correlation exist between Leader’s support and Employee’s performance ($r = 0.742$). Hence the null hypothesis “There is no significant relationship between Leader’s support and Employee’s performance” is rejected. This shows that Leader’s support improves Employee’s performance by 74.2%.

To test the significant relationship between Leader’s support, involvement and factors of team performance of respondents working in IT organizations, Bi-variate correlation was applied to ascertain the significant relationship between Leader’s support, involvement and factors of team performance. The following null hypotheses were framed:

H₀6: There is no significant relationship between leader’s support and (a) team collaboration (b) communication (c) Skills (d) Role identity (e) Attitude and commitment in IT organizations Table 7 shows.

Team Collaboration

There is positive significant correlation exist between Leader’s support and Team Collaboration ($r = 0.716$). Hence the null hypothesis “There is no significant relationship between Leader’s support and Team Collaboration” is rejected. This shows that Leader’s support improves Team collaboration by 71.6%.

Communication

There is positive significant correlation exist between Leader’s support and Communication ($r = 0.655$). Hence the null hypothesis “There is no significant relationship between Leader’s support and Communication” is rejected. This shows that Leader’s support improves Communication by 65.5%.

Table 4. Association between frequency of meeting deadlines and Leader’s support

			Leader’s support			Total	Chi-square value
			Low	Moderate	High		
Frequency of meeting deadlines	Never	N	2	4	10	16	65.524** (p<0.001)
		%	1.2%	1.8%	4.6%	7.6%	
	Rarely	N	6	14	17	37	
		%	3.0%	6.7%	8.3%	18.0%	
	Sometimes	N	16	5	18	39	
		%	7.6%	2.8%	8.6%	19.0%	
	Usually	N	14	16	33	63	
		%	6.8%	7.6%	15.9%	30.4%	
	Always	N	16	10	26	52	
		%	7.6%	4.9%	12.5%	25.0%	
Total	N	54	49	104	672		
	%	26.2%	23.8%	50.0%	100.0%		

**Significant at 1% level

Table 5. Friedman test for Leader's support to the employees in IT organizations

	Mean rank	Chi square value
He gets personally involved with my job	3.75	304.313** (p<0.001)
He provides help to give my maximum output	4.98	
He provides suitable working environment	5.30	
He helps me in my personal as well as professional growth	5.19	
He motivates me	4.91	
He resolves misunderstandings and makes me work smoothly	5.27	
He provides solutions for my work related problems	5.30	
He helps to find meaning in my work	5.47	
He offers the necessary resources needed to do my work	4.84	

**Significant at 1% level

Table 6. Relationship between Leader's support and employee's performance

	Leader's support
Employee's Performance	r = 0.742** p<0.001

**Significant at 1% level

Table 7. Relationship between Leader's support and factors of team performance

	Leader's support
Team collaboration	r = 0.716** p<0.001
Communication	r = 0.655** p<0.001
Skills	r = 0.700** p<0.001
Role identity	r = 0.676** p<0.001
Attitude and commitment	r = 0.691** p<0.001

**Significant at 1% level

Skills

There is positive significant correlation exist between Leader's support and Skills (r = 0.700). Hence the null hypothesis "There is no significant relationship between Leader's support and Skills" is rejected. This shows that Leader's support brings skills sets among employees.

Role Identity

There is positive significant correlation exist between Leader's support and Role Identity (r = 0.676). Hence the null hypothesis "There is no significant relationship between Leader's support and Role Identity" is rejected. This shows that Leader's support make the employees to infer their Role Identity.

Attitude and Commitment

There is positive significant correlation exist between Leader's support and Attitude and Commitment (r = 0.691). Hence the null hypothesis "There is no significant relationship between Leader's support and Attitude and Commitment" is rejected. This shows that Leader's support improves Attitude and Commitment by 69.1%.

Discussion

The study aimed to find the level of leader's support in selected IT organisations and it was found that leader's support exists in different dimensions in the organisations. The study has brought out that there is a significant relationship between leader's support and employee and team performance. This result supports the work of researchers like (Dumdum *et al.*, 2002; Judge *et al.*, 2004) who revealed the direct effects of consideration (supportive leadership) on performance. The investigation contributes to leadership literature by providing empirical evidence to hold up the findings of (Imtiaz and Ahmed, 2009) which states that the employees who lacked sufficient support from their leaders did not show better performance.

Leader's support act as a major contributor to the frequency of meeting deadlines and they are well associated. The different aspects of leader's support were studied. All the aspects of leader's support do not have a equal role to play. The study declares that "Helps to find meaning in my work", "Provides suitable working environment" and "Provides solutions for my work related problems" are the main factors of Leader's support which proves that supportive leadership is all about considering the needs of the follower, showing concern for their welfare and creating a friendly working environment.

The factors of team performance were assessed and there is a positive significant correlation between these factors and leader's support. Leader's Support improves team collaboration, communication, skills, role identity, attitude and commitment. The finding in this study that leader's support has positive significant correlation with team communication supports the research findings of (Wendt *et al.*, 2009). Thus leader's support acts as a moderating variable for employee and team performance.

Managerial Implications

The selected IT organisations in Chennai are benefited by the study as it reveals the existing level of leader's support in the organisation. It is found that

all the aspects of leader's support do not play an equal role in the development of the employee's and team performance and also there is an association between leader's support and employee's and team performance. From the study it is inferred that there is a positive association between these two variables. Even though leader's support exists in the selected IT organisations, it can be enhanced so that it acts as a moderator to employee and team performance. This is brought out by increasing the leader's support factors like "helping to find meaning in work", "Providing suitable working environment" and "Providing solutions for work related problems". The leader must recognize the work of the employees and provide a space for them to exhibit to their performance. The organisation must be able to identify the leader's strength and also train them in areas where they need improvement. This will lead the organisation to successful development.

Conclusion

All organisations always depend on their leaders to guide and motivate their employees for better performance. For this purpose, the leader must understand the employees as individuals and as a team. They must provide support to the employees in all areas of work. This support can be extended even outside of work. The leader can involve personally with the employees. According to the study, there is a positive association between leader's support and employee and team performance. Therefore, leader's support plays a major role in the selected IT organisations in organisational performance. The study shows that leader's support factors like "helping to find meaning in work", "Providing suitable working environment" and "Providing solutions for work related problems" are the major factors of leader's support. Also factors like "Offers the necessary resources needed to do employee's work", "Motivates employees" and "Personally involved with employee's job" are least exhibited in the selected organisations. These least exhibited factors have to be boosted in the organisations so that employees feel more comfortable to work. When the momentum of works starts with the comfort of the employees, the leader's support will moderate the organisational performance. Therefore, leader's support is an organisational asset if it is utilized effectively.

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Author's Contributions

The authors contributed equally to the work presented in the paper. The corresponding author Angeline Selvakumar initiated the work by framing the title, objectives, research methodology and collection of data. These were supported by the works of Dr. Sudha, by her guidance and expertise. She collected the necessary review of literature and assisted in the analysis of data and interpreting them. Both the authors have extensively worked on the paper and have come with this research work.

Ethics

This article is original and contains unpublished material. The corresponding author confirms that all of the other authors have read and approved the manuscript and no ethical issues involved.

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