ABSTRACT

Supportive leadership helps to facilitate goal accomplishment by guiding subordinates to be effective and learn in their roles. Many issues have been discussed regarding leadership since it plays a vital role in shaping an employees’ career and it is associated with the welfare of the organization. The aim of the study to understand whether leaders create interest among employees, assist independent decision-making, allow learning from mistakes and provide a realistic set of plans to guide actions. Reviews with regard to supportive leadership have been collected and analyzed to identify if they show positive impact on employees. Past studies empirically prove that supportive leadership guides employees’ skills and abilities, therefore enabling them a healthy relationship with their leaders and assuring a better environment to work.

KEYWORDS

Leadership, Supportive Leadership, Leadership Styles, Positive Attitude, Self Confidence,
INTRODUCTION

Several studies concerning leadership have been conducted in the modern era. Leadership is the process of providing direction and influencing. Supportive leadership is associated with positive follower attitudes and self-confidence. Banai & Reisel (2007) defined supportive leadership as “helping facilitate goal accomplishment by guiding subordinates to be effective and learn in their roles”. It is essential to understand whether leaders create interest among employees, assist independent decision-making, allow learning from mistakes and provide a realistic set of plans to guide actions.

Supportive leadership is one of the four types of leadership that House (1971) identified in his path-goal theory and is defined as a leadership style that focuses on concerns for the needs and well-being of followers and the facilitation of a desirable climate for interaction. Supportive leadership is regarded as a key aspect of effective leadership in path-goal theory (House, 1971). Supportive leadership is similar to individualized consideration, a sub-dimension of transformational leadership, in that both types of leadership encompass expressing interest in individual followers and attending and responding to their personal needs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Shin et al., (2016) aimed at investigating how team leaders’ supportive role helps the team members to perform their task efficiently. The study explores how the roles of multilevel dynamics namely ‘team cooperation, job satisfaction, team commitment, task performance and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB)’ influences ‘leaders’ supportive leadership and individual work outcomes’. Longitudinal survey data were collected from 536 employees in 69 teams of a large engineering company located in South Korea. Multilevel structural equation modeling was employed. It indicates that individuals’ perceptions of supportive leadership were positively related to their subsequent task performance, and that this relationship was mediated by team commitment. The relationship between individual-level perceptions of supportive leadership and OCB was mediated by job satisfaction and team commitment. On the other hand, team cooperation mediated the relationship between team-level perceptions of supportive leadership and OCB.

Shirazi et al., (2016) conducted a research to study the effects of a workshop of supportive leadership behavior on 110 head nurses working at university hospitals. They were included randomly in two control and intervention groups. The head nurses in the intervention group participated in supportive leadership training, but the control group did not. The statistical inference proved that there was a significant difference in SLB scores. Moreover, the post-intervention scores were significantly higher in the intervention group, compared with the control group (P < 0.0001). The results showed
that in the intervention group, the effect sizes were greater for males (50%) than for females (36%) and greater for married participants (42%) than for single participants (37%). Thus, proving the leadership performance improved among head nurses who participated in the study.

Hocine, Zhang, Song, & Ye (2014) conducted an empirical research on leaders’ autonomy-supportive behavior within the organizational context. Leader’s autonomy support means from leaders thinking from employees’ viewpoint, providing greater choice and encouraging self-initiation among employees. The leaders’ autonomy support was measured into four dimensions namely ‘counseling and work recognition, trust and respect, instructing employees’ career planning and positive monitoring and feedback. The findings of the study reveals that employees expect to gain a good feeling of a real teamwork atmosphere. They expect to be allowed to be part of the problem solving process and enable them the freedom of express their own opinions and views at workplace. Also, employees expect the presence of their leaders to recognize their work achievements.

Wu & Parket (2014) undertook an empirical research to analyze how leaders’ support motivates employees’ proactive behavior, mainly for those individuals who have lower attachment security. An online-survey was carried out from U.S. participants (N = 138) and a sample from a large gas and oil company in China (N = 212). Individuals high in attachment anxiety especially benefited from leader secure-base support in terms of its effect on role breadth self-efficacy; whereas those who are high in attachment avoidance especially benefited from leader secure-base support in terms of its effect on autonomous motivation.

Khalid et al., (2012) examined the moderating effect of supportive leadership on the relationship between job stress and job performance. The study was conducted on 200 employees from 4 educational institutions. Data was collected using a well-developed questionnaire. The empirical results disclose that supportive leadership has a negative effect on job stress and directly impacts job performance. The researchers stated that employees’ performance weaken when they face high level of stress, which can be improved through a supportive leader who keeps employees, motivated even at the unfavorable situations. Therefore, supportive leadership moderates the relationship between job stress and job performance.

Abir & Naqvi (2011) developed a conceptual study to find the effects of supportive leadership as a moderating variable and the relationship of the psychological empowerment and organizational commitment. The aim of this conceptual study is to identify the impact of psychological empowerment on organizational commitment and the moderating effect of organizational learning culture and supportive leadership on its relationship. The researcher attempts to identify the relationship among these variables in the context of existing literature. Hence, he emphasizes that in current trend
managers tend to face the challenges of motivating employees. Psychological empowerment is the best solution to facilitate them with the feeling of autonomy and self drive.

Xie & Li (2011) examined the effects of the supportive leadership to the employee brand building behavior and analyzed the relationship between the employee brand building behavior and customers’ perceived brand image. Questionnaires were distributed to 1400 participants, consisted of 400 employees and over 1000 customers in 4 hotels in Guangzhou and Shenzhen, China. The authors conducted HLM path analysis to test the effect of supportive leadership on the employee brand building behavior and test the cross-level effect of employee brand building behavior on the customers perceived brand image. The results showed that organizational supportive leadership has a significant effect on the employee brand building behavior. As a result, the firm should encourage supportive leadership climate to improve the employee brand building behavior which will lead to a positive brand image.

Banai & Reisel (2007) carried out an empirical research to examine the relationships between supportive leadership and job characteristics and workers’ alienation in 6 countries (Cuba, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Russia, and the United States). 1933 workers and non-managerial personnel participated in the research. After statistical analysis, it was found that supportive leadership and job characteristics were found to be related to alienation.

Newton & Maierhofer (2005) investigated the extent that perceived congruence of employee organizational values impacts the supportive leadership- well-being/strain relationship. 1350 employees were included across an Australian public service organization with 874 responses (response rate = 67%). The empirical results found that higher levels of supportive leadership predicted higher levels of well-being. Also, the results highlight complexity of relationship exists between leadership styles, person-organization value congruence, and employee well-being.

Ogbonna & Harris (2000) aimed to present an empirical research evidence of the links between different types of organizational culture (competitive culture, innovative culture, bureaucratic culture and community culture), a range of leadership styles (participative leadership, supportive leadership and instrumental leadership) and organizational performance. This study was implemented through the presentation of the results of a cross sectional survey of leadership style, organizational culture, and performance across UK companies. The statistical inferences prove that the relationship between leadership style and performance is mediated by the nature of organizational culture. All of the leadership styles analyzed are significantly indirectly associated with performance; instrumental leadership is negatively linked while supportive and participative leadership styles are positively related. Also, supportive and participative leadership styles are positively associated with innovative and competitive forms of
culture. These results indicate that the generation of an organizational culture, which is externally oriented, is significantly influenced by the extent to which a leader is supportive of followers and includes followers in decision-making processes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Literature reviews prove that supportive leadership is broadly about showing concern for employees, being considerate to others’ problem, motivating employees to develop their abilities and careers. Supportiveness promotes cohesion among members and keeping individuals from becoming alienated. There are possibilities of supportive leadership behavior going ineffective. A leader needs to be cautious about how supportive behavior is employed and mould the approach to the needs and concerns of employees. Past studies emphasize psychological empowerment is a necessary component that must be developed among employees, by the organization in order to achieve expected performance. Jeffrey et al. (2006) suggested that employees who perceive high level of psychological empowerment in the organization is tend to bond more strongly and committed with the organization. Whereas, employees who feel lack of empowerment will lack organizational commitment as well, hence may not be able to achieve their goals. So it is proven that psychological empowerment will be positively related with organizational commitment. This view was supported by prior research that showed that organizational commitment was higher for employees whose leaders encouraged participation in decision-making, emphasized consideration and were supportive and concerned for their followers’ development (Nyengane 2007).
Future, literatures had stated that one of the prominent aspects of supportive leadership is ‘autonomy support’. Through the way of leaders conducting emotional regulation, periodic inspection and feedback, counseling, it can provide employees with broad sense of autonomy support. Providing supportive autonomy means giving employees the space they need to succeed on their own. Beth (2001) found in her research that autonomy was related to higher levels of job satisfaction and fewer thoughts of quitting. In the ethos of supportive leadership, rather than controlling, leaders realize that their job is to create a positive work environment where employees could succeed. Many studies have highlighted that stress affects the performance of employees. When employees serving in any organization receive support from their leaders, the level of stress decreases and job performance is improved. It means that supportive leadership plays a moderating role in the relationship between stress and performance. In the light of path goal theory by House and Mitchell (1974) it is stated that supportive leadership plays a crucial role in reducing stress and increasing performance and its significance cannot be over emphasized.

There is an impact of supportive leadership on employee brand building behavior. Supportive leadership includes support to relationship and jobs. When managers support the demand of employees, and keep good relationship with them, the psychological contract will be established between employees and organization, which is positively related to employees’ attitudes and further creates positive influence on employees’ behaviors. Lastovicka & Garderner (1978) mentioned that desire to maintain long lasting relationship with the organization signifies that managers’ work and leadership behaviors receive employees’ recognition and make employees create the commitment to follow managers, keeping long-range relationship with the organization and support the managers’ work. The employees who are willing to keep long-term relationship with organization will be more enthusiastic to finish their in-role work. As Popper and Mayselless defined, “Leaders, like parents, are figures whose role includes guiding, directing, taking charge, and taking care of others less powerful than they and whose fate is highly dependent on them”. Leaders might also have different understandings of what it means to be “supportive.” It is mandatory to provide training to the leaders to make them understand what support means, with the intention that, leaders would motivate employees. When employees are motivated, they could work proactively. It might also be valuable to encourage leaders to recognize insecure attachment styles amongst their employees so that they can target their support efforts to these individuals. Past studies have shown that leadership behavior can influence followers’ creative thinking at workplace. Byrne (2009) proved in his research that supervisory style is potentially viewed as a predictor of employee creativity. That is, psychological process has a strong influence on creative performance. Leaders’ support can maximize the perception of creativity and minimize the potential risk related to creative work. Similarly, employees in such an environment would feel comfortable to generate unconventional and creative solutions to daily problems.
CONCLUSION

It can be determined that supportive leadership has received a positive feedback from most of the past studies. Such leadership style enables health relationship between leaders and followers, assures followers’ well-being and paves way for their career development. Also, few studies have shown that supportive leadership is negatively associated with work alienation. This proves that work engagement is ensured and this could one of the positive outcomes of supportive leadership. Another major finding is that instrumental leadership is negatively associated with supportive leadership. Instrumental leadership is found to have negative relation with job performance of employees. In the current trend where job hopping rate is increasing day by day, tools like supportive leadership can ensure healthy workplace to employees to improve their abilities and skills, hence, promising them they work at right platform under right people. Therefore, supportive leadership is a fine leadership behavior that needs to be implemented in the organizations as it is beneficial to both the leader and follower.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


