

THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPERVISOR SUPPORT FOR MANAGERIAL PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

Perceived supervisor support (PSS) influences the effect of most HR-interventions and has a positive impact on a number of work related outcomes. The result of this study indicates that PSS also is important for managerial performance. Furthermore, employees receiving support from their managers tend to give their managers higher performance ratings.

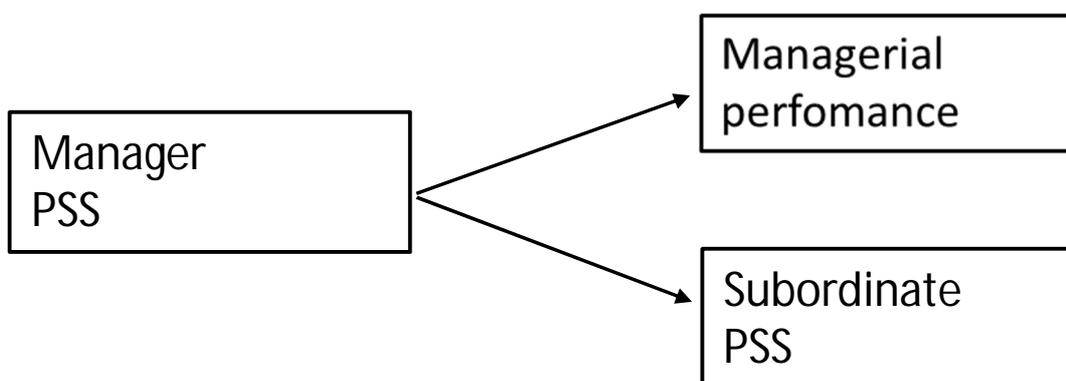
Introduction

Social support is important in the work place. Two important aspects of social support are perceived organizational support (POS) and perceived supervisor support (PSS). POS is the belief that your organization values your contribution and cares about your wellbeing, job satisfaction, commitment and performance. Evidence also indicates a positive relationship between managers' POS and their subordinates' perception of managerial support. (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2006). As an explanation for this relationship, it has been suggested that managers who perceive organizational support (POS), will support their subordinates to reciprocate (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006; Tepper & Taylor, 2003).

Employees' PSS affects important organizational objectives such as performance, organizational commitment, job satisfaction and turnover intentions (e.g. Edmondson & Boyer, 2013; NG & Sorensen, 2008; Eisenberger, Lynch, Aselage, & Rohdieck, 2004; Eisenberger et al; Lambert, 2000). In fact, PSS seems to be important for the effect of most HR-interventions (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010).

A number of studies have been done on the antecedents and consequences of employee PSS. Less explored are the effects of managers' PSS. If subordinates perform better when they feel supported by their manager, it seems reasonable to expect the same for managers. This study investigates the importance of PSS for managerial performance and the relationship between managers' PSS and subordinates' PSS. The research model is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research model



Method

Data was collected from a sample of 383 Norwegian managers below 40 years of age, identified by their manager as superior performers. All managers have been in their position for more than 12 months, and were responsible for at least five employees. The data was collected over five years from 2009 to 2014 with approximately 1/5 of the data collected every year. JP was measured by a ten item questionnaire (Kuvaas and Dysvik, 2009), distinguishing between effort and quality, from three sources (self-report, superior and subordinates). Managers' and subordinates' PSS was measured by four items on a five point scale (Kuvaas and Dysvik, 2009).

Results and analysis

Initially, the data was analysed to identify the correlations in the data set (Table 1). Significant correlations are apparent between manager PSS and both performance measures (.151/.209).

Table 1. Correlations

| N=383 | Effort (three sources) | Quality (three sources) | Effort (subordinate) | Quality (subordinate) | Manager PSS | Subordinate PSS |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Effort (three sources) | 1 | | | | | |
| Quality (three sources) | .500** | 1 | | | | |
| Effort (subordinate) | .647** | .477** | 1 | | | |
| Quality (subordinate) | .417** | .639** | .726** | 1 | | |
| Manager PSS | .151** | .209** | .055 | .061 | 1 | .014 |
| Subordinate PSS | .217** | .299** | .437** | .550** | .014 | 1 |

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

These correlations increase when only subordinates are included in the performance ratings (.437/.550). Interestingly, there is no significant correlation between managers PSS and subordinate PSS.

It should be noted that the managers PSS were high with an average of 4.43, and that PSS among the subordinates had an average of 4.38 indicating a high degree of perceived support for both groups.

Discussion and conclusion

When considering the relatively weak correlation of 0.21 between managers PSS and managerial performance it should be noted that this is a group of successful managers all perceiving support from their superiors. With a more diverse group of managers, it is possible that the correlation would have been higher. However, even in a group of high performing managers PSS seems to be important. PSS explains around 4% of the variance in

the performance variable in this group. Such an increase could over time have a significant impact on organizational performance.

No correlations were found between manager PSS and subordinate PSS, indicating that a manager does not need to feel supported by a superior in order to support subordinates. One explanation can be the lack of variance in both groups. However, as both groups feel strongly supported by their superior it could partly be seen as an indication that the PSS between the groups are related, but further research with a more diverse group is necessary to explore this connection further.

Interestingly, when only subordinates performance ratings are included in the correlation analysis there is a strong correlation between subordinate PSS and performance ratings. It seems that when there is a good relationship between the subordinates and their manager, the subordinates have a more positive view of their manager and his/hers performance. This finding provides additional evidence of the importance of PSS in the work place.

Key references

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