

Managerial Competencies and the Mediating Role of Leadership Style for Improving Job Satisfaction

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Abstract

This paper makes an endeavor to examine the limit job satisfaction concomitance with certain managerial competencies. Managerial competencies like goal setting and team building are taken as independent variables, where as leadership style is mediating variable and job satisfaction as dependent measures. The data were collected from 307 executives of banking sector in West Bengal, India. The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 15.0. The analyses of the same were carried out using correlation and multiple regressions analysis techniques. The results revealed that these managerial competencies had significantly predicted job satisfaction indicating their positive association with satisfaction. It was also found that the appropriate leadership style had significantly mediated the relationship of managerial competencies and job satisfaction. The findings tried to establish that the management should adopt transformational style of leadership to facilitate better performance, where the managers can use these competencies to enhance performance and a higher level of job satisfaction.

Introduction

The concept of competence has a wide and non-specified meaning (Hall, 1980) and the term itself has an 'open' characteristic. According to Spencer and Spencer (1993) a competence is an underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to effective or superior performance in a job or situation as the case may be. It is also defined as the sum of experiences and knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes are acquired and required by us to perform effectively at the working place. It is the quality of these outputs and the reactions of individuals who receive them that lead to the results with consequences that may lead to positive, negative, or neutral for the organization and the people who work there. It can exist at different levels, such as organizational, team, and individual resulting in better performance at all these levels (Turner & Crawford, 1994).

There are many definitions of competency. It depends on how the concept is used. In fact, these definitions propose in a wide range of frameworks and in the literature of various fields. Since competence does not have an absolute meaning, authors include different things. It was earlier believed that clearly defined competencies would systematically insure effective job performance of managers. There are managers who might be labeled "competent" considered as "good". But what is required is the kind of ability that underlies excellent rather than adequate performance. It is this development of 'excellence' that a competency approach aims to indicate. Competence is like death. One cannot be slightly dead, reasonably dead or totally dead. One is either alive or dead. Similarly, competencies provide the common language and concepts, and draw attention to many of the critical business needs of the organization. Hence, there is a need for competence both for an individual and for an organization.

Keywords

Goal Setting, Team Building, Managerial Competencies, Job satisfaction

This study has examined the impact of certain managerial competencies on leadership style and job satisfaction. The managerial competencies include goal setting and team buildings which are considered to be more relevant and significant in today's business environment, as proper goal setting process may be very important for employees, as it helps them to identify their goals and working to achieve them. Similarly, team building is an important factor, as in today's working environment. Workings in teams are preferred over individual working and one has to have the competencies to work in a team effectively. Hence, an effective team can better achieve a goal by pooling, capitalizing and utilizing experience, expertise, and available resources. The details about these factors are given in the following paragraphs.

Goal Setting

Goal Setting involves setting specific, measurable, achievable, result oriented, and time targeted objectives. In an organizational context, it may be an effective tool for making progress by ensuring that employees are clearly aware of what is expected from them. At the individual level, goal setting allows people to specify their work to achieve the objectives. Thompson and Strickland (1999) defined goal setting as a way of creating performance targets while on the path to achieving the organization's vision.

Earlier studies clearly indicated that the setting up of specific, challenging, and obtainable goals tends to enhance performance (Latham & Baldes, 1975; Locke, Cartledge, & Knerr, 1970; Locke & Latham, 1984; 1990). The literature also acknowledges the validity and utility of goal-setting theory (Mento, Steel, & Karren, 1987; Tubbs, 1986). The goal-setting theory of Locke and Latham (1990) proposes that individuals should be encouraged to focus upon specific goals that are both challenging yet achievable. Locke, Shaw, Saari and Latham (1981) have reasoned that goals lead to higher performance because they direct attention, mobilize efforts and encourage persistence in a task. Numerous studies (Locke, 1968; Latham & Yukl, 1975; Matsui, Kakuyama & Onglatco, 1987; Tubbs, 1986, 1993) have developed concepts of effective goal setting and the positive impact and the effective goal setting has in enhancing employee performance. However, despite the quantum of research on goal setting, many questions still need to be addressed (Locke & Latham, 1990). Therefore, one central area of possible investigation can be the construct of leadership. In a study, Godwin, Neck, and Houghton (1999) found that Individuals with effective leadership achieve superior goal performance as leaders facilitate the goal setting.

Locke, Cartledge and Knerr (1970) noted that if goals are stated quantitatively, then it would be possible to measure the discrepancy between the level of performance intended and the level of performance attained. The closer the individual comes to achieving his desired performance goal on a task, the more satisfied the individual will be with his performance (Locke et al., 1970). The more successful employees have in

completing tasks that are highly valued by top management, the greater the degree of satisfaction experienced (Locke & Latham, 1990). Thus the goal setting increases job satisfaction.

Rodgers and Hunter (1993) found that goal setting predict improved job satisfaction done by the employees themselves. In another research, Arvey, Dewhirst, and Brown (1978) found that the goal setting behaviour were positively associated with intrinsic, extrinsic, and total job satisfaction. Further, Umstot, Mitchell, and Bell (1978) found that goal setting and job enrichment when combined together increases both performance and satisfaction.

Team Building

Team building has become a mainstream concept, and approaches to team building vary from organization to organization (Williams, 1999). Team consists of people who interact and work together toward a common goal/objective/mission (Salas, Dickinson, Converse, & Tannenbaum, 1992). The goal of the team is to pool the resources/skills to improve the productivity. As our jobs are becoming increasingly interdependent, it is no longer possible for an individual to work independently or in isolation. Rapidly changing business conditions demand constant interaction with others as the work of one person is integrated with that of many other people in the organization. As a result, traditional approaches for getting the job done are no longer viable. Therefore, the team approach to business recognizes this by maximizing the collective talent and energy of the people within an organization to accomplish the goals. It creates an exciting, people-oriented culture which encourages empowerment, natural ownership, and personal responsibility.

Today, teams are used for accomplishing job tasks in a variety of domains. One reason is that teams are able to tackle goals beyond the reach of individuals. Therefore, it is of great interest to investigate what factors are crucial to efficient teamwork/teambuilding and why certain teams are more successful than others. Yet, it is on the competency and effectiveness of teams that we depend. To be effective, the team as a whole needs to work collectively, as no one is expected to be equally competent in all the areas.

Swezey and Salas (1992) stated that the success of organizations depends on the ability of individuals to work together as a team. Team building is a way of encouraging individuals to participate together in activities. Team building strategies can help improve employees' satisfaction with, and commitment to, their organisations (Longnecker & Neubert, 2000). Team building efforts are made by the organization so that employee working in team is more productive and satisfied. Mosher (1982) noted that teamwork produces better decisions, better morale, greater self-actualization, greater efficiency and effectiveness, and better employee development.

Van Der Vegt, Emans, and Van De Vliert (2000), Batt and Applebaum (1995), Glisson and Durick (1988), found that several factors of team building were significantly

related to job satisfaction. Thus, it can be said that team working produces more job satisfaction. Scarpello and Campbell (1983) from their study concluded that the members of teams may be satisfied with the operations of their teams, but they may not be satisfied with their jobs - or vice versa. Whereas, Abbott, Boyd, and Miles (2006) indicated that consultative team members reported significantly greater levels of overall job satisfaction, satisfaction with team processes and activities, and team commitment, than did substantive team members.

Tornabeni (2001) stipulated that leaders should understand and respect others, while Reynolds, Bailey, Seden, and Dimmock (2003) valuing the unique contribution of all team members indicated that leaders should concentrate on team building processes and help to build effective teams, which will increase employee satisfaction and motivation. Many researchers argue that leadership is an influential factor for the improvement of team effectiveness (Kahai, Sosik & Avolio, 1997; Schminke & Wells, 1999; Parker, 1990). In a research review, Ozaralli (2003) found that transformational leadership had a high positive correlation with subordinates' perceived team effectiveness. Wang (2001) and Kuo (2004) found that transformational leadership had a positive and significant impact on team performance.

Leadership Style

Leadership has been widely researched and still remains an active area of inquiry (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002; Kouzes & Posner, 2002, Yukl, 2002; Kotter, 1999; Bass, 1997; Bass, 1990; Bennis, 1989). "*Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth*" (Burns, 1978, p. 2). Bryman (1986) defined leadership as a process of influence that guides members of the organization towards the shared goal of the business. Great organizations can only thrive on a framework of superior leadership (Robson, 1986).

Beginning with the leadership studies of Lewin and Lippitt in 1938, there have been numerous studies of leadership and numerous leadership theories developed, such as Trait Theory, Situational Theory, and Contingency Theory, Power and Influence Theory and Transactional and Transformational leadership Theory. The leadership theory propounded by Bass and Avolio (1994) which included transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership appears to be the most suited in understanding how leadership style interacts with other organization-related variables in predicting individual and organizational level outcomes. Bass and Avolio (1994) theory of transformational leadership indicate that transformational leaders help people to achieve better performance. The key distinction between transactional and transformational leadership is that transactional leadership tends to be focused on processes while transformational leadership focused on emotions and values and the effect the leader has on the followers (Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Bommer, 1996; Yukl, 1999).

Job Satisfaction

Job Satisfaction is defined as 'a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experience' (Locke, 1976). Job satisfaction is generally viewed as the attitude of the worker toward the job (Roberts, 2001; Tobias, 1999; Evans, 1999; Spector, 1997; Lawler, 1994; & McKee, 1991). Wanous and Lawler (1972) examined different facets of Job Satisfaction to understand this construct. Early leadership theories focused on the relationship between transactional leadership and job satisfaction. However, the recent concern is on the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction (Medley & Larochelle, 1995). Research indicates that a leader is a source of reward for workers, which has its impact on satisfaction (Lawler, 1994).

Kennedy (1989) stated that job satisfaction and leadership style are recognized as fundamental elements influencing the overall effectiveness of an organization. Seltzer and Bass (1990), revealed that leaders presenting idealized influence more frequently advanced employees' satisfaction while laissez-faire style more frequently reduced employees' satisfaction. Further, Yammarino and Bass (1990) revealed that leadership style is strongly related with individual subordinate's effort, satisfaction, and perceived leader effectiveness. Bass, Daniel and Tucker (1992); and Stone (1992) found that transformational leadership has positive impact on organizational effectiveness, job satisfaction, and performance. Emery and Barker (2007) found that the transformational factors of charisma, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration are highly correlated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment than the transactional factors of contingent reward and management-by-exception.

In a changing business environment, organizations need to compete and grow to be effective. The human resource and its skill level play an important role, as knowledge and competencies of people provide a competitive edge to the organization. In this context, it calls for an integrated approach to examine whether these competencies are related with performance. Further some of the variable like leadership style may mediate the relationship of competency and performance. Thus, the major objective of this study was to examine the strength of association between certain managerial competencies, and satisfaction of executives. Similarly, the role of leadership style was also examined that how it mediate the relationship between these managerial competencies and job satisfaction. Accordingly the following hypotheses were developed:

H₁: Managerial competencies will significantly predict the job satisfaction.

H₂: Leadership style will significantly predict the job satisfaction.

H₃: Managerial competencies and Leadership style will be significantly related to job satisfaction.

H₄: Leadership style will significantly predict managerial competencies.

H₅: Leadership style will mediate the relationship between managerial competencies and job satisfaction.

Method

Sample:

The Data were collected from 307 participants from banking organizations in West Bengal, India. Out of 307 participants, 55 were belonged to top management level, 122 to middle management level, and 130 to junior level management. Regarding educational qualification of the participants 52 percent were graduates, 38 percent post graduates, and 19 percent had professional or higher qualification. The average age of the participants was 38.7 years. The average duration of the service of the participants with present employer was 9.4 years, whereas the average duration in the current position was 12.6 years.

Measures:

The items from standardized questionnaires were taken to make up the survey instrument for the present study. The questionnaire administered in the survey consisted of 86 items (excluding the demographic items) grouped under different scales measuring variables incorporated in the study. Brief explanation and instruction was provided above each scale for the respondent's knowledge and convenience. The items were selected from standardized scales and few were slightly changed according to the conceptualization of the variables and the requirement of the study. The demographic data were collected using 8 questions in the survey instrument. The demographic details of the respondents include age; gender; marital status; qualification; type of industry (public or private); level of management; length of service with the present employer and with the present career. A five point Likert scale was used for uniformity. A brief description of these measures is given below.

Goal Setting: It was measured using 20-item scale developed by Robert E. Quinn (2003). Some of the items included, "The overall mission is clear to all" and "We work on forecasting future opportunities and threats". The Cronbach's alpha of the scale is .83.

Team Building: It was measured using 18-item scale developed by Whetten and Cameron (1995). Some of the items included, "I have knowledge about the different stages of team development" and "I help team members to establish a foundation of trust with each other". The Cronbach's alpha of the scale is .81.

Leadership Style: It was measured using 37-item scale developed by Bass and Avolio (1995). Some of the items in this scale included, "Instills pride in being associated with him/her" and "Talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished". The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was .95.

Job Satisfaction: It was measured using 11-item scale developed by Schnake (1983). Some of the items included, "The fringe benefits you receive" and "The amount of freedom you have in your entire job". The Cronbach's alpha of the scale is .81.

Procedure:

The data were collected from banking sector in West Bengal. The choice of this sector was dictated by the fact that they had large number of employees with diverse backgrounds at multiple levels in both developed and emerging markets. In addition, the literacy rate is higher compared to other sectors. Human resource managers and in some instances, chief executive officers (CEO's) were contacted for getting the permission for data collection. The responses were obtained by questionnaires administered to the employees based on their availability, who completed them during working hours. The questionnaires and general purposes of the research were explained to all the managers by the author, a company employee, and the head of the functional area. In this process, out of 600 questionnaires 360 (60 percent) were collected from the participants across hierarchy and departments. Out of these questionnaires 53 had to be rejected because of high number of missing data or showed high response bias leaving an overall sample size of 307. The questionnaires were completed in approximately thirty minutes by employees who were assured anonymity and confidentiality.

Results

For the purpose of analysis of data, the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 15.0 was used. The statistics used for data analysis included descriptive statistics, linear and multiple regressions, and correlations. After collection of survey data, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted to establish the construct validity of the instruments used. The number of dimensions extracted among the variables was determined by the Eigen value greater than one rule. A principal component analysis with a varimax rotation was used to choose significant factor loadings. The exploratory factor analysis resulted into: six factors for Goal Setting (*Goal Commitment: eigenvalue 2.4, variance accounted for 12 percent; Goal Specificity: eigenvalue 2.1, variance accounted for 11 percent; Self Perceived Ability: eigenvalue 2.0, variance accounted for 10 percent; Goal Difficulty: eigenvalue 1.8, variance accounted for 9 percent; Self efficacy: eigenvalue 1.7, variance accounted for 8 percent; Goal Acceptance: eigenvalue 1.4, variance accounted for 7 percent*). Four factors for Team Building (*Goal Clarity: eigenvalue 2.7, variance accounted for 15 percent; Role Clarity: eigenvalue 2.6, variance accounted for 14 percent; Goal Accomplishment: eigenvalue 1.7, variance accounted for 10 percent; Team Motivation: eigenvalue 1.6, variance accounted for 9 percent*). Three factors for Job Satisfaction (*Coworkers: eigenvalue 2.3, variance accounted for 21 percent; Job Security: eigenvalue 2.3, variance accounted for 21 percent; Compensation: eigenvalue 1.9, variance accounted for 18 percent*). Whereas, for Leadership style based on the reliability analysis 8 items out of 37 items were deleted from this scale, as these items indicated very poor correlation (< 0.30) with the total. Later, the selected 29 items were factor analyzed which resulted into five factors (*Management of Attention: eigenvalue 5.4, variance*

accounted for 18 percent; Task oriented: eigenvalue 4.9, variance accounted for 17 percent; Management of Trust: eigenvalue 3.1, variance accounted for 11 percent; People Oriented: eigenvalue 2.6, variance accounted for 9 percent; Management of Risk: eigenvalue 2.3, variance accounted for 8 percent).

The hypothesis H_1 was that managerial competencies would significantly predict the job satisfaction. To test this hypothesis, simple regression analysis was done. The results were found to be significant ($F = 30.657$, $p < .01$). The adjusted R square value was .17 which indicates that 17% of variance in job satisfaction was explained by the managerial competencies. Thus, the hypothesis that managerial competencies would significantly predict job satisfaction was accepted (see Table 1).

— Table 1 about here —

The hypothesis H_2 was that leadership style would significantly predict the job satisfaction. To test this hypothesis, simple regression analysis was done to investigate how well the leadership style predicts the job satisfaction. The results were found to be significant ($F = 32.306$, $p < .01$). The adjusted R square value was .10 which indicates that 10% of variance in job satisfaction was explained by the leadership style. Thus, the hypothesis that leadership style would predict significantly job satisfaction was accepted (see Table 2).

— Table 2 about here —

The hypothesis H_3 was that managerial competencies and leadership style would be significantly related to job satisfaction. To test this hypothesis, a correlation analysis was done. The relationship of managerial competencies (i.e. goal setting and team building) and leadership style was found to be significant with job satisfaction ($r = .286$ & $.373$; $r = .253$, $p < .01$). With this, the proposed hypothesis that managerial competencies and leadership style would be significantly related to job satisfaction is accepted (see Table 3).

— Table 3 about here —

The hypothesis H_4 was that leadership style would significantly predict managerial competencies. To test this hypothesis simple regression analysis was done. The results were found to be significant ($F = 14.799$, $p < .01$). Here, the adjusted R square value was .09, which indicates that 9% of variance in managerial competencies was explained by the leadership style. Thus, the hypothesis that leadership style would predict significantly managerial competencies is accepted (see Table 4).

— Table 4 about here —

The hypothesis H_5 was that leadership style would mediate the relationship of managerial competencies and job satisfaction. To test this hypothesis, multiple regression analysis was carried out. Here the R square value was .21 which indicates that 21% of variance in job satisfaction was explained by the combination of managerial competencies and leadership style in the

organization. Thus, one can see that the variance in job satisfaction is better explained by the combination of managerial competencies and leadership style than the variance explained individually. Thus, the hypothesis that leadership style would mediate the relationship of managerial competencies with job satisfaction was accepted (see Table 5).

— Table 5 about here —

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the influence of certain managerial competencies and leadership style on job satisfaction. It was also proposed to see the mediating effect of leadership style on the relationship of managerial competencies and job satisfaction. The study shows that managerial competencies have a positive and significant relationship with job satisfaction as expected and is consistent with the findings of Godwin, Neck, and Houghton (1999); Donald, Taylor, Johnson, Cooper, Cartwright, and Robertson (2005); Abbott, Boyd, and Miles (2006).

Regarding the positive impact of leadership style on job satisfaction, the present study is in line with the results obtained by Everett (1987), Bass (1990), Stone (1992), Lawler (1994), Medley and Larochelle (1995), Emery and Barker (2007). Also leadership styles significantly predict managerial competencies are justified based on the previous researches by Locke & Latham (1984), Godwin, Neck, and Houghton (1999), Wang (2001), Ozaralli (2003), and Kuo (2004). The study also showed that leadership style mediated the relationship of managerial competencies with job satisfaction as expected.

Most of the studies cited in this paper had been conducted with the Western organizations. The present study proves validation of these theories in Indian organizational settings. There are certain limitations of this study. The first limitation that could potentially affect the results of the study is the population that was sampled. The population consisted of employees from different organizations, making claims of homogeneity of employees. Another limitation is that the data were self-reported. The participants may have completed the survey to the best of their ability and knowledge, but the responses may not have been completely accurate, and biased.

Research in banking organization is further needed, as the use of competencies is constantly increasing in today's fast changing environment in every aspect. The future research can explore the effect of these competencies on organizational effectiveness and technologies with respect to job satisfaction. Also the relationship of other managerial competencies with that of organizational structure could be an interesting area of study.

Finally, it can be concluded that there is a significant and positive correlation among certain managerial competencies, leadership style, and job satisfaction in various banking organizations across West Bengal, India. Also, the use of competencies is contributing a lot to the smooth functioning and overall effectiveness of

organizations. Transformational leadership style has played an important role in the functioning of managerial competencies. The findings also showed that managers were moderately satisfied with their jobs and areas of

dissatisfaction are signals for change. It was also believed that managers need a more in-depth understanding of the variables studied.

TABLE 1
SIMPLE REGRESSION FOR MANAGERIAL COMPETENCIES PREDICTING JOB SATISFACTION

Independent Variable →	Managerial Competencies		R Square	F
Dependent Variable ↓	Goal Setting	Team Building		
	Beta			
Job Satisfaction	0.179 (3.223*)	0.312 (5.607*)	0.168	30.657*

*p < .01, Beta = Standardized beta coefficient; Note: t – value is given in parenthesis

TABLE 2
SIMPLE REGRESSION FOR LEADERSHIP STYLE PREDICTING JOB SATISFACTION

Independent Variable →	Leadership Style			R Square	F
Dependent Variable ↓	β	SEB	Beta		
Job Satisfaction	0.905	0.159	0.309 (5.684*)	0.096	32.306*

*p < .01, β = Unstandardized beta coefficient, SEB = Standardized error of beta

Beta = Standardized beta coefficient, Note: t – value is given in parenthesis

TABLE 3
CORRELATION STATISTICS

Variable	Goal Setting	Team Building	Leadership Style
Goal Setting	1		
Team Building	0.342*	1	
Leadership Style	0.211*	0.261*	1
Job Satisfaction	0.286*	0.373*	0.253*

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

TABLE 4
SIMPLE REGRESSION FOR LEADERSHIP STYLE PREDICTING MANAGERIAL COMPETENCIES

Independent Variable →	Managerial Competencies		R Square	F
Dependent Variable ↓	Goal Setting	Team Building		
	Beta			
Leadership Style	0.119 (2.041*)	0.236 (4.043*)	0.089	14.799*

*p < .01, Beta = Standardized beta coefficient; Note: t – value is given in parenthesis

TABLE 5

MULTIPLE REGRESSIONS FOR INDEPENDENT VARIABLES PREDICTING JOB SATISFACTION

Independent Variable →	Managerial Competencies		Leadership Style			R Squared	F
	Goal Setting	Team Building	β	SEB	Beta		
Dependent Variable ↓	Beta						
Job Satisfaction	.155 (2.826*)	.264 (4.717*)	.070	.018	.206 (3.839*)	.206	26.274*

*p < .01, β = Unstandardized beta coefficient, SEB = Standardized error of beta
Beta = Standardized beta coefficient. Note: t- value of Beta is given in parenthesis

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