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The Effects of Coworker Relationships, Involvement, and Supportiveness on Job Satisfaction and Performance

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Abstract

Past research has indicated that relationships, involvement, and supportiveness have an effect on job satisfaction and performance. A study was done on Gettysburg College students who have had experience with group work. Sixty-four (29 males, 35 females) Gettysburg College students were used as participants in the study. The study was split fairly evenly between sophomores, juniors, and seniors. To start, the survey included two demographic questions: gender and class year. Participants completed an online survey about the relationships among group mates, group involvement, and group support experience. Questions about the overall satisfaction and performance were also included. A correlational design was used to analyze the data. The results of this study concluded that there was significant association between positive relationships and involvement and job satisfaction and group performance in a group scenario. There was a significant association between group support and job satisfaction, but not performance.

Keywords

Coworker Relationships, involvement, support, Job Satisfaction/Performance

Disciplines

Interpersonal and Small Group Communication | Organization Development | Performance Management

Comments

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Similar to many workers in different organizations, college students will eventually have to work in a group environment. Numerous studies have been done within businesses and other organizations, such as hospitals to examine the positive and negative impact of coworker relations. These studies aim to find similarities between multiple work environments. Like pre-existing studies, the Gettysburg College study examines the effects of relationships, involvement, and supportiveness on job satisfaction and performance. The study of college students in groups will underline the effects of coworker relationships and their effects on job satisfaction and performance. Because the participants are Gettysburg College students, variables will be slightly different, but can be easily translated to variables in previous studies. For example, a grade on a project will stand as a measure of performance. This provides relevant evidence to support the previous research done on corporate organizations.

Why Study Job Performance and Satisfaction?

Job satisfaction and performance are two vital factors that affect a worker. Not only will these variables have an effect on the employee, they also affect the entire organization. Employees make up the foundation of an organization, so a study on these variables may provide valuable insight in determining how some organizations become successful. It is important to gain an understanding of the variables which have a direct impact on both job performance and job satisfaction. This compilation of studies will examine the effects of coworker relationships, involvement, and supportiveness on job satisfaction and performance through previous experiments and a recent study conducted on students at Gettysburg College.

Coworker Relationships

Starting with an examination of coworker relationships, a study done by Lei Vincent Huang and Piper Liping Liu examines how technology affects coworker relations. It is important to include a study that involves technology because in 2018, many workers spend more time interacting on computers than in person. Findings of this study support the idea that connecting and creating relationships online has a strong positive correlation with increased work satisfaction and performance. The study goes on to state how managers should help their employees to connect online because of the established positive effects (Huang & Liu, 2017). In another international study, Cong Liu and fellow researchers looked at how harmonious relationships have a positive impact on satisfaction and performance. The researchers collected data from 214 Chinese employees and 301 United States employees and found that harmony, which is more commonly found in Chinese work environments, is very effective at improving job satisfaction and performance. This may provide evidence for why many American workers have negative connotations with group work (Liu, et al., 2017). Similarly, a study conducted by Kander and Byne found that personality and social interaction between employees can influence satisfaction and task performance. Rather than focus on positive relationships, this study focused on negative aspects. The findings showed that disagreements can harm social relationships, resulting in a negative impact on satisfaction and performance (Kander & Byne, 2007). Like the previous study, another study that focuses on more negative aspects was done by Seung-Yoon Rhee et al. Data was collected on 217 employees of a 5-star South Korean hotel to see how incivility among employees would affect job performance. The results showed that coworker incivility had a negative relationship with job satisfaction and performance (Rhee, et al., 2017).

Coworker Involvement

A look at coworker involvement can provide more insight on these variables. A study by Mahesh Nalla et al. gathered data from 251 security guards and security supervisors from Singapore. Researchers analyzed how the involvement of each guard impacted overall satisfaction and performance. The results support that increased group involvement had a positive relationship with their job satisfaction (Nalla, et al., 2016). Another similar study focuses on the involvement of flight attendants and their supervisors and coworkers. It concludes that there is a positive relationship between the involvement of each attendant and overall satisfaction and performance (Kim, et al., 2017).

Coworker Supportiveness

Many studies underline the importance of coworker supportiveness and its influence on job satisfaction and job performance. A 1996 study done by Babin and Boles examined the support of 261 front-line food service employees. This study that found that employee perceptions of coworker support can reduce stress and increase job satisfaction (Babin & Boles, 1996). Differing from the study done by Babin and Boles, Kirsten Peterson and fellow researchers examined the importance of coworker support on employees returning from long-term sickness/injury. The results of the study revealed coworker support is crucial towards satisfaction and performance after long term absence. Typically workers have trouble reintegrating, but with support of fellow employees, the process goes much smoother (Peterson, et al., 2017).

In another study of coworker support a survey of nurses in hospitals took 263 US nurses and 40 non-US nurses to see if social support from coworkers increased job performance. The findings of the study suggest that increased social interactions and support increased job

performance and decreased the amount of stress while working. Positive coworker relationships were able to suppress feelings of stress and improve job satisfaction in a very high stress environment, so the findings of this study are very important for the future of other studies (AbuAlRub, 2004). One final look at support may prove to be the most useful to support a reason for performing a present day study. A study done by Eder and Eisenberger, found that positive organizational support had a strong relationship with tardiness in the workplace. This study consisted of two different samples: manufacturing employees and retail employees. For the study on retail employees, qualitative research was carried out by asking managers for their opinions on employees' habits of neglecting their job, taking undeserved work breaks, and spending time in conversation rather than working. Both groups revealed that perceived organizational support of employees had a positive relationship with tardiness in the workplace. Tardiness, neglecting work, and all the other variables were used as a measurement poor performance (Eder & Eisenberger, 2007). Because of the results of this study were so different from other studies, it provides a good reason to conduct primary research on the topic.

The Importance of Studying College Students: Present Day Study, 2018

A significant amount of research has indicated the sheer impact that relationships, involvement and supportiveness have had on employee job satisfaction and performance in the past. It is crucial to look at the years before students become employed at many different organizations. By looking at college students working in groups, researchers may be able to underline the roots of the variables in employees. Looking at group performance in college may give employers a better indicator of who they would like to employ. A lot of interview questions don't directly relate to these variables of these studies; this may be an issue that causes poorly matched coworkers. Tests on college students may be beneficial to employers in the future, so

this study is a good topic to discuss. With this information at hand, a study was done on

Gettysburg College students in order to find potential evidence and trends that align with studies

done in the past. Examining information about the way students work in groups prior to

employment may provide evidence as to why the results of previous studies are positive or

negative.

      The present day study hypotheses are as follows:

            Hypothesis I: Positive relationships, involvement and supportiveness will have

            a positive effect on group work satisfaction and performance (grade).

The first hypothesis suggests that positive relationships, involvement and supportiveness will

have a strong correlation with positive work satisfaction and performance.

            Hypothesis II: Negative relationships, involvement and supportiveness will have a

            negative effect on group work satisfaction and performance (grade).

The second hypothesis suggests that negative relationships, involvement and supportiveness will

have a strong correlation with lack of work satisfaction and low performance.

Methods

Participants

      This study consisted of 64 Gettysburg College Students. The results of the study were

split fairly evenly and consisted of 29 male (45.3%) and 35 female (54.7%) participants, and 23

sophomores (35.9%), 21 juniors (32.8%), and 20 seniors (31.3%) participants.

Procedure

      The survey was sent to Gettysburg College students through the use of voluntary

sampling, convenience sampling, and snowball sampling. Some participants received the survey

through fraternity or sorority group chats, some were asked to take the survey on the spot, and

some participants directly sent the survey to students they knew. All questions were answered on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being strongly disagree to 5 being strongly agree.

Measures

All measures are available within the appendix. Those who participated in the study answered seventeen questions regarding demographics, relationships between members of a group, how involved the participant's group mates were with the project, the support level of the participant's group mates, the participants satisfaction level, and how they felt about the performance (grade) of the project. These measures were all meant to replicate the effects that positive or negative relationships, involvement, and supportiveness may have on an employee's work satisfaction and overall performance in any work environment.

Demographics. Questions regarding the demographics of the participants only included two of the seventeen questions within the survey. The questions asked for the participant's class and gender. These measures were simply give an identity to those who took part in the survey.

Independent Variable Questions. These questions were used to measure the positivity/negativity of group relationships, involvement, and supportiveness. All measures range from moderate to high in terms of internal consistency. The Cronbach's Alpha of relationship oriented questions was .56. An example of a questions from this measurement is as follows: *When I work in a group, I always tend to like my group members.* This was used to measure to strength of the relationships. In regards to the measurement of group involvement, the Cronbach's Alpha was .84. An example questions from this measurement is: *More often than not, I put in more total time on working on the project than the rest of my group.* The final measure within the independent variables was group supportiveness, and had a Cronbach's Alpha of .51. An example question is: *When I am struggling with my responsibilities in a group*

project, I feel comfortable asking my group mates for help. All of the questions except

demographics were measured on a scale of 1 to 5: 1 being *strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 -*

neutral, 4 - *agree,* and 5 - *strongly agree.*

Dependent Variable Questions. These measured the satisfaction level when working

with a group and feelings about performance or the grade received on the project. The

Cronbach's Alpha for these were .72 and .51 respectively. One example of how satisfaction was

measured is: *I am satisfied with the input I receive from my group mates.* In regards to

performance questions, one such measurement is as follows: *I tend to receive better grades on*

group projects rather than individual work. Both were answered on the same scale as the

independent variables.

Results

Since there were multiple measures, the results section can be split into three sections.

First, these results supported that there was a significant positive association between average

positive relationships in groups and average group satisfaction, $r = .56$, $p < .001$. There was also

a significant positive association between positive relationships in groups and average group

performances, $r = .25$, $p = .05$. Second, results of group involvement impact on satisfaction and

performance supported that there was both a significant negative association between average

group involvement and average group satisfaction, $r = -.45$, $p < .001$, and significant negative

association between average group involvement and average group performances, $r = -.37$, $p =$

.003. Third, results of the tests of group support on satisfaction and performance proved to not be

as reliable as the measures before it. Only one of the two was only a significant positive

association between average group support and average group satisfaction, $r = .52$, $p < .001$.

There was no significant association between group support and average group performances, $r =$

.17, $p = .19$.

Discussion

One can conclude that the results of the present day study align with those of previous studies. The hypotheses cannot be 100% confirmed because the test of group support on overall performance was not significant. However, all other variables support previous research; all correlations ranged from moderate to strong. There was a strong correlation between positive group relationships and group work satisfaction and a moderate correlation between positive group relationships and group performance. Regarding group involvement, there was a strong negative correlation between group involvement and group work satisfaction and a moderate negative correlation between group involvement and group performance. Similar to the other findings, there was a strong correlation between group support and group work satisfaction.

These findings match with previous research and may provide an indicator as to why past studies boast similar results. Looking at the measures and results suggests that Gettysburg College student's group work satisfaction and performance are directly affected by group relationships and involvement. Group support also has a strong effect on group work satisfaction. Looking at the results of this study, it may be likely that college students carry over their college group work tendencies into a work environment.

Limitations and Future Research

There are several potential limitations to a correlation study such as this one. Although it is almost impossible to be sure what the exact limitations of this study are without direct feedback, one can still assume what should have been changed. First, the study probably could have been more representative of the student body at Gettysburg College. The survey was sent to

a lot of students in Greek Life, and it could have been sent to more students outside of the Greek community. Another potential limitation is the idea that some students probably felt it was too long and rushed through it. Friends of the surveyors may have also falsely answered questions in order to skew the data in the opposite direction. In regard to the questions themselves, some measures could have had higher reliability and better worded questions. It is hard to tell if any of these potential factors had an effect on the outcome of this study, but they are only potential limitations, and not what actually limited the study. Some ideas for future research include using a larger sample size, including college major in the study so the sample is more representative of the population, and testing professors to see how their results would differ from students.

Conclusion

The hypotheses cannot be fully confirmed because one of the findings was not a significant association. The findings of the relationship between group supportiveness and performance could not be used toward the study. Since the hypothesis included everything together, it is not confirmable with these findings. All tests would have to be significant in order to 100% confirm them. In regards to the results that were significant, the findings support previous research done on this topic. This means these variables are all generalizable, and would be useful for future studies.

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Appendix

Demographics:

1. What grade are you currently enrolled in?

    - Sophomore

    - Junior

    - Senior

2. What is your gender?

    - Male

    - Female

The following questions were measured on a scale of 1 to 5. 1 - *strongly disagree,* 2 - *disagree,* 3 - *neutral,* 4 - *agree,* 5 - *strongly agree.*

Relationships:

3. When I work in a group, I always tend to like my group members…

4. When I work in a group, I am always well-informed…

5. When I work in a group, I always cooperate with my group members…

Involvement:

6. More often than not, I put in more total time on working on the project than the rest of my group…

7. I feel as though I take my work more seriously than my group mates…

8. My group mates tend to take on smaller roles in group oriented projects…

Supportiveness:

9. Support from my group mates during group work increases my productivity…

10. When I am struggling with my responsibilities in a group project, I feel comfortable asking my group mates for help…

11. During group work, my partners always value my contributions…

Job Satisfaction:

12. I'd prefer to work alone than in a group…

13. I am satisfied with the input I receive from my group mates…

14. I am usually satisfied with my group mates…

Performance:

15. I tend to receive better grades on group projects rather than individual work…

16. I am usually satisfied with the grades I receive on group projects…

17. I tend to have my best performances when working with my closest friends…