

Investigating the Relationship Between Aspects of Support and Performance Among Dairy Employees

James Rankin*, Thomas Griffin and Reuben Brown

School of Advanced Studies, University of Phoenix Tempe, Arizona

Review Article

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***For Correspondence**

School of Advanced Studies, University of
Phoenix Tempe, Arizona, United States

Tel: +6625828950

E-mail: jrankin88@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate if a relationship exists between social support and employee performance relating to the aspects of support and performance among dairy employees, aspects such as an organization's concern for its employees, the organizational goals and values and the employees contributions, and performance. Two surveys were administered to 120 dairy employees with the goal of obtaining 58 responses, to determine if a relationship existed between the aspects of support and employee performance. The results indicated that there was not a significant relationship between social support and employee performance. To address the research question and hypothesis, a Pearson r and the Spearman's rho were conducted. The results of the testing supported that there is not a direct relationship between different aspects that influence support and performance among dairy employees. Future research will be needed to understand why this unique dairy group sample in a minority dominated group, and in a rural setting, did not replicate the findings of other researchers. Future research using a mixed method and elements from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs involving an individual's demographics in a rural vs. urban area may uncover additional research on this topic.

Introduction

Investigating the aspects of providing social support to improve an employee's performance is essential to the longevity of an organization. Literature exists on social support that used both quantitative and qualitative methods, with the quantitative method illustrating the correlation between social support and employee performance Wong, 2014 [1]. However, the literature called for empirical, scientific, and databased research to validate a positive correlation between social support and employee performance Delost & Nadder 2014 [2]. Given this data, it is essential that organizations understand the aspects of social support that may lead to increasing performance among employees Ma, 2015 [3]. The results may aid scholars, leaders, and practitioners who engage in social support by revealing different approaches to use in order to assess the different aspects that may influence support and performance through the development, modeling, and sustaining of social support frameworks. If a relationship existed between social support and employee performance, the relationship would determine the need for critical analysis about how training programs regarding social support can be developed and sustained in various dairy organizations.

This study creates a space for future exploration on the aspects of providing social support as a precursor for improving future employee performance. Understanding different aspects of social support such as an organization's concern for the employees, the organizational goals and values, contributions, and employee performance will enable leaders to strengthen the workforce and improve performance. Improving social support among employees is significant to leadership in that it will enable leaders to deal with uncertainty and to cope with everyday situations. (Lee S, et al. 2015; Meng, et al. 2018) [4,5]. As organizational leaders strive to succeed understanding the issues affecting an employee's performance may lead to a more efficient and productive workforce (Anitha, 2014) [6].

Literature Review and Types of Support

Piyali, et al. (2015) [7] acknowledged the fact that providing support enables employees to utilize their skills. Individuals working in a supportive environment increase their level of training, are self-efficacy, and motivated to remain with the organization (Tracey JB, et al. 2001)[8]. Rabia M, et al. (2017) [9] submitted that providing support is essential for employees to accomplish goals and improve performance, whereas, Hongvichit (2015) [10] noted that individuals rely on the interpersonal skills and

support from their supervisors to perform and complete a task. For example, a quantitative study by Tracey, et al. (2001)[8] conducted among 420 managers investigated if a relationship existed between pre-training self-efficacy and motivation. The study was conducted using surveys over an eight-month period.

Results of the study found that job involvement was an essential factor to consider when developing pre-training programs among individuals. Additional results revealed that a significant relationship between the work environment measure and the pre-training measures indicated that working in a supportive environment has a positive influence on training and development activities (Tracey et al. 2001) [8]. Understanding the significance of social support within an organization is essential as leaders strive to improve productivity and increase efficiency (Tahir, et al. 2015) [11]. Saleem, et al. (2013) [12] acknowledged that increasing the level of support and improving performance could be increased by investigating the interventions currently in place that aid employees in the workforce to perform their job. Employee performance is essential for organizational leaders in a rapidly changing environment, as they strive to aligning individuals with the appropriate job task, and increase productivity (Siengthai, et al. 2016) [13].

Sandvik, Duhan, and Sandvik (2014) [14] recognized that innovation is an essential element and a major contributor to the enhancement of improving employee performance and increasing profitability. Process innovation assists individuals in developing or improving an existing product (Darroch, 2005) [15]. Hilman, et al. (2015) [16] and Rosli, et al. (2013) [17] and Tahir, et al. (2015) [11] indicated that process innovation is significantly associated with employee performance.

The continued need to understand if the effectiveness of the interventions currently in place designed to support the organization's aggressive social support goals is warranted. Social support has an influence on employee performance and can assist the leaders within the organization to increase the productivity of the dairy workforce. This literature review added a specific search criteria and refinement in the scope and limitations for this research study.

Research Method and Results

The sample consisted of 58 non-management hourly employees, 18 years or older from a XYZ dairy plant in Mississippi. One respondent did not disclose his/her gender, age, or ethnicity. However, the remaining data were retained for that respondent since demographic variables were not used in answering the research question or hypothesis. Most participants (91.2%, n=52) were males, and females were in the minority (8.8%, n=5). Regarding age, 63.2% (n=36) were 22-40 years of age and the remaining 36.8% (n=21) were between the ages of 41 and 70.

The number of employees who were 26-30 (24.6%, n=14), 31-40 (31.6%, n=18), and 41-50 (24.6%, n=14) were approximately equally distributed. The sample was not very ethnically diverse as most participants (68.4%, n=39) were African Americans. White (Non-Hispanic) workers (29.8%, n=17) were the second largest group of respondents and 1.8% (n=1) were "other" which was not specifically disclosed on the survey. Non-management hourly employees (65.5%, n=38) were neutral relative to the degree of perceived social support, whereas 8.6% (n=5) had perceived a slight or moderate degree of support. However, approximately one-fourth of respondents (25.8%, n=15) perceived that the amount of social support was slightly lacking to strongly lacking. Regarding employee performance, most non-management hourly employees (62.1%, n=36) were regularly productive. Approximately one-third of respondents (32.7%, n=19) were often or always productive.

Data Screening

The continuous data were screened for normality with skewness and kurtosis statistics, visually with histograms, and with the Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality. With SPSS, when the absolute values of the skewness and kurtosis coefficients are less than two times their standard errors, the distributions are considered normal. For social support, the skewness was 1.00 times the standard error. However, the kurtosis was 4.18 times the standard error. The histogram for social support, which can be described as leptokurtic, is presented in

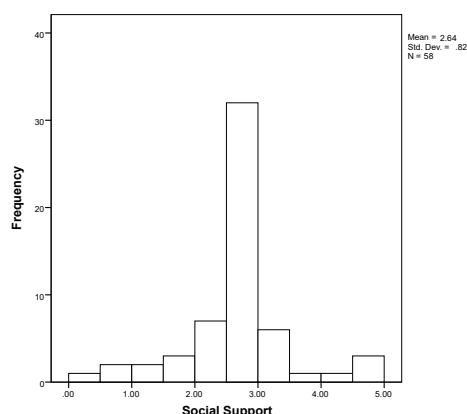


Figure 1: Histogram for Social Support.

For employee performance, the skewness was 2.19 times the standard error and the kurtosis was 0.03 times the standard error. The distribution for employee performance had a positive skew. The histogram for employee performance is presented in Figure 2.

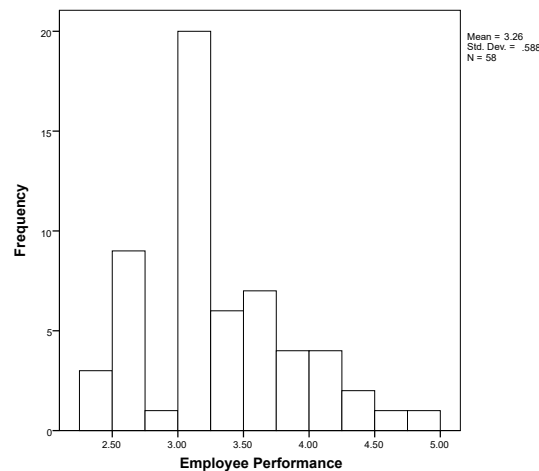


Figure 2. Histogram for Employee Performance.

With the Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality, significance values less than .05 indicate a significant departure from normality. The distributions for both social support ($p < .001$) and employee performance ($p = .006$) were outside the range of normality. See Table 1.

Table 1. Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality.

Variable	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	p
Social Support	867	58	.000
Employee Performance	939	58	.006

To summarize the descriptive statistics, most non-management hourly employees (65.5%, $n=38$) were neutral relative to the degree of perceived social support, whereas 8.6% ($n=5$) had perceived a slight or moderate degree of support. Regarding employee performance, most non-management hourly employees (62.1%, $n=36$) were regularly productive. The variables of interest were assessed for normalcy and measures of skewness and kurtosis and evaluated as to whether the sample obtained met normalcy assumptions. The sample did not meet the normality assumptions. Both the Pearson r and the Spearman's ρ were conducted on the data. The outcomes were similar. Results revealed that there was no significant relationship between social support and employee performance among employees at the XYZ dairy in Mississippi.

Conclusion

The study contributed to filling the gap in the literature relating to how leaders can investigate aspects of support and performance, by identifying and understanding aspects within the organization (Anitha, 2014). Results from the study can help to improve the organizational climate within the XYZ dairy via its identification of employee concerns and issues relating to perceived social support as it relates to improving an employee's job performance. Results of the study revealed that some employees received neutral support to perform effectively on the job. The findings relating to social support and employee performance is critical to the transferring of training within an organizational environment and is relevant because employees depend on support sources to deal with uncertainty and to cope with everyday challenges (Anitha, 2014). Future research will be needed to understand why this unique dairy group sample in a minority dominated group, and in a rural setting, did not replicate the findings of other researchers. Future research using a mixed method and elements from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs involving an individual's demographics in a rural vs. urban area may uncover additional research on this topic.

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