

Effectiveness of Positive Reinforcement and Participative Leadership on Employee's Productivity

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Abstract: In a highly complex and competitive organizational world the role of dynamic employees with higher futuristic potentiality cannot be undermined. Organizational efficiency and growth is largely enhanced due to unique attributes and expertise its employees embrace. This can be supported by the famous Hawthorne studies which brought about a new perspective in Human Relations Movement. It focused on the relations between people and their social environment backed by motivations. Positive reinforcement is a technique to elicit and to strengthen new behaviors by adding rewards and incentives. Participative leadership is another mode through which there can be positive employee involvement with focus on group decision-making, encouraging creativity and thus higher organizational growth.

Positive reinforcement inculcates confidence among the employees, a belief that he or she is capable of completing tasks with success. It paves way for accepting further challenges and complications without the sense of fear and anxiety. Participative leadership is the answer to the success of positive reinforcement. Participative leadership influences the job performance of subordinates through incorporating higher levels of trust between them. Subordinates feel comfortable in sharing their ideas when they are involved in decision-making. This would eventually reflect in higher standards of job performance.

Key words: Organizational efficiency, Positive enforcement, Participative leadership, Employee involvement, Organizational growth.

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I. Introduction

I. Employee Involvement key to organizational growth

Organizational development is a planned effort .knowledge and skills of the behavioral sciences. The main thrust in organizational development is on the organizations problem-solving abilities. The success of any organization largely depends on how effectively and efficiently the workers' contribute (1). It emphasizes on building links between individual goals and organizational goals. Organizational challenges and problems can be resolved through collaborative efforts of the management and the employees. The smooth functioning of the work at various organizational levels depends on certain values such as openness, trust between the management and the employees .pro activeness, autonomy and authenticity.

Authenticity is the trust generated between leaders and the group they lead, willingness and confidence of a person to share their ideas and thoughts .It also involves the power of the employees to take initiatives without any fear of burnout or negative reinforcements.

Employees are the central entity in Organizational development. The proactive change within the organization can be brought about by the dynamic individuals who are the vehicle of change .The employees must integrate their goals with the organizational goals

The effectiveness of an employee depends primarily on their skills and expertise, the efficiency factor depends on the quality of work environment provided by the employers. Factors that affect productivity include the work environment, suitability of tasks for the worker's skills, interactions with co-workers and bosses, and degree of motivational rewards given to the employees. Motivation is the set of forces that causes people to engage efficiently. Employees do not rank 'salary' as the top factor in determining whether they like their jobs or not. What is important to them is to actualize their potential. Empowering the employee gives sense of belongingness in the organization which in turn leads to higher degree of commitment.

Employee involvement at every level of hierarchy in matters concerning the overall wellbeing of the employees can be achieved through participative leadership. Participative leadership also known as Democratic Leadership Style, is a method of leadership that involves all team members in terms of identifying important goals as well as developing strategies and procedures to achieve the goals.

II. Work related issues affecting Employees effectiveness and commitment

There are different types of pressures and challenges faced by the organizations, which inevitably spills over to the employees. The pressure of aggressive competition among the firms, the globalized competitions penetrating in every firm big or small has changed the way organizations meet their goals. The targets fixed are time-bound, and constant need ensuring flexibility in their operations to face technological changes around. This requires the employees to be constantly aware of the evolved changes. Therefore the employees are faced with the excessive burden to face these surmountable challenges. The challenges faced by the employees are:

A) Fear of redundancy :

There is constant fear of being redundant which can negatively affect the overall productivity. The technological changes from the 1990's Robotics to the latest transition towards Artificial intelligence, have created an ever-demanding role from the employees. .

B) The Psychological contracts between employer and Employee :It refers to the employees set of expectations from the organizations. There is always a tussle between the desired expectations and the actual outcomes. The recent trends in downsizing and cut-backs further creates a sense of restlessness among the employees.

C) Individual traits and attributes: The differences in skills and attributes creates a sense of unhealthy competition among the employees which in turn affects the Team-work.

D) Favoritism is seen as another hurdle in the way of overall organizational growth. This can evolve due to either due to individual differences or due to the nature of job. However this adversely affects the conducive work atmosphere and can result in higher attritions rate or labor turnover.

E) Burn out: A direct consequence of stress and feeling of exhaustion when employees face too much of pressure due to the expectations of their employers. The constant expectation for good results brings in mental exhaustion and eventually psychological withdrawal.

III. Research Objectives

1. Importance of Positive Reinforcements on employee's productivity.
2. The role of Participative leadership in an organization.

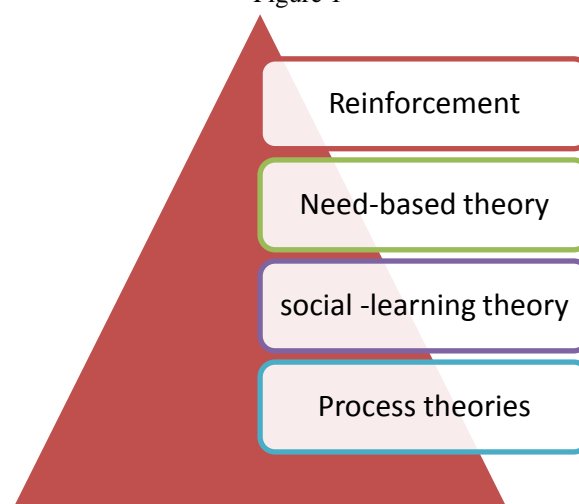
IV. Research Methodology

The research paper has gathered data based on secondary research and information gathered from the other research papers, books on Organizational behavior's which have been imperative in framing this conceptual paper.

V. Literature review

Theoretical framework of positive reinforcement:

Figure 1



Principle of Reinforcement:

The principle of reinforcement refers to an increase in the frequency of a response when it is immediately followed by certain events. This concept of reward as a motivator is attributed to Skinner's reinforcement theory.

According to Nelson (2001), positive reinforcement is most effective when it is 'directly reinforcing of the desired behavior', 'is immediate', 'is valued' by the individual and is 'frequent'. Recognition is one such positive reinforce which when used on the lines of reinforcement theory, increases the frequency of desired behavior.

Social Learning Theory:

Albert Bandura (1969) worked on the foundations of reinforcement theory and suggested that behaviour does stem from its consequences but also includes constant learning and adapting to one's environment and that most learning probably occurs vicariously through observation of others.

The theory thus explains behavior as a function of the person and his or her social environment and the interaction between both.

Another key element of Social learning theory is self-regulation which involves controlling one's own behavior or the transfer of behavior from external sources to internal ones. This self-regulation occurs through three steps of self-observation (looking at one's own behavior and keeping tabs on it), judgment (comparing one's behavior with a standard) and self-response (rewarding or punishing oneself through the comparison with the standard). It is through this self-regulatory mechanism that an individual gets a sense of self-esteem.

It is derived from the theory that an individual's self-belief about his or her ability to do a task strongly influences his or her ability to perform (Appelbaum 1996, cited in Nelson 2001) and the relationship between performance and efficacy has been established empirically.

Need based theories:

The phenomenon of recognition provides for Individual political, social and psychological benefits. After food, it is by far the most significant of human needs and as Heike (2009) points out, "without recognition humans in general would not lead a life above merely animal existence." (Heike 2009, p.39)

Role of recognition in driving human action can be gauged by its placement in the various theories of motivation; need for recognition has been a part of both the traditional and contemporary theories of motivation.

Maslow (1943) in his seminal work 'A theory of human motivation' gave importance to Recognition as a concept can be observed in relation to individual's social needs and needs at the higher end of the hierarchy. Acknowledgement as a member of a group satisfies an individual's social need, likewise recognition for achievement helps build self-esteem.

David McClelland (1953) worked on Maslow's need theory and condensed it to three main needs for power, affiliation and achievement.

Alderfer's ERG theory (1972) also points out the role of recognition in context of an individual's need for relatedness.

Process theories

Process theories give relevance to the 'value' associated with those rewards. Vroom's expectancy theory (1964) provides the most significant and holistic presentation of work motivation.

Ambrose and Kulik (1999) assert that after thirty years of inception, there is a decline in the research on expectancy theory, which indicates that the basic concerns regarding the theory have been examined and that the theory has matured. (Ambrose and Kulik 1999, p.236)

It is said that expectancy theory has been used "as a general framework for assessing, interpreting or evaluating employee behavior" (Ambrose and Kulik 1999, p.236)

Theoretical framework of Participative leadership:

Trust-Based Mechanisms by which Participative Leadership Influences Job Performance

There is growing evidence to suggest that participative leadership influences the job performance of subordinates through engendering higher levels of trust in supervisor, especially for employees in non-managerial positions (Huang et al. 2010).

Affective trust refers to that which results from the emotional ties developed between two parties within a relationship as they engage in a process of reciprocal social exchange (Schaubroeck, Lam, & Peng 2011). By providing opportunities and support to take responsibility and participate in decision-making, participative leaders should elicit affective trust in their subordinates through the development of a close emotional bond between the two parties (Huang et al. 2010).

According to House and Mitchell (1974), the participative leader possesses consultative behaviors, such as imploring subordinates for ideas prior to making an ultimate decision, although, they retain final decision authority. The participative leader shares duties with subordinates by encompassing them in the preparation, decision-making, and implementation phases (Negron, 2008). Employees who are motivated

become self-directed and produce an inspired team, thereby bestowing a greater consistent team and ownership amongst members (Hersey, & Blanchard, 2010).

Participative style of leadership has a high degree of consultation between the leader and his or her followers. This is mainly seen when followers are involved in decision making by their leaders (Quick & Nelson, 2013). This involvement is crucial for achieving high employee performance which leads to a high employee commitment as followers feel appreciated and valued (Luthan, 2011)

Leaders will gain respect from their employees and instill a sense of responsibility in their workforce when they let their employees to voice their opinions (Jones, 2013). The benefits associated with this approach include increased trust in the leaders by their followers (Moshal, 2009). Leaders that make decisions while keeping employees in the dark may lose the trust of their subordinates (Jones, 2013).

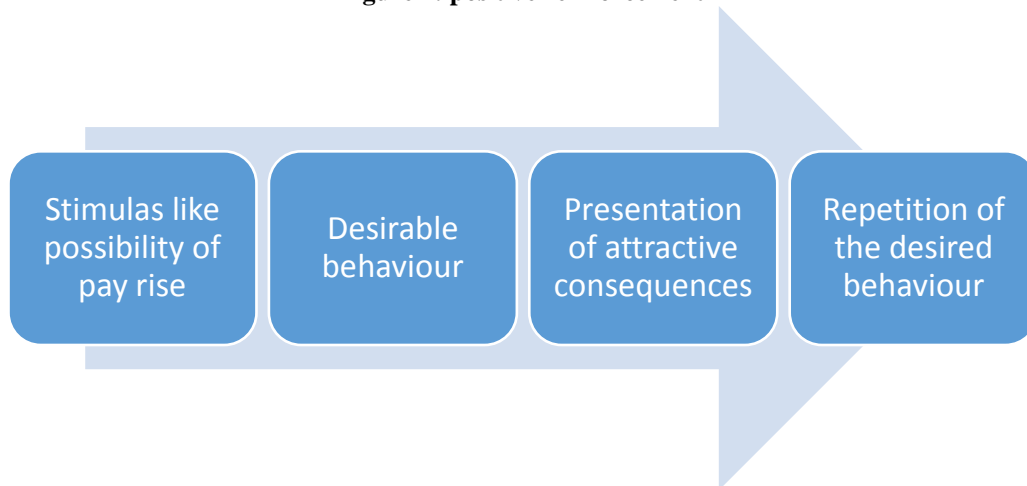
According to Rost (2013), the effectiveness of leadership rests on a process of influence, in this case, employees are motivated to work towards goals, not through intimidation, but through individual inspiration.

VI. The essence of Positive reinforcement

“The way positive reinforcement is carried out is more important than the amount.”– B.F. Skinner.

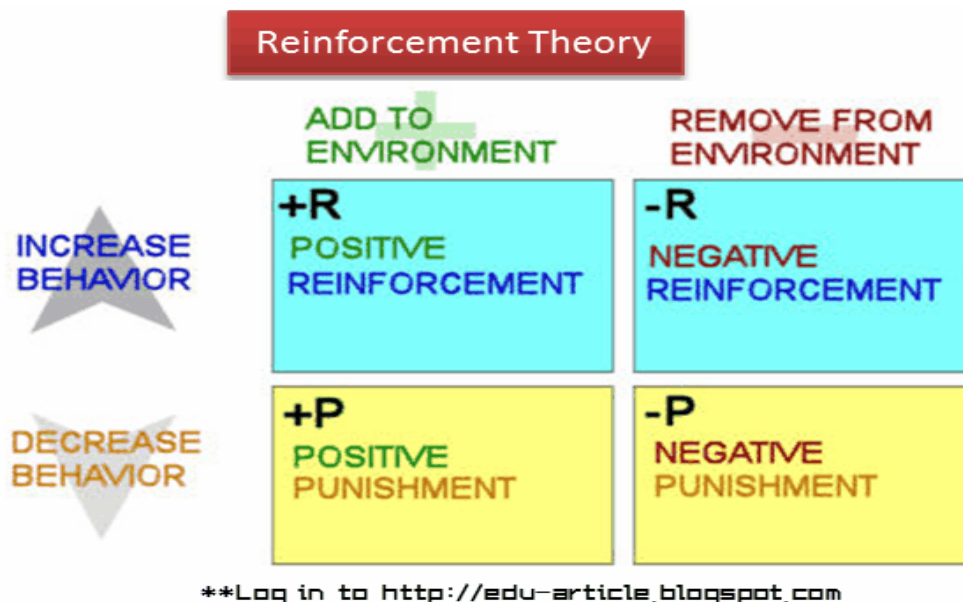
Positive reinforcement: Reinforcement theory also known as “operant conditioning” (2), associated with the work of B.F skinner. This theory gives importance to the fact that organization with employee favorable environment, there would be higher degree of efficiency and productivity. This would also ensure consistency in organizational growth both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Figure 2: positive reinforcement



Reinforcement theory:

Figure 3



Keeping in mind the various work and employee related issues, the organizations can focus more towards playing positive role in the form of rewards and motivations. This also refers to Psychological contract between the employee and the organization's.

One of the best ways to motivate a team and produce phenomenal results in the workplace is by using positive reinforcement.

When positive reinforcement is used, focus is less on what people are doing wrong and more on what they're doing right. By rewarding and praising team every time they do a good job, there would be an atmosphere of healthy growth and competition.

Positive reinforcement would create an atmosphere of constant desire for higher performance and development among the employees.

The various types of positive reinforcement can be:

- a) Rewards for creativity and sense of commitment in an organization.
- b) Timely Recognition of the performance and achievement's in the form of appreciation letters.
- c) Tangible reinforcements which encompasses bonuses, and compensations and incentives.

VII. Effects of positive reinforcement on employees

- A) Sense of worthiness: The timely rewards given to the employees would make them have the sense of worthiness in the organization. The efforts made by them would give them boosts for further enhancing their productivity and efficiency.
- B) Workplace morale among the employees would be uplifted: There can be a general cordial and concerted efforts by the employees. There would also be greater team –work and encouragement for faster results. Positive reinforcement lets the employee know she is making progress and that management is recognizing her efforts.
- C) Focused individual's and teams: It is a human tendency of showing remarkable work when they are aware that contributions would be highlighted and rewarded. Consistency in their work can be thought as the best effect of positive reinforcements. Through skilful use of positive reinforcement, will increase employees' self-esteem and call forth from them greater contributions and increased dedication to the job
- D) Enhanced Organizational worth in the market: In a drive towards achieving higher scale in the competitive market, organizations with the employees who are loyal and committed would certainly command greater heights. Employees who feel their efforts are important and appreciated make significant and consistent contributions. The attrition rate is expected to be lower since organization's reputations of valuing their employees would give a good reputation in the external market.. There would be an amicable team environment, showing persistent drive towards innovation and creative problem solving.

Figure 3 Positive outcomes of positive reinforcements:



VIII. Participative leadership

“This style of leadership generates fresh thinking and creates shared commitment to solving critical challenges in sustainable, inclusive ways. (Participatory Leadership, Workshop Workbook, 2014) “

Positive reinforcement theory can be successful if there exists system which constantly supports it. This can be achieved through dynamic leaders without whom the organizations cannot achieve their goals and targets. From the organizations point of view leadership is vital because they have powerful influence on individual and group behavior.

A modern study of leadership emphasizes that Leadership is a relationship between leader and the people being led (3). An appropriate leadership style can influence and ensure the prosperity and the economic growth of both the organization and employees. A leader's combination of attitudes and behaviors leads to regularity and predictability in dealing with the group members. Sharing decision –making with the group members and working with them with full involvement has become the generally accepted leadership approach in modern organizations. If a group or team is led by an effective and good leader, it is more or likely that the team will be able to fulfil their as well as the organizations goal and objectives successfully. Participative leadership reinforces positive behavior among the employees and gives sense of democratic style of working. Hence it is also called Democratic style of leadership.

Participative leadership boosts employee morale since they are aware that their ideas and contributions are respected in the decision-making process.. When a company needs to make changes within the organization, the participative leadership style helps employees accept changes since they have been a part of the decision-making.

Cambridge defines Participatory as “*The idea that things can be achieved more easily if everyone works together and is involved in making decisions*”. Participative leadership encompasses many behaviors and therefore can be broadly characterized as:

1) Consultative leaders: They confer with the group members before making a decision. However they retain the final authority to make decisions

2) Consensus leaders strive for consensus. They encourage group decision about and issue and then make a decisions.

3) Democratic leaders confer give final authority on the group .They function as collectors of group opinion and take vote before making a decision.

The participative style of leadership is also known as Trickle –up leadership because the leader accepts suggestions for managing the operation from group members.

This kind of leadership is crucial because of technological changes, changes in Line and staff relationship and the updated skills of the employees. Participated style of leadership encompasses team work approach. The process of such kind of leadership involves coaching from team members, negotiating the demands and collaborative approach to issues facing the organization's.

The powerful story of Andrall (andy) Pearson, chairman of Tricon Global Restaurants, PizzaHut, Taco Bell and KFC can be suitably cited as the leaders who transformed himself from being autocrat leader to the considerate supportive leader. To quote him “Great leaders find balance between getting results and how they get them. A lot of people make the mistakes of thinking that getting results is all there is to a Job.....Your real job is to get results and to do it in a way that makes your organization a great place to work”

Significance of participative leadership:

A) The need for “leaders at all levels” is one of the 12 critical issues identified in the Global Human Capital Trends 2014 survey published by Deloitte University Press, the publication.. The Deloitte team advocated

that “21st-century leadership is different”. Participative leader is the one who readily understand and absorb the millennial mind-set and help them innovatively build a better organization.

- B) Participative leadership inculcates decision –making at all levels and thus giving scope for effective problem solving techniques.
- C) Organizations that possess participative leader, generates high level of job satisfaction among the employees which directly leads to higher productivity among the employees. Thus is there high incidence of psychological relief among the employees .They feel that their ideas and contributions does have value in the management decisions.
- D) Higher degree of Commitment can be expected as a result of constant efforts from democratic leader who exercises power in such a way that an employee feels highly motivated by the requests that seem important to the leader.
- E) Participative leadership changes organizational culture by inspiring a sense of mission and purpose about the importance of the group work and stimulating new ways of thinking and problem solving. This style of management plays an important role in influencing and motivating the employees, make them aware of the tasks outcome and stimulate their needs and orient them towards organizational performance.
- F) Effective leadership involves motivation, management, inspiration and analytical skills. These factors present in the organizations helps in recording increased employee satisfaction positively and constructively and influences overall productivity and the profits.
- G) Participative leadership change the organizational culture by inspiring a sense of mission and purpose and stimulating new ways of thinking and problem solving.
- H) By providing opportunities and support to take responsibility and participate in decision-making, participative leaders should elicit affective trust in their subordinates through the development of a close emotional bond between the two parties (Huang et al. 2010). This enhances the comfort and confidence level among the employeesand effectively offer their suggestions thus ensuring smooth process of decision-making. This also leads them to reciprocateactively byconstantly engaging in work-related behaviors desired by the supervisors.

IX. Conclusion

Organizations are subjected to pressures for change .These changes are the result of various factors .To name few are fast paced generation x, technologicalrevolutions, high globalized era which has thrown open doors to cut-throat competitions, competing products and services with more features andoptions, lower costs and demand for higher quality. Organizations are what its people are .The strength and quality of its employees are the drivers of growth and organizational development. Thus to meet the growing challenges the focus should be towards application of the behavioral science .Quality-of work life programs for its employees, participative management to decentralize the decision-making autonomy to employees and timely positive reinforcements would pave way for smooth functioning of the organizations. Effective leadership involves motivation, management, inspiration and analytical skills. When all these are present, the organizations record increased employee satisfaction that positively influence productivity and the profits.

To increase the organization's performance a leader must have the ability to promote creativity and innovation, stimulate the subordinates to challenge their own value systems and improve their individual performance.

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