Leader's Motivating Language and Job Performance: Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

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Abstract

This study is based on the notion of a leader`s communication patterns in the context of affecting interpersonal relationship at the workplace. The Motivating Language Theory provides a model to check its relationship with job performance. For the validation of this relationship, a sample of all levels of teaching staff from all Pakistan public and private universities was drawn based on the proportionate random and disproportionate sampling technique and data was collected through self-administrated survey questionnaire from 577 university teachers to check their perception regarding the motivating language that is used by their superiors. The Correlation Coefficient and mediation (INDIRECT) Path analyses were applied to check the relationship between the use of motivating language and job performance with the mediation of job satisfaction. Based on empirical evidence this is ascertained that faculty members' collective perception of using motivating language by their deans/heads is positively related to job satisfaction. In addition to this, job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between motivating language and job performance. The findings generate more interest in enhancing communication patterns used by the deans/heads in the context of university environment to increase more satisfaction and job performance of the faculty members. The study recommends that additional testing be carried out with the longitudinal approach in order to check its generalization.

Key Words: use of leaders' motivating language, satisfaction, job performance, higher education

1. Introduction

The leader's oral communication with subordinates received ample consideration in the literature on organizational communication and leadership. The research has focused on the relationship between the spoken words of leaders and employees` job-related behavior at the work place (Raina & Roebuck, 2014). It shows that leaders require a model to facilitate them in selecting the most appropriate pattern of communication with their subordinates. Numerous models have been introduced to guide a leader's intended behavior, for example, the Path-Goal Theory (House, 1971),the Expectancy Theory (Robbins & Judge,2014;Vroom, 1964), the Goal-Setting Theory (Locke, 1968) and the Transformational Leadership Theory (Burn, 2003). However, the Motivating Language Theory (MLT) (Sullivan, 1988) is an all-inclusive model that facilitates leaders to strategically formulate communication patterns with respect to enhancing employees' outcomes related to their employment in the organization (Steele & Plenty, 2014).In the last three decades, researchers focused on investigating the potential influence of MLT on employees' outcomes, for example; job satisfaction, job performance (Mayfield & Mayfield & Kop, 1998), organizational climate (Alqahtani, 2015) self-efficacy (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2012),decision-making(Mayfield & Mayfield, 2015), communication competence (Madlock & Sexton, 2015) and team creative performance (Wang, Chang, Kai-Tang,Menifee & Michael, 2009). Most of these studies were conducted in the United States, only a few studies were carried out from a non-US perspective.

Therefore, new research studies of the MLT need to be conducted and replicate the research in other parts of the world to

check the results` compatibility and generalizability. This study focuses on how the use of motivating language by leaders can influence the relationship with employees' job-related outcomes from that perspective of higher-education institutes in Pakistan. This study endeavored to expand the body of knowledge in the literature on leaders` oral-communication by establishing the potential mediating link played by job satisfaction with respect to use of motivating language and job performance, to the contentment of the international research community. This research will provide a more extensive and profound level of understanding and emulate assured components of previous pieces of research conducted on of employee satisfaction and job performance in context of leader-member exchange situations (Mayfield et al, 1998). Exploring the concept of the potential link between the use of motivating language, job satisfaction and job performance, the subsequent sections elaborate on the literature that is related to the designated study variables along with the research design, limitations, concluding discussion and suggested future lines of research.

2. Review of Literature and Formulation of Hypotheses

2.1 Motivating-Language Theory and Job Satisfaction

Leadership communication is an interesting subject in the research community; these pieces of research have described and suggested various models in guiding the leader's communication-patters and among these models the MLT is a refined and inclusive model that helps the leaders to set their communication-pattern strategies with subordinates at the workplace with the aim of increasing job-related outcomes (Sullivan, 1988; Mayfield &Mayfield, 2015).

The MLT consists of three prominent components of verbal communication which are direction-giving in nature (perlocutionary) and used to reduce ambiguity, clarify intended objectives and outline a direction of work with completion time and expected rewards. Sullivan (1988), Mayfield et al, (1998). It established the proposition that when employees receive clear instructions regarding task requirements, there is increased job satisfaction which eventually leads to better job performance. This type of language, similar to the Path-Goal Theory, the Goal-Setting Theory, the Expectancy Theory and the Structure Dimension (Ohio State study) (Yulk, 2013), Empathic Language (illocutionary) happens when the leaders express courteous feelings, and show humanity towards subordinates. This type of language takes place when the leader offers compliments on a good job done by the subordinates. This language also occurs when employees face opposing situations by taking care of the interpersonal relationship at the workplace like accommodating leadership and people consideration of Ohio-State study (Sullivan, 1988). "Meaning-Making Language" (locutionary) occurs when leaders make employees aware of the organization's culture-dynamics and align them with structure, norms and values for more job satisfaction and performance through the transmission of metaphorical stories (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002). Like Transformational Leadership, this meaning-making language also occurs when an organization strives hard due to major structural changes at the time of a transformation process. Moreover, when these three forms of speech acts are used strategically in integrated form, they have been proven to have a

significant influence on employees' job satisfaction and performance (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2009).

Concisely, the MLT hypothesizes that it is one of the motivating mechanisms used by leaders in facilitating achievement by employees and realizing organizational goals. In fact, the workers conceptual framework establishes the notion that a leader's language gears-up an employee's motivation level. Therefore, workers must understand the desired objective of leaders who use the ML pattern for securing various desired work outcomes.

As mentioned in the previous section, Motivating Language strategically links with employee job satisfaction and job performance (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2004). Locke (1968) described that "job satisfaction" means pleasurable, positive feelings based on the appraisal of job practices (p.1297). One of the common elements which cause employees to feel dissatisfaction is related to interpersonal interaction at the dyadic level between a leader and an employee (Kenny & Cooper, 2003). When the interpersonal communication is reduced or inappropriate it negatively affects job satisfaction and ultimately leads to poor job performance. Previous research has studied the relationship of a supervisor's use of motivating language and the subordinate`s job satisfaction in American and Mexican based organizations. However, so far in Pakistan, no study of the influence that Motivating Language has on job satisfaction has been conducted. Furthermore, among previous pieces of research at the international level none has been conducted to determine the mediating effect of job satisfaction in connection with the use of motivating language and the employee's job performance. Thus, the following research question was formulated:
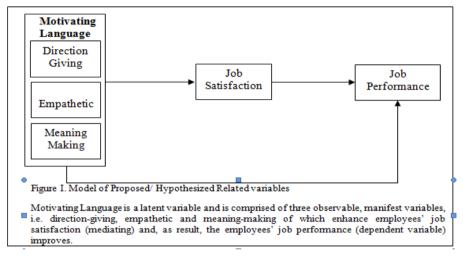
Research Question 1: Does motivating language have any influence on employee job performance?

2.2 Mediation of job satisfaction between the use of motivating language and job performance

Davar & Bala (2012) cited that industrial psychologists identified the relationship between job satisfaction and job performance as being a "Holy Grail". Various researchers found that many organizations made an effort to generate job satisfaction among employees for greater job performance. Vroom (1964) supported this notion of better performance based on satisfying the needs of employees. This view has been investigated for the five decades that satisfied employees are more productive employees (Bisel, Messersmith, & Kelley, 2012). Robbins (2005) investigated the Ohio State study of leadership style in which both high structure and consideration positively related to job satisfaction. Employees feel more satisfied when they perceive that their supervisors' behavioural patterns feature dimensions of both structure and consideration. The direction-giving language of the MLT is linked with the initiating structure of the Ohio State model of leadership, while meaning-making language is coupled with the consideration aspect of the leadership model; empathetic language has not been covered by any behavioral theory. Therefore, this is proposed to investigate the extent to which motivating language is used by the leaders' influences employees' job satisfaction and that leads to their job performance. Henceforth, the following research questions were forwarded:

Research Question 2: Is job satisfaction positively related to an employee's job performance?

Research question 3: Does job satisfaction mediate the relationship between the use of motivating languages and job performance?

Hypothesized Proposed Model of the Study

Figure I. Model of Proposed/ Hypothesized Related variables

Motivating Language is a latent variable and is comprised of three observable, manifest variables, i.e. direction-giving, empathetic and meaning-making of which enhance employees' job satisfaction (mediating) and, as result, the employees' job performance (dependent variable) improves.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sampling and Procedures

In this study, the survey respondents were faculty member of 135 universities of Pakistan. The universities were category based as per the regional strata of the country. Using the Stratified Proportionate Random; Disproportionate Sampling Technique, 770 faculty members of all levels from various departments were approached to fill-in the study`s questionnaire. A total of 592 questionnaires were received (response rate 77%) and 577were considered for final data analysis because of their completeness and correctness. The faculty members responded regarding their perception of the use of motivating language of by their deans/heads and their own level of job satisfaction. Likewise the deans/heads provided information regarding the perceived performance of their faculty members on questionnaire which had a specific code for each faculty member.

3.2 Instrument/ Measurements

All three categories of motivating language were measured on a 5-point scale, with range of 1 ("Very little") to 5 (a Whole Lot) based on 24 criteria. This measurement was developed and validated by Mayfield, Mayfield & Kopf (1998) with the alpha coefficient reliability of $\alpha = .97$. The mean values were taken of all of the respondents` perceptions regarding the use of the motivating language by their deans/heads. An example 'question' is: "Expresses support for my professional development". Job satisfaction was also tapped on a 5-point scale ranging from 1("Very Dissatisfied") to 5 ("Very Satisfied") using a condensed version of the 20-item"Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire" (MSQ) (Weiss, Davis, Logquiest, & England, 1967; Malinowski, 1999) with an alpha coefficient of $\alpha = .93$. An example item: "the feeling of accomplishment that one gets from the job". The deans/heads responded to the six-item questionnaires on job performance scale 1("Satisfactory") to 5("Outstanding") with an alpha coefficient reliability of $\alpha = .97$. An example item: "Know-how and Judgment". The responses made by faculty members and deans/heads were matched through a pre-arranged coding system on the questionnaire.

3.3 Data Analysis Methods

The collected data was coded and entered under the SPSS Registered 20 Version. Every filled-in questionnaire was entered in the field provided by the software with a specified code number of each questionnaire, so that in case of any problem in the data value of any item the code number facilitated locating the questionnaire and the intended item value. The specified items of each variables were computed in the SPSS to move on to the next step of descriptive and

multivariate analyses. Once the values were computed then the basic test of homogeneity of variance was applied, the reliability was tested by using Cronbach's Alpha and descriptive statistics were run to check the mean, standard deviation and frequency of the responses. Special care was taken while finding the average value of the "gender"; a mode was used to find the frequency of gender in absolute terms. To check the inter-correlation among the studied variables Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Exploratory Factor Analysis were run on the data in SPSS. Then ANOVA was used to check the control variable from the list of 8(eight) demographics, although this was not the objective of this study. However, to check the true influence of using all three components of ML on job-related outcomes of this study. Then Correlation of Coefficient Test was applied to empirically check the correlation among the studied variables. Finally mediation effects were checked through PROCESS path-analyses by Hayes & Preacher (2013). The results of all of the aforementioned tests are given in the section.

An average of twenty-three respondents were taken from 3 to 40 various departments of each university the average age of the respondents was 34 years (SD = 1.40) and in gender categorization, 39% were female and 61% were male. As for educational level 56% had MS/MPhil qualification and 32% held PhD degrees. The data was collected from both private and public-sector universities. For the variance across all of the data set to be the same on any given measurement scale, the Homogeneity of Variance Test was used.

4. Results

In order to check for any multicollinearity, of Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) test was used. The tolerance of

motivating language is .87 with a VIF 1.139 and job satisfaction is.84 with a VIF of 1.178, at the significance level of p < .01.The model-fitness shows a .95 index along with an adjusted index of .91 and RMSEA = .11. This indicates that there is a'good fit' between the hypothesized model and the resultant data. Furthermore, this also confirms that all of the established relationships among the studied variables confirm the criterion of a good-quality model.

The results shown in Table 1 indicates the coefficient correlation between motivating language and job performance found $r =.155$ ($M = 3.16$, $SD =.50$), $p = 0.01$, this implies the positive and significant relationship ML and JP among university teachers. This also provides the support to our research question that motivating language has the relationship with job performance of university teachers. The positive relationship ascertained between the use of motivating language and job satisfaction $r =.281$ ($M = 3.22$, $SD =.49$), $p = 0.01$, this result reflects the significant and positive relationship between motivating language and job satisfaction among university teachers. The correlation coefficient value between job satisfaction and job performance was ascertained to be $r =.706$ ($M = 3.41$, $SD =.39$), $p = 0.01$.This also support the second research question that there is the positive relationship of job satisfaction and job performance among the university teachers.

Table 1. *Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation Coefficient among ML,JS and JP*

Variables	*M*	*SD*	ML	JS	JP
1.ML	3.18	.380	-		
2. JS	3.22	.497	.281[**]	-	
3. JP	3.16	.509	.155[**]	.706[**]	-

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*ML=Motivating Language, * JS=Job Satisfaction, , *JP=Job Performance

The path coefficient of the research model shown in Figure 1 indicates the use of motivating language is significantly related to job satisfaction $\beta = .278, t = 3.595, p = .001$ and job satisfaction ultimately affects job performance $\beta = .724, t = 21.39, p = .001$. The Preacher and Hayes (2008) (INDIRECT) mediation reveals a positive, indirect relationship between the use of motivating language and job performance through mediating role played by job satisfaction. The bootstrap does not contain any zero value CI[0.066, 0.208] with the indirect effect =.20, and this result further reinforces the Sobel Test for confirmation of the mediation between independent and dependent variables, which supports all of the hypotheses put forward in this study.
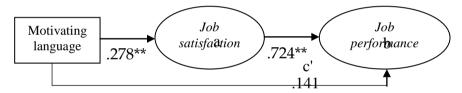

Figure 1 Path coefficient of study model

**p<.01.

5. DISCUSSION

The results indicate that the faculty members` combined perception regarding the use of motivating language is that it does have a positive significant relationship with employee job satisfaction and, subsequently, this job satisfaction affects job performance. Furthermore this shows that the use of all three kinds of motivating language in an integrated form influences job-related outcomes in higher-education institutions. However, each type of motivating language has its own influence on work outcomes and this indicates the exclusive importance of each language pattern that is used in the

higher-education setting. Most of the previous research studies were conducted in non-educational sectors.

5.1 Theoretical Implication

The study generally contributed in the purposive communication framework in perspective of leadership and critical job-related outcomes-literature stream. The MLT is to be proven as the composite of other main motivating theories such as the Equity Theory, the Path-Goal Theory, the Expectancy Theory and the Goal-Setting Theory for the practicing leaders. The results of this study confirm the theoretical inferences that the leader`s use of motivating language significantly influences faculty members` job satisfaction. Though there are other factors which also influence job satisfaction, it is the spoken word which holds more importance as compared to materialistic parameters that exist in higher-education institutions. As these faculty members have their own prestige among the non-academic staff in such institutions, if they are not positively addressed to by their supervisors they will they feel embarrassing and will experience discomfort which eventually affects their quality of teaching in the classes and the performance of their other academic duties/responsibilities.Therefore, this study focused on the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between the motivating language and job performance, a query which previous studies have not covered in the related literature. As such this study amalgamated the findings of previous studies of motivating language with the mediating effect of job satisfaction in the context of higher-education institutions.

5.2 Managerial Implication

This study has many managerial implications in that faculty members experience a satisfying, empathetic and more supportive relationship with their deans/heads when there is a flow of healthy communication that features an integration of the three types of motivating language that can be used at workplace. The deans/heads must be aware of the contextual meaning of their messages when dealing with various faculty members. Likewise, higher-education institutions must encourage an open communication system in the organization so the faculty members feel more 'coziness' at the workplace and subsequently give better job performances. Last, once the university leaders come to know the significance of using ML, they would be able to transfer this quality of using ML in their teachers which, eventually, will be inculcated in the minds of the students with the result of this being a fine investment in the future of the country.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research Areas

This study had certain limitations: the interpretation of the results was taken in composite form of motivating languages. In the future it may be required to comparatively analyze and discuss each type of motivating language along with the moderation of cultural and leadership style, thereby expanding the body of knowledge. Similarly, a separate interpretation of the demographic variables will also be required in context of this study. Furthermore longitudinal study would also confirm the generalizability of the results and a survey taken from non-academic staff members would also constitute a viable addition to this field of investigation.

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