

A STUDY OF COGNITIVE STYLE SIMILARITY, LEADER MEMBER EXCHANGE AND COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION AMONG BANK EMPLOYEES

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Abstract

Employee communication satisfaction has been an area of study by business and communication scholars primarily because satisfaction with communication has been found to be positively related to employee job satisfaction, job performance, and organizational commitment. Employee communication satisfaction refers to the employee perception on how much they are listened to, how much their managers respect and pay attention to their opinions and amount of support they receive. The purpose of this article is to investigate whether cognitive style similarity of managers and employees influence the employee communication satisfaction. Drawing upon the similarity-attraction paradigm, we propose that manager-employee cognitive style similarity will play a prominent role in improving employee communication satisfaction. The study further investigates cognitive style similarity and employee communication satisfaction by examining mediating role of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), and Tenure. Cognitive style and communication satisfaction measures were collected from department managers and their direct employees in banks located in North Cyprus (175 dyads). Managers and employees also completed a measure assessing their perceptions of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX). Demographic data and information about length of employment and working with same manager were also obtained. The results of path analysis revealed that there was a significant relationship between cognitive style similarity and communication satisfaction. As cognitive style difference increases, i.e. the gap between cognitive styles is larger, the level of communication satisfaction decreases. On the other hand, insignificant relationship between cognitive style similarity and LMX was observed. Furthermore there was a significant relationship between LMX and employee communication satisfaction. The mediating effect of LMX and LMX and tenure (combined influence) on the cognitive style similarity and communication satisfaction relationship was not significant. This study shows that when cognitive styles are similar between manager and employee dyads, this leads to improved communication satisfaction. Also when Leader Member Exchange (LMX) is higher between manager and employee dyad; communication satisfaction is improved. These results should not mean that we need to match managers and employees with similar cognitive styles since managers generally do not have the opportunity of selecting employees who are congruent with their own cognitive style. The practical realities of the business world require that, managers and employees with different cognitive styles have to work together. Therefore, it is critical that the members of a dyad be aware of both parties' cognitive styles in order to improve communication satisfaction. This self-awareness will increase the ability to empathise with the other party and thus understand that there may be alternative ways of perceiving, processing and working with information. Organisations could gain from considering cognitive style as individual difference and provide training and self-development programs in order to facilitate this understanding. Specifically, managers need to develop strategies to work with employees that will have different cognitive styles in order to improve manager-employee communication satisfaction.

Keywords: Cognitive style, communication satisfaction, leadership, LMX, banking, North Cyprus.