

ROLE OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT IN AUGMENTING SELF-EFFICACY OF EMPLOYEES

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Abstract *This study seeks to examine the impact of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) on the self-efficacy levels of employees and whether there are significant differences in the level of POS and self-efficacy based on gender, designation, and length of tenure of employees. POS is the perception of employees that their organization values their contribution and is also concerned about their well-being. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's conviction in his ability to successfully execute a given task (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy fosters work commitment and self-efficacious employees accept challenging goals. The positive relationship between self-efficacy and job performance has been supported in many past studies. Hence, promoting self-efficacy among employees is vital for the sustainable growth of the organization. This study explores the effect of POS on the self-efficacy levels of the employees of IT Enabled Services (ITES) sector in India. Data collection was done through personally administered questionnaires from 312 employees of ITES companies in Bangalore. The results of the study indicate that POS has a significant positive impact on the self-efficacy levels of employees. This study has implications for the top management to focus on factors (timely support, rewards, appreciation, fairness, justice) contributing to POS. Further, it recommends that the management should provide self-efficacy training to the employees. Enhancing self-efficacy of employees can result in improved performance in the workplace and thereby lead to the competitive advantage of the organization.*

Keywords: *Perceived Organizational Support, Self-efficacy, ITES Sector*

INTRODUCTION

Self-efficacy is the belief of a person in his ability to complete a given task in a given situation. Past studies have found that self-efficacy has a high correlation with subsequent performance (Gist, 1987). Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive theory sets the base for the concept of self-efficacy. People with high self-efficacy have strong belief in their ability to control outcomes and succeed in facing challenges. It is an attribute of the second-order construct, Psychological Capital. Self-efficacy has a strong positive relationship with work-related performance (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy perceptions of employees have a direct positive influence on their productivity, quality, cohesion, and commitment (Bandura & Cervone, 1986). He has also shown through his research and subsequent application in workplace that self-efficacy can be developed. A self-efficacious person develops positive expectations which in turn can enhance his work commitment and job satisfaction (Fridrickson, 2001). Self-efficacy is a vital personal resource and there are numerous studies to support this finding (Stajkovic, Lee, & Nyberg, 2009; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998; Holden, 1991; Holden, Moncher, Schinke, & Barker, 1990). But there is a dearth of

studies regarding the antecedents of self-efficacy. This paper attempts to study the influence of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) on the self-efficacy levels of the employees of ITES sector in India.

POS refers to the perception of employees regarding the extent to which they feel their organization supports them in their job and values their contribution to the organization. It also includes their perception regarding the extent to which the employees feel that their organization cares for their well-being. POS represents one's relationship with the organization and self-efficacy represents one's self-perception. POS is an assurance that aid will be available from the organization when it is needed to carry out one's job effectively and deal with stressful situations (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Self-efficacy is described as one's belief in one's ability to succeed and attain a given level of performance (Bandura, 1977). It is one's conviction about one's own capabilities to carry out tasks to achieve a desired result. Employees who perceive supportive work environment are intrinsically motivated and self-efficacious. Backed by the support of the organization, they have strong belief in their abilities to do the job effectively. They choose challenging tasks and accomplish them successfully.

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Positive feedback or encouragement from a superior can enhance one's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Thus, it can be inferred that POS can have a positive effect on self-efficacy. This paper attempts to validate the same with the help of an empirical study conducted on the employees of IT Enabled Services (ITES) sector, Bangalore. Traditional resources like economic resources and technology can be replicated by competitors. Self-efficacy is a personal or psychological resource that cannot be replicated by competitors. Moreover, investing in the enhancement of self-efficacy levels of employees leads to long-term gains for the organization as multiple studies have proved that self-efficacy leads to performance improvement and work commitment. Hence, it is vital to determine the antecedents of this personal resource in an organizational context.

The relationships that have been theorized in the western culture may not be applicable to the non-western cultures (Johns, 2006). Although there have been many studies on self-efficacy in the western cultural context, it is pertinent to examine the effect of POS on self-efficacy of employees in such a diverse cultural setting as in India. The Indian ITES Sector has been experiencing a rapid growth in terms of profitability and turnover for more than a decade. In spite of this growth, attrition level is high among ITES employees. The prime reason behind this is the high stress level that they experience at work. Past studies have found that self-efficacy may play a vital role in reducing the stress level of employees. Hence, it is necessary to ascertain the antecedents of self-efficacy construct in Indian context.

Self-efficacy construct was developed by the famous psychologist, Albert Bandura. This construct is based on the social cognitive theory by Bandura. According to the social cognitive theory, an individual's social behaviour and cognitive processes are influenced by what an individual observes in others (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy is influenced by "observational learning", "social experience", and "modeling" (Bandura, 1997). Employees with high self-efficacy believe that they are likely to be successful in their job irrespective of the challenges they may face at their work place. In work context, Stajkovic & Luthans (1998) defined self-efficacy as "an individual's strong belief in his or her abilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and action needed to successfully execute a specific task". Individuals with high self-efficacy levels have the ability to motivate themselves and accept challenging goals. On the contrary, individuals with low self-efficacy levels are doubtful about their personal capabilities and hence are likely to encounter failure (Bandura & Locke, 2003). Self-efficacy as a psychological construct is developable (state-like) (Bandura, 1997; Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2015) and measurable (Maurer & Pierce, 1998; Parker, 1998). Luthans, Lebsack and Lebsack (2008) argued that personal resources

such as self-efficacy, optimism, and active coping style will assist the employees to control their work environment and achieve career success.

Employees' work performance increased with the increase in their job specific self-efficacy (Randhawa, 2004). The study was conducted by collecting data from 300 scientists from Haryana, India. In a study on middle- and senior-level executives in Indian organizations, Chaudhary, Rangnekar & Barua (2012) found that occupational self-efficacy had a significant relationship with employee engagement. Among the factors of occupational self-efficacy, they found that confidence was the strongest predictor of employee engagement. There was a negative correlation between an individual's self-efficacy beliefs and dimensions of role stress among the employees of Himachal Pradesh Power Corporation Limited, Shimla, India (Janjhua, Chaudhary, & Chauhan, 2014). This recent study provides evidence to the role of self-efficacy in reducing the stress levels of employees. These studies have demonstrated the importance of self-efficacy in enhancing desirable workplace outcomes.

Organizational Support Theory (OST) proposes that if employees perceive more support from their organization, they are likely to develop more positive attitudes towards the organization (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). OST has evoked considerable interest among the management and researchers as it helps in viewing the relationship between employees and organization from the employees' point of view. The clarity of the POS construct and the strong associations of POS with several desirable organizational and attitudinal outcomes have also contributed to the importance of OST (Kurtessis, Eisenberger, Ford, Buffardi, Stewart & Adis, 2017). POS includes the overall support, which the employees perceive that they receive from their immediate peers, their supervisor, and other departments, which helps them to successfully perform their work duties. Past studies (Byrne & Hochwarter, 2008; Erdogan & Enders, 2007) have found that when an employee perceives strong support from the organization, it strengthens his/her cognitive and emotional evaluation of his/her job and organization. POS helps employees to foster their personal resources like self-efficacy, optimism, resilience, etc. Supportive organizational climate enhances the Psychological Capital (PsyCap) of employees (Luthans, Norman, Avolio, & Avey, 2008). A supportive organizational climate depends on the level of POS of employees. So, it can be inferred that when employees have high POS levels, their PsyCap will be enhanced. Self-efficacy is an attribute of PsyCap. So, we propose that perception of organizational support creates positive conditions which help in enhancing the self-efficacy levels of employees.

On the basis of literature review, we formulate the following hypotheses:

H1: There is a significant difference in the level of perceived organizational support of employees based on their gender.

H2: There is a significant difference in the level of self-efficacy of employees based on their gender.

H3: There is a significant difference in the level of perceived organizational support of employees based on their designation.

H4: There is a significant difference in the level of self-efficacy of employees based on their designation.

H5: There is a significant difference in the level of perceived organizational support of employees based on their tenure in the organization.

H6: There is a significant difference in the level of self-efficacy of employees based on their tenure in the organization.

H7: POS has a direct positive effect on self-efficacy.

H8: Demographic factors like age, gender, designation, and length of tenure influence the impact of POS on self-efficacy of employees.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample and Procedure

The research design was cross-sectional and used quantitative data collection methods. This study was conducted on a sample of 312 employees (146 females and 166 males) of ITES sector of Bangalore. Convenience sampling was used to select the companies and simple random sampling was used to select the respondents for data collection. A self-reported online questionnaire was mailed to the targeted respondents with the help of personal contacts in the selected ITES companies. The e-mails were sent to the ITES employees with a request to participate in the survey.

Majority of the respondents were in the age group of 20 years to 40 years (88%). In terms of experience, 35% of the respondents had less than 5 years of experience, 33% had between 5 and 10 years of experience, and the rest (32%) had more than 10 years of experience. The designation of the respondents ranged from team member to Vice President.

Measures

Parker's (1998) self-efficacy scale was used to measure the self-efficacy levels of the respondents. This self-efficacy scale is a 6-item scale and responses are measured on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = agree,

and 6 = strongly agree). The self-efficacy scale used in this study was found to be reliable (Cronbach's alpha = 0.96). This scale has demonstrated adequate reliability and been validated across multiple settings (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007; Luthans, Avey, Avolio, & Peterson, 2010). "I feel confident analyzing a long-term problem in finding a solution" is a sample item of this scale.

POS was measured using the 8-item Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS by Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997). SPOS is a one-dimensional measure of POS; hence, a single SPOS score is obtained. A sample item of this scale is "the organization really cares for my well-being". The respondents indicated their responses on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = somewhat agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree). The scale had a high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.97). This scale has been used in a recent study (Perrot et al., 2014) and has shown adequate reliability.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

In the sample of 312 respondents, 53% were males (166) and 47% were females (146). 88% of the respondents were in the age group of 20 to 40 years. 11% of the respondents were in the age group of 40 to 50 years and 1% of the respondents were above 50 years. About 35% of the respondents had less than 5 years of experience, 33% had experience of 5 to 10 years, and 31% of the respondents had more than 10 years of experience in the ITES industry.

Main Study Results

The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 21). The main objective of this study was to assess the degree of association between POS and self-efficacy and examine if POS enhanced the self-efficacy level of employees. Obtained data were analyzed using independent sample *t*-test, one way ANOVA, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis. *t*-Test is used to compare the means of two populations. Hence, it was used to find out if both the groups (male and female) varied in their perceptions of organizational support. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is used to compare means of more than two populations. Designation-wise, respondents were grouped into four categories (team member, team leader, project manager, and vice-president), and tenure-wise they were grouped into six categories. Hence, one-way ANOVA was used to examine if their perceptions of organizational support and self-efficacy levels varied based on their designation

and tenure. Linear regression helps us to examine if the independent variable can adequately predict the dependent variable and the extent of variation caused in the dependent

variable by the predictor variable. Regression was used to ascertain the extent to which POS explained self-efficacy of employees.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of POS and Self-Efficacy Across Gender

Variable	Male		Female		t-value	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
POS	4.18	1.30	4.39	1.20	-1.68	0.305
Self-efficacy	3.69	1.09	3.74	1.07	-0.40	0.689

POS and self-efficacy of males and females were analysed using independent sample *t*-test to find out if there was any significant difference in the perception of organizational support and the self-efficacy levels among male and female employees. The mean and standard deviation of the two groups are presented in Table 1. There was no significant difference in POS and self-efficacy levels between the male

and female employees. Table 1 clearly indicates that there is no significant difference in POS based on the gender of the respondents ($t = -1.68, p > 0.01$). Thus, the hypothesis H1 is rejected. Similarly, there was no significant difference in self-efficacy levels based on gender ($t = -0.40, p > 0.01$). Thus, hypothesis H2 is also rejected.

Table 2: Mean score and Standard Deviation of POS and Self-Efficacy Across Designations

Designation	N	Mean		Std Dev	
		POS	SE	POS	SE
Team Member	186	3.86	3.48	1.11	1.11
Team Leader	48	4.59	3.87	1.04	1.04
Project Manager	29	5.65	4.18	0.743	0.743
Senior Manager/Vice President	19	5.73	4.60	1.25	1.25

$p < 0.01$

Table 2 presents the mean score and standard deviation of POS and self-efficacy of employees based on their designation. The results show that there is a significant difference in the POS levels based on designation ($F = 47.86, p < 0.01$). Hence, hypothesis H3 is accepted. Similarly, there is a significant difference in the self-efficacy levels based

on designation ($F = 17.86, p < 0.01$). Hence, hypothesis H4 is also accepted. Self-efficacy levels were higher among senior managers when compared to the junior staff. It could be because employees belonging to senior designation had higher perceptions of organizational support. Their level of experience would also have contributed to their self-efficacy.

Table 3: Mean Score and Standard Deviation of POS and Self-Efficacy Based on Tenure of Employees

Tenure	N	POS		SE	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
0 – 2 years	105	3.53	1.17	3.09	1.03
2 – 4 years	88	4.03	0.97	3.66	0.88
4 – 6 years	33	4.81	0.88	4.21	0.97
6 – 8 years	27	5.13	0.85	4.42	0.72
8 – 10 years	32	5.21	0.75	4.55	0.69
Above 10 years	27	5.34	0.88	4.61	0.66

$p < 0.01$

One-way ANOVA was used to examine if there is a significant difference in the mean level of POS and self-efficacy among the employees based on their tenure in

their organizations. Table 3 presents the mean scores and standard deviation of POS and self-efficacy based on the tenure of the respondents. The respondents were categorized into six different categories on the basis of their length of

tenure in their present organization. There is a significant difference in the POS levels based on the tenure ($F = 30.35, p < 0.01$). Hence, hypothesis H5 is accepted. Similarly, there is a significant difference in the self-efficacy levels based on tenure of employees ($F = 24.21, p < 0.01$). Hence, hypothesis H6 is also accepted. The test results establish that there is a significant difference in the level of POS and self-efficacy of respondents based on their tenure. Employees who have more years of service in their organizations perceive more

support from their respective organization in comparison to those who had fewer years of service. Similarly, the levels of self-efficacy were higher among respondents who had comparatively more years of service in their organization. It could be because employees perceive higher levels of support from their organization as their length of tenure increases. This in turn enhances their self-efficacy levels. Hence, as length of tenure of employees increases, their self-efficacy level also increases.

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2
POS	4.3	1.25		0.69
Self-efficacy	3.6	0.98	0.69	

$p < 0.01$

As seen in Table 4, there is a significant positive correlation between POS and self-efficacy levels of employees ($r = 0.69, p < 0.01$). Hence, hypothesis H7 is accepted. Perception of

employees regarding organizational support has a significant positive impact on the self-efficacy levels of employees. This is consistent with the earlier study (Luthans et al., 2008).

Table 5: Impact of POS on Self-Efficacy

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.185	0.159		7.458	.000
POS	0.600	0.036	0.690	16.777	.000
R Value	0.690				
R Square	0.476				
Adjusted R Square	0.474				
F Value	281.48				
Significance	0.000				

Regression analysis was carried out in which POS was regressed against employees' self-efficacy levels. The regression analysis results are presented in Table 5. It indicates that POS as a predictor variable successfully predicted self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.690, p < 0.01; F = 281.48, = 0.476$). This indicates strong evidence in support of

Hypothesis 7. R Square value is 0.476 which implies that POS explains 48% variance in the self-efficacy levels of employees. Further, the model is fit as the F value at 281.48 is significant at 5% level. The regression equation to predict the outcome variable is as follows.

$$\text{Self-Efficacy} = 1.185 + 0.600 (\text{POS}).$$

Table 6: Impact of POS on Self-Efficacy Due to the Demographic Variables

Demographic Variable	Significance
Age	0.056
Gender	0.683
Designation	0.321
Length of Tenure	0.001

Hierarchical regression was done to examine if there was any significant difference in the impact of POS on self-efficacy due to demographic factors. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 6. It shows that only length of tenure influenced the impact of POS on self-efficacy. Hence, hypothesis H8 is partially accepted.

DISCUSSION

When employees get positive feedback on their contributions (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011), it encourages them to engage in mastering their experiences which in turn enhances

their self-efficacy (Caesens & Stinglhamber, 2014). Also, POS has a positive influence on employees' physiological and emotional states by decreasing their work-related stress (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). In agreement with these theoretical arguments, this study concludes that POS has a significant positive effect on self-efficacy levels of employees. This is consistent with the past study by Luthans (2008) that positive organizational climate enhances the PsyCap level of employees. Self-efficacy is a component of PsyCap. Another recent study by Caesens & Stinglhamber (2014) also confirms our finding that employees had higher self-efficacy levels when they perceived more support from their organization. They found that POS had a direct positive impact on the self-efficacy levels of employees.

There was no significant difference in the self-efficacy levels of males and female employees in the ITES sector. This is contrary to a recent study which found that male employees of a power generating company had a higher level of self-efficacy beliefs when compared to their female counterparts (Janjhua, Chaudhary & Chauhan, 2014). Social skills are more important than technical skills in a call centre (Thompson, Warhurst & Callaghan, 2001). Thus, in a call centre, capabilities such as the ability to remain calm under pressure and maintain a friendly positive attitude during interaction with hostile customers and empathy are greatly valued apart from their computer skills and product knowledge (Rose & Wright, 2005). Call centres are a part of ITES sector. As female employees are likely to possess fairly good social skills which is vital in an ITES sector, their self-efficacy levels may not differ from their male counterparts. Paradoxically, gender norms are mobilized in the in-built notion that women are suited to emotional work, especially in terms of deference to the needs of often hostile customers (Ghosh, 2013).

LIMITATIONS

This study was restricted to a sample of 312 respondents from five leading companies of ITES sector in Bangalore. The results can be generalized only if the studies are undertaken with a larger sample across sectors. Absolute causality can be confirmed only if a longitudinal study is carried out.

CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This paper examines the role of POS in enhancing the self-efficacy levels among employees of ITES sector in Bangalore. Self-efficacy of employees is a psychological resource and can serve as a competitive advantage for the organizations (Luthans et al., 2015). It is associated with all positive workplace outcomes like job satisfaction,

organizational commitment, and job performance. The study concludes that the employees who perceive recognition and appreciation for their contribution and get the needed timely support from their organization possess higher level of self-efficacy. Therefore, the top management should focus on factors contributing to POS (fairness, justice, timely support, recognition, & appreciation) to enhance POS level of employees which can further positively contribute to augment the efficacy levels of employees. This can in turn enhance all the positive work-related outcomes resulting in the competitive advantage of organizations.

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