

Linking Team Leaders' Human & Social Capital to their Team Members' Career Advancement

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Linking Team Leaders' Human & Social Capital to their Team Members' Career Advancement

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Abstract

This paper looks at a conceptual model depicting the impact of high performing Team Leaders (TL) on their team members' career advancement. Certain inherent factors present in high performing TLs are not usually linked to either the development or the career advancement of the team members; however their presence ensures that there is a positive impact. For this study those factors were classified into two main categories – a) Human Capital and b) Social capital. Using Social Learning Theory, one can say that high performing TLs provide modelling stimuli based on live experiences to their team members. Social modelling and learning in this context can further be understood using Social Network Theory. This impact is positively moderated by the strength of the TL-team member dyads, which can be theoretically examined through Leader-Membership exchange and supervisory support.

Keywords: Team member career advancement; human capital; social capital

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1. Introduction

Several studies have suggested that TLs, supervisors and leaders who are inherently involved with the careers of their team members, positively impact the latter's career advancement (Schaubroeck & Lam, 2002; Sloan, 2007; Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, & Chen, 2005). Team Leaders (TLs) are akin to managers and leaders that guide, instruct and motivate a set of employees deemed as team members to achieve the team's targets and goals. Most studies have attributed the impact of a TL to the voluntary endeavour of a TL making a contribution towards their team members' growth, advancement and satisfaction (Jiang & Klein, 1999; McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002). The argument is mostly oriented towards the intentional actions of the TL that get transcended into efforts towards the careers of their Team members. However the unintentional impact of a TL's actions and behaviour might have on the Team member's career advancement has still not been covered extensively. The aim of this paper is to understand what could be the impact of a high performing TL's characteristics on the team members' career advancement. It specifically looks at high performing TLs and the impact they have on the career advancement of their team members. Using Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971; Weiss, 1977), the positive impact a high performing TL's characteristic inconspicuously has without any proactive attempts on their team members' career advancement, is explicated. For the purpose of this study we are not restricting the term career advancement to promotions and salary hikes but are also including career growth facets such as job enrichment, horizontal growth, job enhancement, supplementary assignments, significant opportunities, apportioning organisationally important responsibilities and high visibility projects, coveted recognitions, autonomy for decision making etc.

The affirmative impact on the team members is further influenced by the relationship between the TL and the team member, which can be understood better through Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory and Supervisory Support theories. The LMX theory supports a reciprocal relationship between the TL and the team member such that the TL provides more resources, opportunities and better responsibilities and respectively the team member is motivated to perform better and is also more satisfied than those who do not have this relationship with their TL (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Supervisory support further strengthens this relationship and adds to the career satisfaction and advancement of the team member (Jiang and Klein, 1999). Therefore, a TL's man and social capital have a more profound impact on the team member's career advancement if the relationship is strengthened through LMX and constant supervisory support.

2. Literature review and conceptual framework

2.1 Effect of the TL on team members' work and performance

A portion of managerial responsibilities which are necessary to manage a team include the development of their team members and enhancing the human capital of the company (El-Sabaa, 2001; Gentry, Harris, Baker, & Leslie, 2008; Luthans, 1988) and thus any managerial effort put in by the TLs towards their team members would evidently aid the their team members' performance (Katz, Tushman, & Allen, 1995; McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002; Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005; Pelletier & Vallerand, 1996). However, it is also possible that if we isolate these pertinent managerial duties and only look at the characteristics of a high performing TL which form their human capital, a team member's performance might still be impacted (Sloan, 2007; Weiss, 1977). The leadership style developed by a TL and portrayal of certain specific qualities that lead to transformational performance positively impact the team members' work behaviour and thus their career advancement (Dvir, Eden, Avolio and Shamir, 2002; Sloan, 2007; Wang et al.,

2005; Yukl, 2002). Their leadership style and capabilities which form their human capital though have an evident impact; they also have a fortuitous effect. The need for conformity would compel the team members to imitate and imbibe the qualities of their TL (Bernheim, 1994) to achieve commonality (Schaubroeck & Lam, 2002). The reciprocal effect between the TL's behaviour and the team member's performance enhances this need for commonality from the Team member's perspective (Greene, 1975). Also, team members tend to internalise the values and belief system of their TLs and thus also their performance traits (Wang et al., 2005). Therefore, some of the qualities of high performing TLs would be imitated, reciprocated and imbibed by their team members. As discussed before, display of certain behaviour that is desired by the TLs can be directly ingrained into their team members through various learning techniques, such as direct reinforcement (Porter and Lawler, 1968; Vroom, 1964) in the form of appraisal ratings, rewards and recognition. However, if we look at social learning theory, it states that learning does not only happen through the direct involvement of the TLs, but also through observation, imitation and modelling (Bandura, 1971; Weiss, 1977). Nuances of certain behaviours that the TLs do not consciously promote through direct reinforcement but display in their own work might be picked up by the team members (Bandura, 1971). The influence of characteristics of TLs on the team members' career advancement has been explored in greater detail in the sections below.

2.2 Characteristics of high performing TLs

High performing TLs have several characteristics that influence their performance and careers. For career advancement in any field the major driver is their capabilities and competencies (Katz, Tushman, & Allen, 1995; Luthans, 1988; Mintzberg, 1973), however proficiency alone is not sufficient to advance. Networking and influencing skills form the social capital of a TL. Social capital is nothing but being in a position within a network where you have access to resources and information and can influence others socially (Lin &

Huang, 2005). The social capital plays a critical role in enabling participation in significant social groups, gaining visibility and developing the right image which eventually leads to career advancement (Forret & Dougherty, 2004; Wolff & Moser, 2009). There is a need to create a desirable social identity at the workplace (Singh, Kumra & Vinnicombe, 2002) which can be communicated through networking abilities and is sustainable only if there are established competencies. Therefore, the two aspects that are looked at for this paper are: one, Human Capital and two, Social Capital.

2.2.1. Human capital of high performing TLs

Human capital is the “combined knowledge, skills, innovativeness and ability” to achieve the goals that need to be achieved. It has been proven that the repository of skills required to be classified as a “good” leader and in this case a good “Team leader” has not changed since the 1980s (Gentry, Harris, Baker, & Leslie, 2008) and therefore we would apply a miscellany of competencies specified by Katz (1974) - human, conceptual and technical skills and Mintzberg (1973) - informational, interpersonal and decision making roles that were espoused to describe human capital that a TL must possess even today (Gentry et al., 2008). In short, a good TL needs to have certain competencies that have to be directed at the work as well as people. Similarly Mintzberg’s (1973) classification and Luthans’ (1988) rendition of what real TLs are, comprises communication, human resource activities (related to development, guidance and mentoring of Team members), traditional managerial activities (includes Fayolian managerial functions of planning, coordinating, commanding, etc.) and networking. Thus any TL who possesses these skills is ideally a “good” team leader. And these repository of skills contained in this “TL” form his/her human capital.

2.2.2 *Impact of TL's human capital on team member's career advancement*

Though very few studies have actually looked at human capital of TLs and team member career advancement, past research has indicated that there could be a link between the TL's human capital and the career advancement of her/ his team member (Katz et al., 1995; Scandura & Schriesheim, 1994; Sloan, 2007; Weiss, 1977). Some of these studies have also shown that the better the performance of the TL the more cogent is the impact on the career advancement of the team member (Farmer & Aguinis, 2005; Katz et al., 1995; Pelletier & Vallerand, 1996; Sloan, 2007). The direction and pace of career advancement of an individual is moulded by the nature and mode of feedback given, motivation levels controlled, opportunities presented and training and development provided by their TLs (Katz et al., 1995; Sloan, 2007; Tharenou, 1997; Weiss, 1977). The team member also has more opportunities to observe the TL due to higher levels of interaction, which are also a part of the TL's human capital skill bouquet (Mom, Bosch and Volberda, 2009). Exploring from this aspect, we can look at a compendium of capabilities that would be exhibited overtly or covertly by a competent manager, who can influence the career advancement of his/her team member by the virtue of possessing these faculties. It is also noted that TLs with high human capital would want high performing employees in their team (Kraut, Pedigo, McKenna and Dunnette, 1989); therefore they would endorse behaviours that induce high performance. A consistent demand and communication for such behaviours would by default lead to performance which in turn would aid in the career advancement of the team members (Dasgupta, Suar, Singh, 2013; Newbold, 1997). When high quality work is necessitated by their TLs, Team members incorporate the required norms. For example, the decreased chances of making errors, increased eye for detail, efficient & productive working style are all behaviours that can be learnt on the job by imitating their TLs' style of working. Also the

technical knowledge of high performing TLs would get imparted as learning, to their Team members while working jointly on projects or assignments. Thus we can propose that:

Proposition 1: TLs having high human capital will have more impact on career advancement of their team members.

2.2.3. Social capital of high performing TLs

Human capital is important however it is restricted, and TLs also need social capital abilities to further enhance and exhibit your role and position within the organisation. Networking and Influencing help TLs build their social capital which is advantages gained by being holding a position within the social network. If we understand organisations using the Social Network Theory (SNT), we can look at all the employees as “nodes” and the relationship between these employees as “ties”. To advance and create opportunities within the organisation not only are the attributes of the individuals pertinent, but also the relationship/ ties with the right individuals (Granovetter, 1973; Milgram, 1967) and thus enhancing the social capital. And thus, networking and influencing capabilities are significant to create these ties and enrich their social capital. Social Network Theory explains the transfer of benefits of TL’s social capital to their team members without any voluntary action on behalf of the manager to transfer their social capital. Their need for and indoctrination of high performance ensures that team members imbibe not only the competencies but also have access to resource rich networks both of which positively influence their career advancement. Subsequently, the TL’s human capital (represented through their managerial capabilities) and social capital (augmented by their networking and influencing skills) impact the team members’ career advancement. To further extend this concept, the Social Capital Theory (SCT) is employed to understand the effect of networking and influencing on career advancement. SCT implies that an individual or group adds and gains value and enables various activities by the virtue of the social structure s/he is a part of (Coleman, 1990). The

nature of relations and the changes facilitate the creation of social capital (Granovetter, 1973). In essence networking provides quicker access to relevant information, bargaining power and greater visibilities and career opportunities (Burt, 1992). The career model of SCT (Seibert, Kraimer and Crant 2001) states that the diversity (inter-functional relationships) and the richness (number of individuals in a network) benefit the individual by the virtue of being part of the network by giving him, “access to information”, “access to resources” and “career sponsorship” which then directly impacts career advancement positively.

Luthans (1988) implied that networking is an activity that differentiates the successful (promoted quickly) and effective TLs (have satisfied and committed team members and high performing business) such that successful TLs spend a majority of their time on networking. Therefore, human and social capital both significantly impact career advancement (Baker, 2000; Forret & Dougherty, 2004; Katz et al., 1995; Luthans, Rosenkrantz, & Hennessey, 1985; Michael & Yukl, 1993; Wolff & Moser, 2009). Kotter (1982) and Mintzberg (1973) highlight networking by entailing that someone in the position of TL should ideally spend a major portion of his/her time interacting with others. Kotter (1982) explicitly calls these informal social meets as “network building” with the intention to fulfil professional and personal requirements (Kotter,1982 & Luthans, 1988). Networking can be defined as “as individuals' attempts to develop and maintain relationships with others who have the potential to assist them in their work or career” (Forret & Dougherty, 2004: 6).

Some authors indicate that networking and thus the formation of their social capital is positively correlated to career advancement (Wolff and Moser, 2008). Several studies have causally linked networking behaviour to promotions (Emmerik, Euwema, Geschiere, & Schouten, 2006; Forret & Dougherty, 2004). Also, different types of networking behaviours have different impact on various components of career advancement (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Emmerik et al., 2006; Forret & Dougherty, 2004). Several studies associated

networking behaviours with increased visibility which positively effects promotions. Visibility can be augmented by taking up projects with exposure to other departments and by the virtue of interactions within the organisation (Sturges, Guest, Conway & Davey, 2002). Since it is oriented towards internal networking it has a high impact on promotions and compensation (Forret & Dougherty, 2004). A tangible measure of the networking and influencing behaviour is their social capital and therefore social capital directly impacts career advancement.

2.2.4. Impact if TLs social capital on team members' career advancement

As mentioned in the above section, networking and heightened social capital directly impacts career advancement (Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004). When a TL leverages networking s/he has an explicit bearing on the functional processes, exposure to the decision-makers and other game-changing activities in the organisation (Brass et al., 2004). These positive effects are also cascaded to the team member directly impacting the Team member's performance and visibility and accordingly his/her career advancement (Burt, 1992; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Katz et al., 1995; Sparrowe & Liden, 1997). The TL's career activities in the organisation enabled through networking categorically impact the team member's career in a positive frame. When employees work with high performing TLs with rich social capital, they inevitably acquire admittance to their TL's networks. This entry enables visibility and access to the resources and opportunities that these networks can provide. By being a part of these networks, the team members can exploit their TL's social capital for their own career advancement through gaining exposure to new opportunities, helpful information and by obtaining high visibility. Social Learning Theory also indicates that they might also learn how to create networks and increase their social capital and communicate their credibility within the organisation from their TLs (Bandura, 1971). This would allow them to not only utilise their TL's social capital but also develop their own

social capital which would further enhance opportunities for career advancement (Granovetter, 1973; 1982). Thus they are using the social capital extracted by the relationship with their own TL in addition to the social capital they will establish through their own primary networks and their TL's secondary networks. Accordingly we can propose that:

Proposition 2: TLs having social capital will have more impact on career advancement of their Team members.

3. Leader-team member dyad

Looking at the past literature and the arguments built so far there is an association between the success and the performance of the TL with career advancement of the team member. However to state that all successful TLs will have successful team members is “to bite off more than one can chew”. So what actually determines whether a successful TL would positively impact the team members' career advancement? If we look at Social Network Theory, the nature of ties is more important than the attributes of the individual (Milgram, 1967). Extending the concept we could insinuate that the nature of the relationship between the team member and the TL determines the impact on the career advancement of the team member. There are several theories to support the enrichment of the connection between the human capital and social capital of a TL on the upward career mobility of the team member. Social Exchange Theory (SET) helps explicate the enhancement of the manager-team member dyad. Blau (1964: 25) defined Social Exchange as “limited to actions that are contingent on rewarding reactions from others.” It implies that there is bilateral mutually symbiotic rewarding procedure involving "transactions" or simply "exchange". Classically the social exchange theory emphasises that the basic tenet of any relationship is based on the subjective cost benefit analysis and economic rationalisation. The interpretation of 'rewards', 'outcomes' and 'costs' is more social in nature than economic implying dependency and trust in the relationship (Stafford, 2008). SET is an amalgamation of

valuable resources, where social processes can include network of actors in corporate groups where individuals occupy certain specific roles (Emerson, 1976).

Deriving from this theory we can state that the manager-team member relationship should lead to mutual rewards that are gained through transactions or interactions with each other. The richer the transactions, the more the possibilities of gaining from each other would be evident. Applying this theory to understand the relationship between the team member and the TL we will look at two different frames of reference – LMX and Supervisory Support. The impact of high performing TLs' characteristics and career advancement of Team members is positively moderated by the strength of the manager-team member dyads. The nature of this relationship is explored through Leader-Member Exchange Theory and Supervisory Support to understand the impact on the team member's career advancement. Both these theories provide a series of benefits and advantages (rewards) to both the TL and the team member after each of them put in certain efforts (costs), within the team member-TL dyad. These theories also assume that the relationship is strong in terms of frequency of exchange and richness of the transactions between the TL and the team member. And the stronger the relationship the higher would be the exchange and thus higher would be the opportunity for team members to learn covertly from their high performing TLs both in terms of imbibing their capabilities and building social networks. In the following sections, we would understand on how LMX and supervisory support would enable a stronger impact of high performing TLs on the career advancement of the team members.

3.1. Relationship based on LMX theory

Several authors concentrate on the relationship between the TL and the team member as dyadic and reciprocal and explore how one-on-one interaction between them (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, & Chen, 2005; Sloan, 2007). TLs have certain expectations and goals that are passed on to the team member who depending on the

interaction level and relationship will internalise them. Similarly depending on the behaviour of the team member and his/her expectations of how he wants to be treated, the TL would modify his/her own behaviour. The higher the LMX the more positive would be the impact on organisational commitment and task performance. LMX incorporates the tenets of both transactional as well as transformational Leadership (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). According to LMX theory, there is mutual trust, respect and obligation that will enhance the influence both the members have on each other which leads to a stronger relationship opening into strong relationship enhancing learning. It also thus is an incentive for further networking, continuous improvement in the team work and powers more superior work from both the TL and the team member (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). However, the manager-team member relationship is not restricted to the dyad but also extends to the larger network that both are a part of (Graen & Scandura, 1987). It has been empirically supported that ‘high-quality’ LMX has a positive bearing on the team member’s career satisfaction, commitment, loyalty and job performance of both the team member and the TL (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Settoon, Bennett & Liden, 1996; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). LMX would ensure that the connection between the team member and the TL would enable learning through observation as well as social exchange. This would allow the effect of factors of the high performing TL – human and social capital on the Team members’ career advancement to be enhanced. All these factors impact the influence of the TL within the organisation as well as increase the probability of an upwards career movement for both the TL and the team member. Consequently we can propose that:

Proposition 3: Leader-member exchange enhances the positive impact that a TL has on his/her team member’s career advancement

3.2. Supervisory support

When a TL's involvement leads to positive impact on a Team member's career it is called TL support. In fact a TL's role involves professional and psychological support. (Greenhaus, Parasuraman & Wormley, 1990; Kram, 1985; Orpen, 1995). This support includes – “sponsorship, facilitating exposure and visibility, coaching, and protection” (Jiang & Klein, 1999: 237). The TL's role is extremely critical when it comes to how a team member is considered as a contributor and also in imbibing values of the organisation and imparting learning on organisational culture (Katz et al., 1995). It has been proven that supervisory support impacts job performance evaluations which in turn directly impact the advance prospects of the team member in terms of promotion, career plateau and career satisfaction (Greenhaus et al., 1990). Supervisory support has also shown to reduce stress and instance of job conflict (Babin & Boles, 1996; Driscoll and Beehr, 2007), which would create a more conducive environment for social learning not only from the TL but also from other co-workers. Yuan and Woodman (2010) also suggest that innovative workplace behaviour which is one of the fundamental factors that drive career advancement (Seibert, Kraimer & Crant, 2001). Also, supervisory support increased perceived organisational support which in turn positively impacts organisational citizenship behaviour, loyalty and performance at the workplace. All these factors also add to career advancement opportunities (Shanock & Eisenberg, 2006). These aspects enable widening of networks & enriching capabilities and competencies of the team member, through social exchange with their TLs as well as through an augmented situation of social learning. Hence, we can propose that:

Proposition 4: Supervisory support enhances the positive impact that a TL has on his/ her team member's career advancement.

Supervisory support along with the influence of the Leader-member exchange has been summarised in a conceptual model given in Figure 1. A high performing TL would have

two major influencing factors – human and social capital. The mere presence of these characteristics would positively impact the career advancement of their Team members. This relationship is positively moderated by the strength of LMX and supervisory support. Figure 2 clearly elucidates these conceptual relationships.

Figure 1

Figure 1

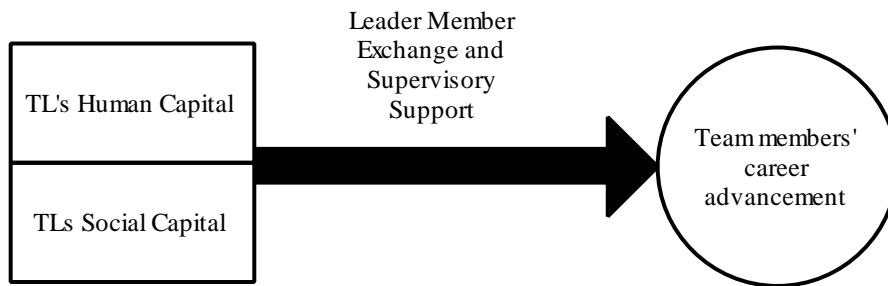


Figure 1: A conceptual model linking High Performing TL's impact on their team members' Career

4. Conclusion

Most studies have attributed that, TLs' conscious actions and intentional effort towards their Team members impact the latter's career advancement. However in addition to this direct effect, there is an ancillary consequence of the characteristics of the manager. Through the lens of social learning we can understand that the team members learn through observation and imitation and not only through conscious efforts of their TLs. This scenario has been further analysed in the case of high performing TLs. It has been assumed that the two major determinants of high performance or perceived performance are their high managerial (human capital) and networking and influencing capabilities (social capital). Their human and social capital further enhances their own position in the organisation and sometimes also in the industry. This positively impacts the chances of their Team members' career advancement. The impact of their own capabilities on their Team members can be studied through social learning, where observation and socialisation leads to transfer of knowledge and absorption of learning. When TLs have high human capital in terms of

managerial capabilities, they have the right mix of conceptual, technical and human skills to implement their job impeccably. Therefore they set high standards of quality and efficiency not only for themselves but also set the same expectations from their Team members on whom they depend for the implementation of their ideas and vision. Therefore solely by being a part of the same team, these team members assimilate these qualities and standards at work, thus in turn impacting their own work and career advancement opportunities.

Also research has proven that capabilities and skills unaccompanied do not help in career advancement. These skills as well as the work done have to be propagated amongst the decision makers within the organisation, and social capital needs to be created at the workplace. Forasmuch as, we have assumed that high performing TLs have high networking skills. Moreover, to be able to make an impact and sway decisions, they need to have influencing skills within the organisation. If the TL has a network worthy of decision makers as well as social capital that has a bouquet of competencies, the Team members would have also have access to this network. By sheer admittance to this network, the team members have also increased their own social capital within the organisation and which will not only allow them to work better in tandem within the organisation but will also be exposed to more opportunities in terms of information, projects and career positions. These additional opportunities which their peers in other teams might not have access to will give them an additional boost in career advancement.

But this impact that a high performing TL might have on his/her team members can be prominent or limited. The relationship between the TL and the team members therefore becomes more important as a focus of study. The secondary effect of a performing TL on his/her Team members' career is further augmented in the presence of positive LMX and supervisory support. If the reciprocity of information, learning and social capital is high, which indicates high LMX, and the supervisor also supports the team member in his

endeavour of career advancement, the ramifications of the effect are superior. Therefore the role of the moderators - LMX and supervisory support is critical since it can change the degree of the impact. The implication of the gravity of the intensity of the presence of the moderators can be seen in managerial training modules. Also, it is the minimal effort that TLs can put in to ensure that their Team members' development without actually being involved.

This paper has put forth a conceptual model, which can easily be tested empirically as a part of research in the future. All the conceptual variables have been operationalised. The effect of organisational factors, inequality in the positions between the team member and the manager, ratio of TL to the number of Team members within a team, divergence in terms of goals etc. on this impact can also be included. The study can also be done in culturally diverse countries to see if this impact is affected due the new variables. The personality traits of the TLs and the Team members are other aspects that can be delved into. We can also look at other variables other than career advancement that might be impacted due to the fact that the TL is a performer. This conceptual paper thus provides the foundation to further explore more ways of managerial impact in several different contexts.

Another message that this paper indicates towards is that concentrating on one's own career might be the first step towards being a good manager, since it would not only strengthen your own position but might also positively impact your Team member's career and eventually help the organisation. High performing TLs not only directly contribute to the organisation's goals but also promote the career advancement of their team members, creating a ripple effect of high performance within the organisation.

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