Positive Feedback in the Workplace:

Impact on Task Performance and Relationship Quality

Lisa Sansom, MBA, MAPP, DBA student

RESEARCH PROBLEM

In Kluger & Denisi's 1996 article on feedback intervention theory (FIT), the authors noted that:

- Over one-third of feedback interventions decreased performance.
- Approx. one-third of feedback interventions had no impact.
- Feedback interventions are moderated by task characteristics that are poorly understood

However they did not examine relationship dimensions or outcomes.

Since that time, feedback research has largely focused on constructive or negative feedback with an intent to close a performance gap.

There has been little research done to date on the effectiveness of positive feedback on task performance or relationship quality.

Further research has demonstrated that the feedback provider (FP) needs to be perceived as competent and trustworthy by the feedback recipient (FR) for the FR to be open to the feedback, intend to make changes, and act on those intentions.

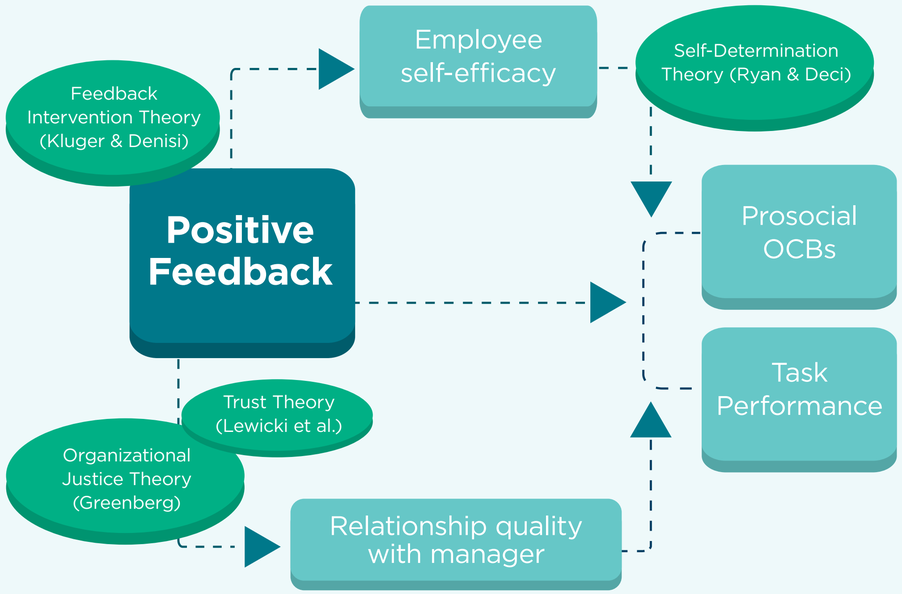
However, the provision of negative feedback over time can undermine trust, negatively impacting the FR's desire and intention to act on received feedback.

Overall, the potential of positive feedback to create upward spirals of trust, feedback acceptance, performance and relationship has not yet been thoroughly researched.

Beyond a theoretical model, what does this imply for managers delivering feedback in the workplace?

RESEARCH QUESTION

How can managers optimally deliver positive feedback to employees to enhance virtuous upward spirals of both relationship quality and task performance?



POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY AND PRACTICE

- Contribute to the body of research on the impact of positive feedback on task performance.
- Elevate the role of relationship quality in the research of feedback provision and acceptance.
- Contribute to the body of research on the impact of positive feedback on relationship quality.
- Develop a practical training mechanism to develop managerial skills in delivering effective positive feedback.

OBJECTIVES

- To better define and distinguish different types of positive feedback (e.g., encouragement, acknowledgment, compliments, praise, gratitude,appreciation, recognition, etc.) as these are often confounded in the research literature
- To create a model, rooted in theory, of effective positive feedback that can be delivered in casual situations (i.e., not performance review/appraisal discussions) spoken from a manager to an employee to improve relationship quality and task performance, sparking upward virtuous cycles at the dyadic and ultimately systemic levels (e.g., employee engagement)
- To test this model in a professional environment and ascertain outcomes

INTENDED METHODOLOGY

1. Research Setting / Participants:
a professional workplace (TBD) with managers and employees

- Control group wait listed

2. Intervention: training managers on positive feedback delivery

3. Data collection:

- Before training
- Training utility and intentions to apply
- Post-training at different intervals

4. Hypothesis testing:

- Self efficacy
- Trust
- Performance
- Prosocial OCBs
- Relationship

SELECTED LITERATURE

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