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Impact of managerial communication styles on employees' attitudes and behaviours

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# Impact of managerial communication styles on employees' attitudes and behaviours

Managerial communication styles

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – Through the lens of social exchange theory and organisation support theory, the purpose of this paper is to examine the passive, aggressive, and assertive styles of managers/supervisors that influence perceived supervisory support and to test whether the support increases employees' satisfaction with the communication of supervisors and their organisation-based self-esteem. It also assesses whether employees' communication satisfaction and their self-esteem influence employees' performance, commitment and absenteeism.

**Design/methodology/approach** – In total, 400 employees from ten manufacturing firms in India were studied through questionnaire survey. Standard instruments were used to assess the constructs. A scale was developed to measure the communication style of managers and a single item to assess absenteeism.

**Findings** – Results revealed that assertive style of communication lends maximum support to employees. Perceived supervisory support at the workplace enhances employees' satisfaction with communication of supervisors and organisation-based self-esteem. Satisfaction with communication fosters a strong emotional bond with organisations and the emotional bond with organisations reduces employees' absenteeism.

**Originality/value** – The paper shows that employees' organisation-based self-esteem increases their job performance. Organisations can conduct training programs to develop an assertive communication style in their managers/supervisors to increase the support to subordinates; thereby its positive consequences will follow in increasing employees' performance and commitment and reducing absenteeism.

**Keywords** Managers, Communication skills, Employees' behaviour, Employees attitudes, Managerial communication styles, Perceived supervisory support

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Today we are faced with the pre-eminent fact that, if civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships (Roosevelt, 1945).

Interpersonal relationships including social relations with one another are an essential part of organisational life and sustainable success. As far as communication is concerned, words are only superficial aspects. Without human function, words can never convey the exact meaning to the other person. Effective communication builds relationships. Wyatt (2006) stated the following:

Effective communication is the lifeblood of a successful organization. It reinforces the organization's vision, connects employees to the business, fosters process improvement, facilitates change, and drives business results by changing employee behaviour (p. 6).

Managerial communication drives relationships and frames the attitudes and behaviours of employees in the workplace. Attitude has three components: affective,



cognitive, and behavioural. While the cognitive component represents the evaluation of stimuli in the mind, behaviours are actions or reactions that occur in response to those stimuli. In measuring attitudes, only affective/feeling components are assessed in connection with communication, organisations, managers, and situations. Positive attitudes manifest in well-adjusted behaviours and negative attitudes lead to the reverse.

An historical overview of managerial communication shows that the way managers communicated with subordinates is markedly different from how they do today. While employees were previously regarded as the greatest asset of an organisation, the asset metaphor has been elevated to a new level. Organisations have started recognising employees as human capital owners and investors (Davenport, 1999). As a result, the emphasis on communication “content” has shifted to “behaviour” as a part of the communication process because employees’ interpretation of supervisory communication depends not only on “what” is said but also on “how” it is said. A people-centred strategy is an important source of competitive advantage because, unlike technology, costs, or new product development, it is difficult to imitate (Pfeffer, 1998). Managers can create an environment through communication where employees feel happier and more passionate about their jobs and exhibit attitudes and behaviours necessary for improved organisational performance.

### **Background**

Blau’s (1964) social exchange theory is among the most influential conceptual paradigms for understanding workplace behaviours. Social exchange theory is based on a central premise that the exchange of social and material resources is a fundamental form of human interaction. When two parties who are in a state of reciprocal interdependence interact with each other, obligations are generated (Saks, 2006). Organisational support theory, derived from social exchange theory, explains how the support of organisations affects the behaviours of employees (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986). It suggests that employees form a global perception of the extent to which the organisation cares about their well-being and demonstrates appreciation, called perceived organisational support (POS). Supervisors are regarded as representatives of the organisation. If employees perceive the supervisor/organisation as supportive, they feel an obligation to return this support (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002) in the form of favourable attitudes and behaviours that promote employees’ performance. POS manifests in increase in in-role and extra-role performance and decrease in stress and withdrawal behaviours such as absenteeism and turnover. Assessing such constructs quantitatively, the effects of managerial communication on employees’ attitudes and behaviours can be gauged.

Although relational concerns have been at the heart of management research for decades, the power of relationships has become even more salient both for employees and organisations. Accordingly, going beyond the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and organisation support theory (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002; Shore and Shore, 1995), this study investigates the impact of perceived managerial communication styles on employees’ attitudes and behaviours through perceived supervisory support (PSS) *vis-à-vis* POS. Social exchange theory suggests that if a superior (on behalf of the organisation) confers a social gift on a subordinate, the latter will feel obligated to reciprocate. POS is defined as employees’ perceptions about the degree to which the organisation cares about their well-being and values their contributions. Organisation support theory suggests that the development of POS

is the employees' tendency to assign humanlike characteristics to the organisation (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). POS represents an indispensable part of the social exchange relationship between employees and the employer because it implies what the organisation has done for its employees. The supervisor on behalf of the organisation extends support to subordinates. Subordinates perceiving support of supervisors *vis-a-vis* organisations cultivate positive attitudes and engage in extra-role behaviours. Subordinates are unlikely to hold favourable attitudes and behaviours when the treatment is negative or neutral (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002).

Reciprocity and strong mutual care are emphasised in Indian culture (Srivastava *et al.*, 2008). Indian culture stresses interdependence, sharing, and harmony with the surrounding world. While horizontal orientation and rationalism are valued by Indians, hierarchical orientation and emotionalism are also being valued (Sinha and Kanungo, 1997). The family structure in India is a close knit unit. Decisions are made only after prior consultation with the family members. Making important decisions without talking to the family is considered offensive and implies a lack of respect. These human aspects of Indian culture may have implications in the workplace. This study stresses the "human function" of managerial communication, a concept neglected in communication style research. The human function embedded in communication of managers/supervisors can affect the work relationships that can facilitate or retard employees'/subordinates' attitudes and behaviours (Varona, 2002).

While human relations practices play a key role in developing and maintaining the exchange relationship between the employee and the organisation (Aggarwal and Bhargava, 2009), extant research offers little insight on appropriate managerial communication style that can help to build high levels of support. The role of social relationships is yet to be explicitly investigated. An issue that needs to be addressed is the specific styles of managerial communication that can promote or demote relationship building. To address this issue, one potentially helpful approach is to establish a link between the effective managerial communication styles and development of positive supervisor-subordinate relationships.

## Review of literature and development of hypotheses

### *Communication styles*

Management is a process of working with and through others to achieve organisational objectives in an efficient manner (Lwehabura and Matovelo, 2000). Managing employees is enacted through communication (Holladay and Coombs, 1993). "The way one verbally, non-verbally and para-verbally interacts to signal how literal meaning should be taken, interpreted, filtered or understood, is known as the communication style" (Norton, 1983, p. 58). Norton (1983) classifies communication styles into ten different types – dominant, dramatic, contentious, animated, impression-leaving, relaxed, attentive, open, friendly, and precise. McCallister (1992), combining Norton's (1983) styles, classifies communication styles into noble, reflective, and socratic. Comstock and Higgins (1997), merge Norton's styles to four clusters of communication styles – cooperative, apprehensive, social, and competitive. Analogous to McCallister's threefold typology of communication styles, Heffner (1997) groups the communication styles into aggressive, passive, and assertive (Ibrahim and Ismail, 2007). Noble style is directive and straightforward and may be equated with aggressive style. Reflective style is non-directive and may be parallel with passive style. Socratic style emphasises on analysis of details and debates and may be similar to assertive style. To understand the human aspects of managerial communication and the formation of interpersonal

relations in organisations, Heffner's classification of communication styles can be adopted to study perceived managerial communication styles. Heffner's communication styles appear simpler and emphasise more on human relations in workplace than McCallister's communication styles.

Managers practice various communication styles. However, often one type dominates and becomes habitual. In passive communication style, managers avoid to express their needs, feelings, and feel shy to protect their rights. In aggressive communication style, managers express their feelings and opinions and advocate for their needs in a way that violates the rights of employees. While passive managers are usually unable to convey the full thrust of their message, causing irritation, delays, and rework, aggressive managers tend to be less concerned with moving things along than in preserving their own status and power over employees, though they may be successful in completing short-term goals (Newbold, 1997). Between these two extreme styles, is the assertive style. Assertiveness is a behaviour that enables managers to act in their own best interest and to stand up for themselves without denying rights of others (Arredondo, 2003). It facilitates good interpersonal interaction (Lwehabura and Matovelo, 2000) and is characterised by honesty, objectivity, openness, tolerance, accuracy, self-expression, and respect for self and others. Assertiveness can be used for creating mutual understanding and fulfilling objectives (Lwehabura and Matovelo, 2000). Assertive managers respect the needs of employees and go through the mental process of assessing what they need to know and how. Assertive managers also have the skills and confidence to challenge ambiguity and misunderstanding (Newbold, 1997). When the communication style of managers is straightforward and accurate, employees view managers as trustworthy (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000). This openness facilitates employees' understanding of tasks and enables responsible decision making (Moye and Henkin, 2006).

Assertive managers differ from aggressive managers. Aggressive managers attack or ignore employees' opinions in favour of their own. They usually react to the given situation in a rude, derogatory, and sarcastic manner which escalates employees' anxiety. On the other hand, assertive managers state their opinions while being respectful to employees. While aggressive managers fail to establish relationships with their employees, assertive managers build long-term relationships.

The assertive communication style enables a manager to express his/her opinions and thoughts in a direct way without attacking others, refuse an unreasonable request without feeling guilty, give employees "constructive feedback" instead of "criticism", give recognition and praise to employees at the right time and create a motivational climate, deliver a firm message by asking "questions" through a clever approach or ask effective questions to probe for facts and provoke for ideas, trust employees, and create a collaborative and congenial working environment.

#### *Perceived managerial communication styles and PSS*

Workplace interactions are often conceptualised via Blau's social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Social exchanges are considered bi-directional relationships through which two parties reciprocally transact in an interdependent manner (Blau, 1964, 1974). Social exchanges involve intrinsic, higher order, valuables than do simple economic exchanges (Blau, 1974).

Employees learn from the structure of their work-place and react the way the environment suggests they should. The structure of the work-place and the transmission of information and feedback to employees are the major responsibilities

of a manager (Villegas and Cervený, 2004). An honest and straightforward communication enables a manager to create trust and transform negative energy into positive ones (Beck and Hillmar, 1992). An assertive manager creates a nurturing, a more humane, caring, and fulfilling work environment. Employees develop an overall belief concerning the extent to which supervisors on behalf of the organisations value and care about them, which is called as POS (Shanock and Eisenberger, 2006). This is in accordance with the organisation support theory. The POS is executed through supervisors called PSS. Based on this discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

- H1.* Assertive communication style of supervisors will elicit more PSS to employees compared to passive and aggressive communication styles.

*PSS, communication satisfaction, and organisation-based self-esteem*

If the employees perceive their supervisor as supportive, they feel intrinsically satisfied, realise self-worth, and feel an obligation to return this support through appropriate attitudes and behaviours that benefit the organisation (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Consistent with this premise, subordinates perceiving support through their managers' communication style are more likely to experience satisfaction with the communication – a personal contentment experienced by subordinates at the work place while exchanging ideas with their supervisors. Supervisors' willingness to listen, to understand the problems faced by subordinates, to trust, to support, to provide constructive feedback, and recognise subordinates' efforts are the main sources of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. When employees are treated with support and respect (e.g. mistakes dealt with in a non-coercive manner) and their contributions to organisations are recognised, the effect of "them and us" attitudes is reduced (Peccei and Rosenthal, 2001; Pfeffer, 1998).

Organisation-based self-esteem is constructed from past experiences such as task accomplishments and failures in the organisation (Hui and Lee, 2000). Employees are usually not averse to put extra efforts when organisations need help in overcoming problems or meeting production deadlines. But if extra efforts go unnoticed, employees wonder why they should bother. Supportive supervisors empower their employees, permit them to exercise self-direction and self-control, and provide them with opportunities to exercise competence and experience success (Pierce and Gardner, 2004). Such fulfilling and supportive environment creates positive energy for subordinates and enhances their organisation-based self-esteem. Based on this discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H2a.* PSS will provide more communication satisfaction to employees.

- H2b.* PSS will increase employees' organisation-based self-esteem.

*Communication satisfaction, job performance, organisational commitment, and absenteeism*

Human and technical factors are responsible for determining employees' job performance. Job performance is a multiplicable function of motivation and ability (Campbell *et al.*, 1993). In other words, ability in the absence of motivation or motivation in the absence of ability is insufficient to yield good performance. Ability involves knowledge and skill while motivation is influenced by an employee's needs, and physical and social conditions (Randhawa, 2004). At the interpersonal level,

satisfaction with managerial communication satisfies the intrinsic needs of employees and encourages them to utilise their abilities. The communication satisfaction is likely to directly influence employees' performance (Orpen, 1997; Soonhee, 2002).

Organisational commitment is the desire of employees to remain in the organisation, exerting work effort while accepting organisational goals (Putterill and Rohrer, 1995). Organisational commitment has three dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Though related, these dimensions show conceptual and empirical distinctness, and so, they may be treated as distinct constructs (Kelly, 2004). Affective commitment is the employee's positive emotional attachment to the organisation. An employee who is affectively committed strongly identifies with the goals of the organisation, desires to remain in the organisation and tries to glorify it. Continuance commitment is the state in which the employee commits to continue his/her job in the organisation because s/he perceives high costs of losing organisational membership, including economic (such as pension accruals) and social costs (friendship ties with co-workers). Normative commitment is the feelings of obligation to remain in the organisation. These feelings may derive from many sources. For example, the organisation may have invested resources in training an employee who then feels a "moral" obligation to put forth efforts on the job and stay on with the organisation to "repay the debt". It may also reflect an internalised norm, developed before the person joins the organisation through family or other socialisation processes, that one should be loyal to one's organisation. Employees with strong affective commitment remain because of emotional binding, those with strong continuance commitment remain because of their necessity, and those with strong normative commitment remain because of moral obligations (Allen and Meyer, 1990).

Past research has shown positive relationships between communication satisfaction and organisational commitment (Downs, 1991; Varona, 1996, 2002). Supportive managers follow the golden rule: "Do unto others, as you would have others do unto you!" Social exchange theory acknowledges that employees willingly exchange loyalty for the support they receive from superiors during interactions (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986; Mannheim *et al.*, 2003). Recognition of their work and constructive feedback help to meet their socio-emotional needs, which enhance their sense of belonging and pride in organisations. Sensible and rational treatment to employees affects their commitment.

Failure to report to work is absenteeism. When employees do not intentionally create the conditions which produce the absence, then these are considered as involuntary absenteeism (Savery *et al.*, 1998). Involuntary absenteeism is due to sick children at home, personal illness, funeral attendance, or other unavoidable situations. Contrarily, voluntary absenteeism is controlled by employees. This study focuses only on voluntary absenteeism. Employees whose needs are not met in the job remain absent (Cross and Travaglione, 2004; Sagie, 1998). Communication satisfaction can directly relate to socio-psychological well-being arresting absenteeism (Clampitt and Giard, 1993). Thus, the more the communication satisfaction, the lower will be the absenteeism. Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H3a.* Employees experiencing higher communication satisfaction will report higher job performance.

*H3b.* Employees experiencing higher communication satisfaction will report higher affective, continuance, and normative commitment.

*H3c.* Employees experiencing higher communication satisfaction will report lower absenteeism.

*Organisation-based self-esteem, job performance, organisational commitment, and absenteeism*

Low self-esteemed employees are more likely to exhibit negative feelings in their work. Often lack of motivation, minimal feedback, and lack of trust in management are responsible for their poor performance. Self-esteem being the key to human dignity sets the boundaries for individual performance and career progress (Goddard, 1992). In the top-down approach of “management by objectives” and the bottom-up approach of the “quality circles”, employees’ participate in goal setting, problem solving, and decision making that enhance their organisation-based self-esteem in the eyes of other employees. Employees with high organisation-based self-esteem undertake more challenging tasks than the employees with low self-esteem. The high self-esteem triggers enthusiasm and optimism of employees that result in high job performance (Goris *et al.*, 2000; Villegas and Cerveny, 2004). Such employees work to restore their reputation. A supervisor, who encourages participation of employees and respects and recognises employees in interpersonal transactions, creates a feeling of oneness and thus increases their commitment to organisational goals (Silverthorne, 2004; Gaertner, 1999).

People escape temporarily to avoid unpleasant work circumstances (Villegas and Cerveny, 2004). To create a psychologically healthy work-place, supervisors rotate job assignments on routine tasks, solicit employees’ input on nature and execution of job or give them timely freedom for carrying out tasks. This gives them a sense of ownership and makes them the executors of their decisions. In accordance with social exchange theory and organisation support theory, when employees feel in interpersonal interaction that they are valued, important, competent, and capable to their organisation, they attend to their work regularly. Based on this discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H4a.* Employees experiencing high organisation-based self-esteem will report high job performance.

*H4b.* Employees experiencing high organisation-based self-esteem will report high affective, continuance, and normative commitments.

*H4c.* Employees experiencing high organisation-based self-esteem will report low absenteeism.

*Organisational commitment and absenteeism*

Organisational commitment can influence absenteeism (Savery *et al.*, 1998). The learning and experiences of employees at workplace act as a socialising force for which long-term relations are formed between employees and organisations. Employees, who are highly committed to their organisational goals, are expected to have positive attitudes towards their organisations and have strong desire to come to work and contribute towards goal attainment. Based on this discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H5.* Employees having high affective, continuance, and normative commitments will report low absenteeism.

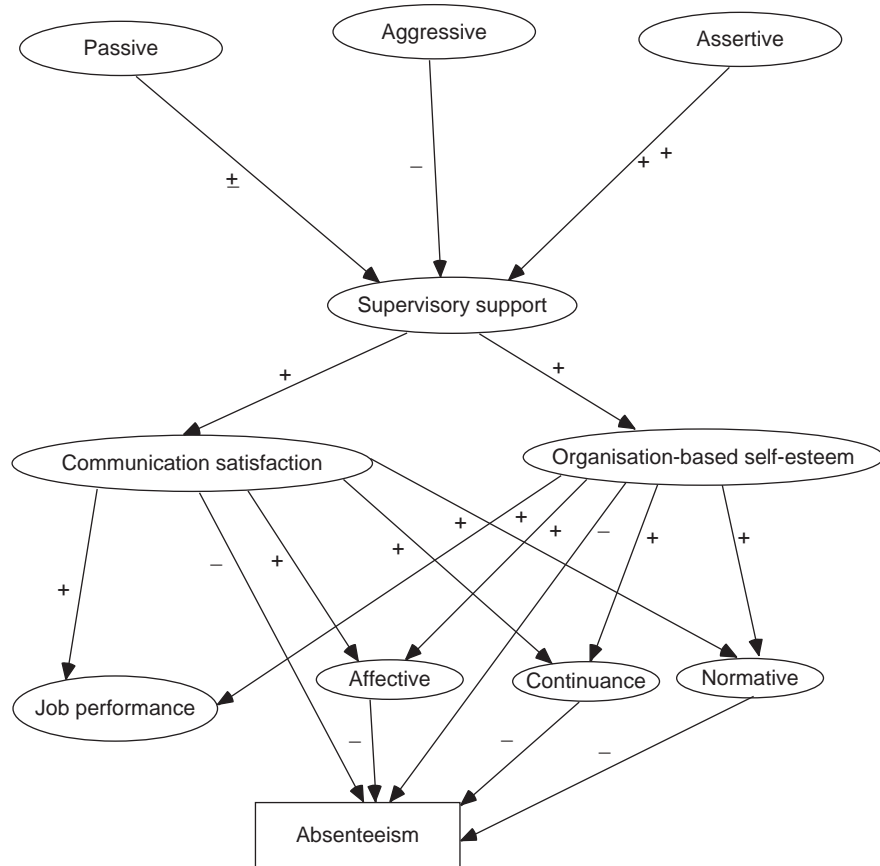


To sum up, this study investigates the influence of perceived managerial communication styles on PSS to employees that can further communication satisfaction and enhance employees' organisation-based self-esteem. Communication satisfaction can enhance job performance, organisational commitment, and decrease absenteeism. Also, it is proposed that the organisation-based self-esteem can enhance job performance, organisational commitment, and decrease absenteeism. Also, the organisational commitment can reduce absenteeism. A model that incorporates all hypotheses is shown figuratively (see Figure 1).

**Method**

*Sample*

Data were collected from full-time employees during May 2007 to July 2008 in ten manufacturing organisations located in states of West Bengal (Kharagpur, Kolkata, and Haldia), Jharkhand (Tatanagar), and Uttar-Pradesh (Renukut) in India. They are large private organisations owned by industrialists producing steel, aluminium,



**Figure 1.**  
The conceptual model  
for investigation

**Notes:** +, Direct impact; -, inverse impact

electricity, petrochemicals, edible oil, consumer goods, and battery. The employee strength in the organisations varied from 2,000 to 3,000. With the permission of higher authorities and procuring the list of employees, 2.5 per cent of the total employees having minimum three years of experience in the organisations were randomly selected. Thus, 650 employees were approached, explained about the purpose of the study personally and getting their consent, they were given the questionnaires. All the questions were written in English. The cover letter in the questionnaire explained the purpose of the study and assured complete anonymity of responses. Each employee was requested to fill-up the questionnaire and return it after a fortnight. Employees were met after a fortnight and 400 employees returned the complete filled-in questionnaires. The response rate was 61.53 per cent. At the time of collection of filled-in questionnaires, eight employees from three organisations who agreed to report their experiences about their supervisory communication, recognition, behaviours, and attitudes mentioned that and those were jotted down in field diary. The important narrations relevant to the context are reported. Employees were given the following prompts to recall situations at the workplace in which they had good and/or bad experiences:

- (1) tell me about an incident when the communication of your immediate supervisor made you happy, motivated, and consequently you were able to perform well; and
- (2) tell me about a situation when the communication of your immediate supervisor made you unhappy, demotivated, and consequently you failed to perform well.

Of the 400 respondents, 94.8 per cent (= 379) were males and the rest 5.2 per cent (= 21) were females. There were very few female employees compared to male employees in the manufacturing organisations and accordingly the sample contained a lower representation of females. The sample profile of male and female employees were compared using “*F*” test. They did not differ in their age, had similar years of job experience, and both groups had by and large nuclear families. While female employees had studied more number of years in formal schools and colleges than that of male employees, on average, each male employee had received about two promotions compared to only one promotion per female employee during their job in the organisation (see Table I). More than two-thirds of employees were from semi-urban (20.8 per cent = 83) and urban (49.5 per cent = 198) background and only less than one-third of employees were from rural background (29.8 per cent = 119). The age of employees varied from as low as 19 to as high as 60.

Variable	Male, <i>M</i> (SD)	Female, <i>M</i> (SD)	<i>F</i>
Age	37.91 (9.93)	35.24 (8.85)	1.45
Education	14.77 (2.63)	16.19 (2.25)	5.86*
Basic salary	8,850.49 (6,095.56)	8,176.19 (2,974.38)	0.25
Promotions	1.73 (1.55)	0.90 (1.30)	5.70*
Experience	14.22 (9.83)	11.30 (9.17)	1.76
Family members	4.49 (1.78)	3.90 (1.38)	2.21

**Note:** \**p* < 0.05

**Table I.**  
Sample profile  
of employees

*Measures*

All constructs used in the study had validity and reliability except absenteeism. While “absenteeism” was measured using a single open-ended question, all other constructs were measured using multi-item close-ended questions. An expert in communication studies, another in psychology, and still another in management science were asked to assess the relevance of items to the constructs. All the items agreed by them were retained (Table II).

With the measures of socio-demographic variables, self-reported questionnaires assessed communication styles, PSS, communication satisfaction, organisation-based self-esteem, job performance, commitment, and absenteeism.

*Perceived managerial communication styles.* Perceived managerial communication styles had three dimensions: passive, aggressive, and assertive. Each dimension was assessed on eight items. The items for measuring all these styles were generated on the basis of quiz questions on “assertiveness” for testing communication styles by Brigham Young University (2004). The items of the scale were arranged randomly to assess the three styles, which supervisors might employ when interacting with their employees. Sample items on passive communication style include, “My supervisor lets other people take unfair advantage of him/her” and “My supervisor does not express his/her views or feelings”. Sample items on aggressive communication style include, “My supervisor often ignores another person’s rights”, and “My supervisor often monopolises conversations”. Sample items on assertive communication style include, “My supervisor is able to recognise and express his good points”, and “My supervisor usually stands up for his/her own rights and lets other people do the same”. All the items of three styles were positively keyed. Employees were asked to indicate the extent to which each statement was true regarding their immediate superiors’ communication style. Response descriptions against each item were given on a five-point Likert scale – “strongly disagree” (= 1), “disagree” (= 2), “neither disagree nor agree” (= 3), “agree” (= 4), and “strongly agree” (= 5).

*PSS.* To assess employees’ perception that their supervisor valued their contribution and cared about their well-being, the eight-item short version of the “POS” (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986) questionnaire was adapted, replacing the word “organisation” with the word “supervisor”. Of the items, four were positively keyed and four were negatively keyed. Sample items include, “My supervisor values my contributions” (positively keyed) and “My supervisor would ignore any complaint from me” (negatively keyed). Employees were asked to indicate the extent to which each statement was true regarding their immediate supervisors’ support towards them. Response descriptions against each item were given on a five-point Likert scale – “strongly disagree” (= 1), “disagree” (= 2), “neither disagree nor agree” (= 3), “agree” (= 4), and “strongly agree” (= 5).

*Communication satisfaction.* The construct was measured using seven items from the 40-item scale developed by Downs and Hazen (1977). Employees were asked to indicate the extent to which each statement was true regarding their satisfaction with the amount and/or quality of communication with their immediate supervisor. Sample items include, “My supervisor listens and pays attention to me” and “My supervisor provides me the information needed to do my job”. All items were positively keyed. Response descriptions against each item were given on a five-point Likert scale – “highly dissatisfied” (= 1), “dissatisfied” (= 2), “neither dissatisfied nor satisfied” (= 3), “satisfied” (= 4), and “highly satisfied” (= 5).

Variables	Items		Mean	SD	$\chi^2/df$	CFI	GFI	NFI	PCFI	PGFI	PNFI	RMSEA	STLR	Cronbach $\alpha$
	Total	Retained												
Passive	8	8	20.67	5.25	1.71	0.97	0.98	0.93	0.69	0.96	0.67	0.04	0.45-0.68	0.73
Aggressive	8	7	18.34	5.57	1.59	1.00	0.99	0.98	0.66	0.99	0.65	0.02	0.60-0.73	0.80
Assertive	8	7	24.52	3.87	3.90	0.80	0.96	0.80	0.54	0.92	0.51	0.08	0.27-0.63	0.62
Perceived supervisory support	8	8	27.44	5.93	9.84	0.80	0.87	0.80	0.57	0.76	0.55	0.12	0.51-0.71	0.80
Communication satisfaction	40	7	25.38	5.61	13.65	0.84	0.89	0.83	0.56	0.78	0.55	0.13	0.53-0.75	0.85
Self-esteem	10	10	38.96	6.06	7.44	0.83	0.88	0.81	0.65	0.82	0.63	0.10	0.61-0.77	0.86
Performance	7	7	26.65	4.43	10.78	0.83	0.90	0.82	0.56	0.80	0.55	0.13	0.44-0.83	0.80
Affective	8	8	27.77	6.05	10.45	0.80	0.86	0.76	0.55	0.75	0.54	0.12	0.51-0.76	0.79
Continuance	8	7	20.09	4.56	9.72	0.74	0.91	0.73	0.50	0.82	0.45	0.13	0.23-0.63	0.70
Absenteeism	1	1	0.63	2.28										

**Note:** *STLR*, standardised loading range

**Table II.**  
Validity and reliability  
of variables

*Organisation-based self-esteem.* The scale contained the ten-item measure developed by Pierce *et al.* (1989). Employees were asked to indicate the extent they believed that they were valuable, worthwhile, and effectual members of their employing organisations. Sample items include, "Around here I count" and "Around here I am taken seriously". All items were positively keyed. Response descriptions against each item were given on a five-point Likert scale – "strongly disagree" (= 1), "disagree" (= 2), "neither disagree nor agree" (= 3), "agree" (= 4), and "strongly agree" (= 5).

*Job performance.* Job performance was measured through seven items of Abrainis's (1985) job performance scale. Employees were asked to report how they performed in last six months. All items were positively keyed. Sample items include, "How well do you think you were at producing satisfactory quality of work?" and "How well do you think you were at producing satisfactory quantity of work?" The response categories against each item were given on a five-point scale – "very poor" (= 1), "poor" (= 2), "neither poor nor well" (= 3), "well" (= 4), and "very well" (= 5).

*Organisational commitment.* To measure employees' organisational commitment, the tricomponent organisational commitment scale, developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) was adapted. Each dimension of affective, continuance, and normative commitment had eight items. Of the eight-items in affective commitment, four-items were negatively keyed. Sample items include, "I really feel as if this organisation's problems are my own" (positively keyed) and "I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organisation" (negatively keyed). Of the eight-items in continuance commitment, two-items were negatively keyed. Sample items include, "It would be very hard for me to leave my organisation right now, even if I wanted to" (positively keyed) and "I am not afraid of what might happen if I quit my job without having another lined up" (negatively keyed). Of the eight-items in normative commitment, three-items were negatively keyed. Sample items include, "If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere I would not feel it was right to leave my organisation" (positively keyed) and "I do not think waiting to be a 'company man' or 'company woman' is sensible anymore" (negatively keyed). Response descriptions against each item were given on a five-point Likert scale – "strongly disagree" (= 1), "disagree" (= 2), "neither disagree nor agree" (= 3), "agree" (= 4), and "strongly agree" (= 5).

*Absenteeism.* Because of confidentiality issues, looking at records of absentees was not permitted by the surveyed organisations. An open-ended question was asked to each employee to report the total number of days absent in the previous year. As a large number of employees reported zero or few absences, the variable was transformed by adding 1 (to remove the zeros) and taking the natural logarithm. The distribution was then closer to normal.

#### *Validity and reliability of measures*

The validity and reliability of questionnaire data were evaluated using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 16 and Analysis of Moment Structures version 16. Validity is ensured when the construct measures what it intends to measure. Confirmatory factor analyses were performed to assess the validity. It assumes a priori factor structure. We had chosen a conservative standardised regression weight of 0.22 or below for an item to be eliminated. The intention was to eliminate the poorly performing items for measuring a construct.

Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was computed to determine the internal consistency of items to measure a construct. The Cronbach  $\alpha$  coefficients of all the constructs except normative commitment ( $\alpha=0.40$ ) crossed the recommended level of 0.60

(Nunnally, 1978). The normative commitment scale could neither satisfy the test for internal consistency nor the convergent validity (all items loaded non-significantly); hence it was dropped from the analysis. Affective and continuance commitments were conceptually different from one another and each was treated as a separate construct.

The following fit indices were chosen for evaluating each construct: relative chi-square ( $\chi^2/df$ ), comparative fit index (*CFI*), goodness-of-fit index (*GFI*), normed fit index (*NFI*), their parsimonious fit indices – *PCFI*, *PGFI*, *PNFI* – and the root mean square error of approximation (*RMSEA*). The items, their descriptive statistics, validity and reliability are shown (Table II).

$\chi^2/df$ , is the ratio of minimum discrepancy to degrees of freedom. The  $\chi^2/df$  was  $<3$ , in passive and aggressive styles, and  $<5$  in assertive style. In all other constructs, it was  $>5$ , the cut-off limit. Because of the sensitivity of  $\chi^2$  to sample size, the other fit indices were calculated. The *GFI* is analogous to  $R^2$  in multiple regressions. *CFI* indicates the overall fit of the model relative to a null model and *NFI* adjusts for the complexity of the model. Only for passive and aggressive styles, the *CFI*, *GFI*, and *NFI* were above 0.90, the cut-off limit. For assertive style, the *CFI* and *NFI* were close to 0.80, although the *GFI* was above 0.90. For other constructs, the *CFI*, *GFI*, and *NFI* were 0.80 or above it. The parsimonious fit measures were above 0.50 for all the constructs. *RMSEA* indicates the approximation of the observed model to the true model. The lower the *RMSEA*, the better is the model. The *RMSEA* of passive and aggressive styles were well within the cut-off limit of 0.08. The *RMSEA* of assertive style was equal to 0.08. For all other constructs, the *RMSEAs* were around 0.10.

## Results

The Pearson correlations among studied variables are given (Table III). Because the data were collected from ten private organisations, the intercorrelations among studied variables were estimated for each organisation. The visual inspect of the correlations suggested that they were not widely apart from one organisation to another and therefore, the data of ten organisations were clubbed together. Taken together, the correlations suggested that an increase in assertive communication style of supervisors decreased passive and aggressive styles. Also, the assertive communication style of supervisors increased the PSS whereas the passive and aggressive styles decreased PSS. So also, increase in PSS led to increase in communication satisfaction and organisation-based self-esteem of employees. Higher communication satisfaction also increased job performance and affective commitment of employees but it did not relate to continuance commitment and absenteeism. Moreover, organisation-based self-esteem enhanced job performance and affective commitment, but did not relate to continuance commitment and absenteeism. Only affective commitment increased continuance commitment and decreased absenteeism. All these reported relations were in hypothesised direction except the relationships of communication satisfaction and organisation-based self-esteem with continuance commitment and absenteeism.

The bidirectional correlations ( $x \leftrightarrow y$ ) do not reveal the relationship between antecedents and consequences. To reveal the antecedent-consequence relationships, the latent variable structural equation modelling (LVSEM) was used to analyse the data and test the propositions. The LVSEM tests the complex relationships of multiple independent and dependent variables in a single analysis. It incorporates measurement model as well as structural relationships. It controls for measurement errors: random error and systematic error. Random errors of each construct were isolated using

**Table III.**  
Correlations between the  
studied variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Passive style	1.00	0.47**	-0.22**	-0.30**	-0.14**	-0.09	-0.10	-0.23**	0.15**	0.13**
Aggressive style	1.00	-0.34**	-0.54**	-0.43**	-0.30**	-0.13**	-0.44**	0.01	0.16**	
Assertive style			1.00	0.50**	0.50**	0.37**	0.21**	0.29**	0.14**	0.05
Supervisory support		1.00	0.67**	0.41**	0.18**	0.43**	-0.03	-0.09		
Communication satisfaction		1.00	0.53**	0.25**	0.34**	0.05	0.00			
Self-esteem				1.00	0.41**	0.25**	0.06	0.05		
Job performance						1.00	1.00	0.02	-0.03	0.06
Affective commitment							1.00	0.02		
Continuance commitment						1.00	0.18**	-0.16**		
Absenteeism							1.00	0.02		1.00

**Note:** \*\* $p < 0.01$

confirmatory factor analysis. Systematic errors occur due to factors like social desirability, common method bias, and response biases. This was controlled statistically using LVSEM with all the indicators loading on the latent factor (see Figure 2).

In accordance with the perception of employees, passive and assertive communication styles of supervisors increased PSS to employees whereas aggressive communication style decreased PSS. Supporting the first hypothesis, it can be observed from the standardised regression weights that assertive

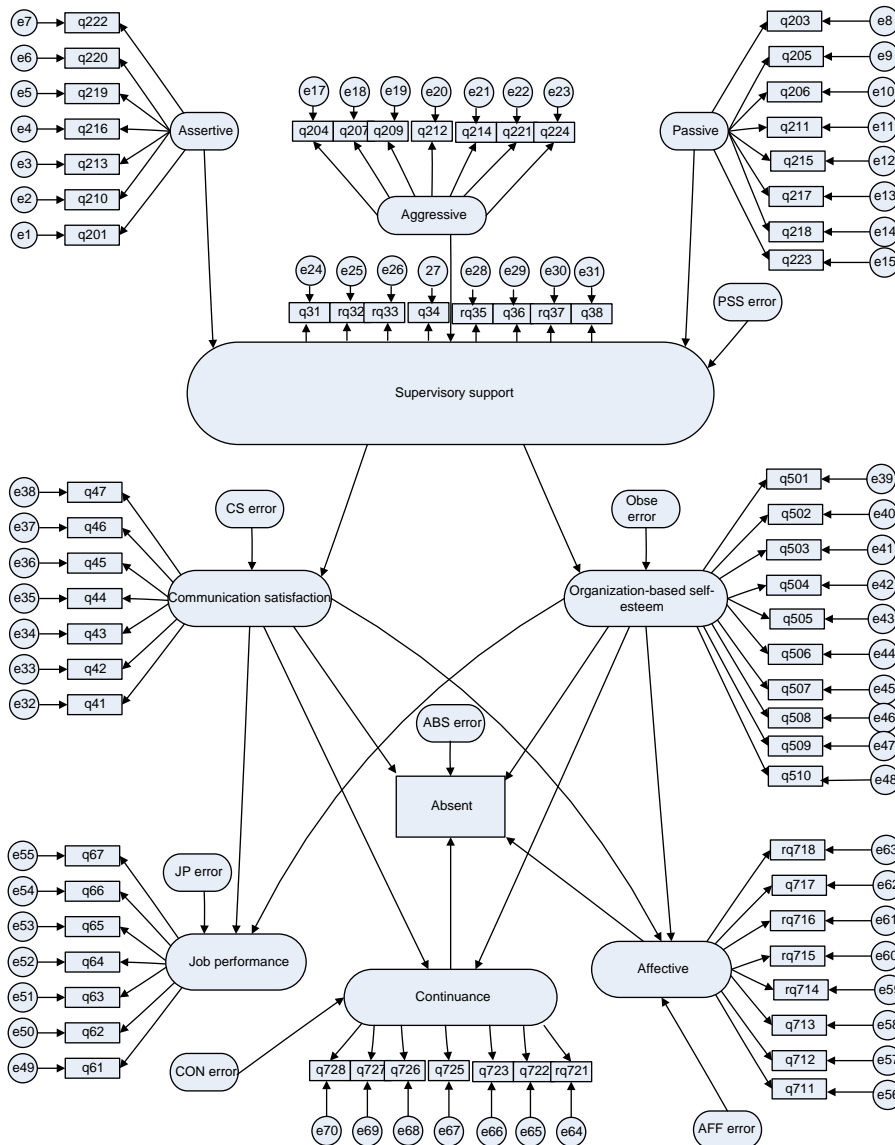


Figure 2. LVSEM of hypothesised relations



communication style of supervisors increased more PSS to employees compared to passive communication style (Table IV).

PSS to employees increased employees' satisfaction with supervisors' communication as well as increased employees' organisation-based self-esteem. These findings supported the second hypothesis. Supporting the third hypothesis, employees' satisfaction with supervisory communication increased employees' affective commitment, but did not influence their job performance, continuance commitment, and absenteeism rates as hypothesised. Supporting the fourth hypothesis, employees' organisation-based self-esteem furthered their job performance, but could impact neither employees' affective and continuance commitments nor their absenteeism rates. Supporting the fifth hypothesis, employees' affective commitment to their organisations decreased their absenteeism rates. However, their continuance commitment did not impact their absenteeism rates (see Figure 3). About 88.8 per cent of employees surveyed for this study did not report any absenteeism.

Deleting the non-significant paths, a parsimonious model was developed. The parsimonious model reaffirmed that assertive communication style of supervisors was positively associated with PSS to employees. PSS to employees increased employees' satisfaction with communication of their supervisors at the workplace and enhanced employees' organisation-based self-esteem. While the communication satisfaction increased the affective commitment of employees, the affective commitment decreased their absenteeism. The increased organisation-based self-esteem increased employees' job performance (Table IV).

The hypothesised and parsimonious models were compared on fit measures (Table V). The  $\chi^2$  in both the models were significant. Because of the sensitivity of  $\chi^2$  to sample size, the  $\chi^2/df$  were computed. The  $\chi^2$  in both the models were less than the cut-off limit of 3 (Bentler, 1990; Bollen, 1989), suggesting that the models were acceptable. So also, the *RMSEA* in both the models were less than the cut-off range of 0.08, suggesting the similarity between observed and model-implied covariance matrix (Table VI).

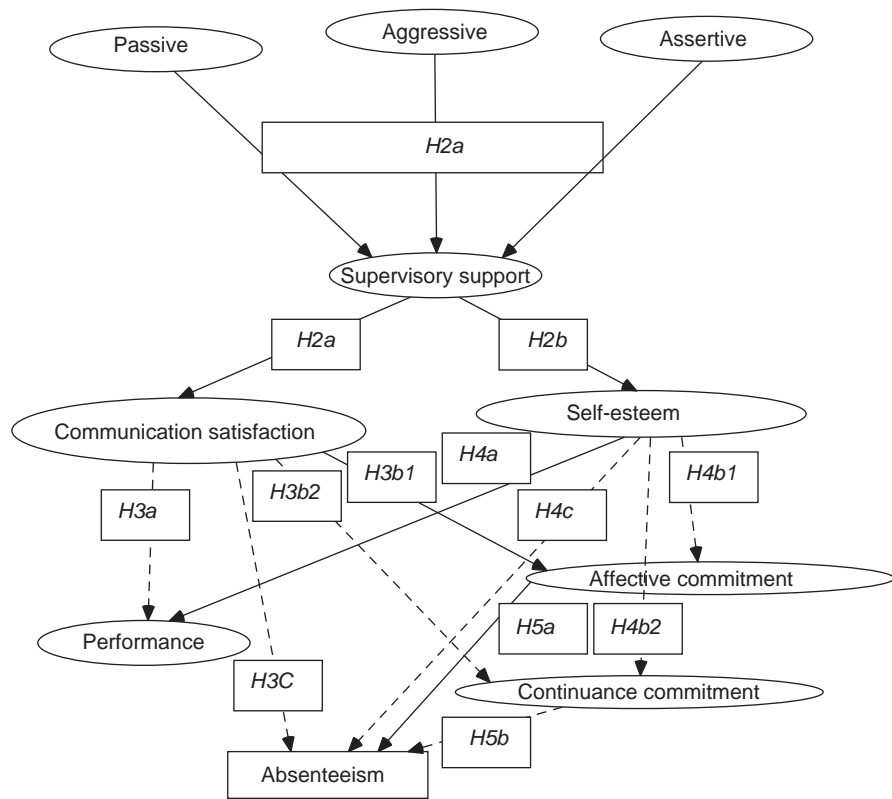
The measures of *CFI* and *GFI* were around 0.80 but the minimum fit was achieved in both the models. The parsimonious fit indices of these measures (*PCFI* and *PGFI*) that were less sensitive to sample size also favoured both the models. Because the non-significant paths were deleted in the parsimonious model, the parsimonious fit indices somehow increased in the parsimonious model compared to the hypothesised model. The fit indices of both the model were not widely apart but the parsimonious model had somehow better fit than the hypothesised model because the non-significant paths were eliminated.

## Discussion

This study examines the relationship of managers and employees through the lens of social exchange theory and organisation support theory. Studying a cross-section of 400 employees from ten manufacturing private organisations in India, the results reveal that managers communicate in passive, aggressive, and assertive styles. While assertive style of communication of superiors compared to passive style lends more support to employees, aggressive style decreases PSS. PSS at the workplace enhances employees' satisfaction with communication of supervisors and their organisation-based self-esteem. Satisfaction with communication fosters a strong emotional bond with organisations and the emotional bond with the organisation reduces employees'

Hypothesis	Paths	Path coefficients			SE	CR	Proposition
		UST	ST	ST			
<i>H1a</i>	Supervisory support	←	0.37	0.34	0.09	4.36***	Supported
<i>H1b</i>	Supervisory support	←	-0.33	-0.33	0.08	-4.13***	Supported
<i>H1c</i>	Supervisory support	←	1.22	0.82	0.18	6.80***	Supported
<i>H2a</i>	Communication satisfaction	←	0.79	0.92	0.07	11.07***	Supported
<i>H2b</i>	Self-esteem	←	0.43	0.65	0.05	9.22***	Supported
<i>H3a</i>	Job performance	←	-0.01	-0.01	0.06	-0.21	Refuted
<i>H3b(1)</i>	Affective commitment	←	0.61	0.83	0.10	6.03***	Supported
<i>H3b(2)</i>	Continuance commitment	←	-0.00	-0.00	0.06	-0.03	Refuted
<i>H3c</i>	Absenteeism	←	-0.01	-0.01	0.07	-0.95	Refuted
<i>H4a</i>	Job performance	←	0.63	0.51	0.08	7.52***	Supported
<i>H4b(1)</i>	Affective commitment	←	0.10	0.10	0.07	1.40	Refuted
<i>H4b(2)</i>	Continuous commitment	←	0.09	0.10	0.08	1.19	Refuted
<i>H4c</i>	Absenteeism	←	-0.42	0.11	0.25	1.67	Refuted
<i>H5a</i>	Absenteeism	←	-0.57	-0.19	0.25	-2.32**	Supported
<i>H5b</i>	Absenteeism	←	0.18	0.05	0.22	0.84	Refuted

**Notes:** UST, unstandardised path coefficients; ST, standardised path coefficients; SE, standard error; CR, critical ratio. \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.005$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$



**Figure 3.**  
Paths showing the  
hypothesised relations

**Notes:** ——— Significant paths; - - - - - non-significant paths

absenteeism rates. Employees' organisation-based self-esteem furthers their job performance. Eight employees from three organisations also shared their experiences at the workplace related to happiness and superior performance, unhappiness, and inferior performance. The narrations reveal that employees prefer to work and stay in organisations where supervisors communicate openly with subordinates, treat them with respect/recognition, minimise the difference between superior-subordinate relationships, and create a congenial environment in which subordinates/employees can develop and use their abilities. Though the narrations of the employees did not specify the variables outlined in the quantitative study, the broad themes reinforce each other.

In India, success in organisations largely depends on relationship building. Indian culture emphasises on interdependence and mutual help. Interactions in the workplace serve to create and maintain work relationships among superiors and subordinates (Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010). The relations in terms of affection (*sneh*) and deference (*shradha*) entail affective reciprocity. Work is performed diligently as part of a *sneh-shradha* relationship between employees and their nurturant superiors (Sinha, 2002). The communication style of managers play key role in building relationships with employees. The superior-subordinate relationship embodies just and fair human

Hypothesis	Paths		Path coefficients			
			UST	ST	SE	CR
H <sub>1a</sub>	Supervisory support	← Passive style	0.37	0.34	0.09	4.36***
H <sub>1b</sub>	Supervisory support	← Aggressive style	-0.33	-0.33	0.08	-4.13***
H <sub>1c</sub>	Supervisory support	← Assertive style	1.22	0.82	0.18	6.80***
H <sub>2a</sub>	Communication satisfaction	← Supervisory Support	0.79	0.92	0.07	11.07***
H <sub>2b</sub>	Self-esteem	← Supervisory Support Communication	0.43	0.65	0.05	9.22***
H <sub>3b(1)</sub>	Affective commitment	← satisfaction	0.62	0.84	0.10	6.04***
H <sub>4a</sub>	Job performance	← Self-esteem Affective commitment	0.64	0.52	0.08	7.60***
H <sub>5a</sub>	Absenteeism	← commitment	-0.58	-0.20	0.25	-2.33**

**Notes:** UST, unstandardised path coefficients; ST, standardised path coefficients; SE, standard error; CR, critical ratio. \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.005$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

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**Table V.**  
Path-coefficients of  
parsimonious model

	$\chi^2/df$	CFI	GFI	PCFI	PGFI	RMSEA
Acceptable threshold levels	3.0	$\geq 0.90$	$\geq 0.90$	$\geq 0.50$	$\geq 0.50$	$\leq 0.08$
Hypothesised model	2.00	0.80	0.78	0.73	0.70	0.05
Parsimonious model	1.90	0.83	0.80	0.77	0.72	0.05

**Table VI.**  
Fit measures  
of two models

relations. Indian employees tend to be in supportive relationship with those superiors whom they love and trust.

All organisational activities occur in the context of interpersonal relationships. Obligations are generated through a series of interactions between parties who are in a state of reciprocal interdependence. Workplace relationships develop over time and they can deteriorate as well (Sias, 2009). Consequently, effective managerial communication can increase PSS. Although both passive and assertive managers are found to support employees and make trustworthy relationships, the level of support from assertive managers is found to be much higher than passive managers. Passive managers may be able to maintain positive relationships but they can be indecisive, poor mentors, and uninspiring. Employees working for a passive manager may find it hard to gain support for their ideas and initiatives and be uncertain about where their focus should be. Passive managers may not be able to represent their employees' needs and concerns at senior level. On the other hand, assertive managers consider the rights and needs of everybody. They are able to support and connect employees, both rationally and emotionally. Due to open and honest approach, they have the ability to provide guidance to their employees to get the job done while commanding respect. Accordingly, assertive managers have extended more support to employees compared to passive managers. One employee expressed his happiness and satisfaction as follows:

I was told to look after the maintenance of all motors of the 2 × 10 MW captive power plant. I felt very happy and proceeded with the work. There were some hiccups midway but with the able support of my manager and my teammates, the work could be handled well. I would like to work with my supervisor for my entire life.

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Conversely, aggressive managers due to their harsh behaviour and selfishness could not maintain positive relationships with their employees. Here is a complaint reported by an employee:

Our manager is very arrogant. For simple mistakes he would bash us like anything. Once, he scolded me very badly in front of my peers for not signing the daily log book. Almost every employee is fed up with his harsh language. The situation became so bad that when we got the news of his transfer, we celebrated by having a party at a restaurant.

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Communication satisfaction is a socio-emotional outcome resulting from communication interactions (Gray and Laidlaw, 2004). Supportive communications of supervisors build relationships and increase employees' communication satisfaction (Madlock, 2008). The more the supervisor communicates support to employees, the more satisfied are employees with the communication of their supervisors because their needs are met. Also, evidence suggests that managerial support plays a major role in the development of employees' organisation-based self-esteem (Gardner and Pierce, 2011; Pierce *et al.*, 1989). Superiors' styles that are perceived to be more supportive can enhance employees' scope for decision making and help developing a sense of job autonomy (Peccei and Rosenthal, 2001). The experience of being valued by immediate supervisor and being treated fairly increases one's feeling of self-worth in the context of work. The recognition and respect to an employee as a person and not as a mere wage earner creates a psychologically healthy workplace. One of the employees reported:

My supervisor has great faith in me. Whenever there is an emergency, he would call me. Three months ago, when there was a major plant breakdown, he invited my suggestions. It really feels great to work with such a supervisor.

While evidence supports that satisfaction with the supervisory communication at the work place increases employees' performance (Orpen, 1997; Soonhee, 2002), other evidence contradicts it (Kennedy *et al.*, 2001). An Indian grows up in a family system, where family ties and a sense of belongingness are fostered. Most of the Indian employees, accordingly, value emotional bonds and long-term relationships. Communication satisfaction fulfills the intrinsic needs of employees and hence binds them emotionally with organisations. This is due to the reciprocation of positive regard and caring. It is possible that an employee's level of continuance commitment could be high in spite of dissatisfaction with managers' communication. This is because the employee might not have any other employment alternatives or might experience a significant financial loss (e.g. pension benefits), if s/he wishes to quit the organisation. Also, communication satisfaction does not influence the job performance of employees. Just fulfilling the intrinsic needs of employees through interpersonal communication may not be sufficient for their better performance.

Job performance not only relates to employees' competency and their attitudes towards work (Pierce *et al.*, 1989) but also their recognition in workplace (Pierce and Gardner, 2009). When supervisors show confidence and trust in their employees, employees experience personal worth and this motivates them to perform at a higher level. Swami Vivekananda emphasised the importance of self-esteem to awaken Indians against the British rule, by saying that man is the infinite dreamer dreaming finite dreams (cited in Bahl, 2000). Positive expectations produce positive results. The implication of the "Pygmalion effect" (Livingston, 1988) in the workplace enables employees to excel in response to the manager's message that they are capable of success and expected to succeed. The Pygmalion effect can also undermine employees'

performance when self-worth in the organisational context and superiors' expectations are opposite.

By setting and communicating high performance expectations, managers motivate employees to perform at a higher level. Employees feel valued when they are taken seriously. Given the chance to prove, most of the Indian employees love to work and contribute their share as it gives them the ultimate satisfaction. Literature suggests that supervisors' willingness to listen, showing confidence in employees, and encouraging participation of employees enhance employees' self-esteem that translates into organisational commitment (Gaertner, 1999; Silverthorne, 2004). Contrary to the literature, self-esteem is not found to influence employees' commitment to organisations. When employees are trusted and offered challenging work, their enhanced self-esteem may trigger the scope of job switching and better job in another organisation.

Low opportunities and unpleasant work environments discourage employees to come to work (Aamodt, 2004; Villegas and Cervený, 2004). One employee reported thus:

My supervisor unnecessarily fires me and that too in front of my juniors. Once, I felt so humiliated that I did not attend the workplace for two to three days. O God! Just change my supervisor or I'll have to leave this job!

This expression supports the cliché that "Employees leave the boss but not the organisation". On the other hand, positive pushers in work environment like constructive feedback, trust, and guidance encourage employees to attend their work regularly (Blau, 1986). When absenteeism was critically examined, satisfaction with communication of supervisors and organisation-based self-esteem did not influence employees' absenteeism rates. This may be due to the reason that employees might not have taken leave without permission due to the severe consequences they might have to face including pay cut, losing jobs, etc. This is clearly evident from the self-reported absenteeism rates. About 89 per cent of employees had not taken any leave in the previous year.

Employees who identify themselves with the organisational goals feel positive about their organisations and wish to remain in those organisations. Only employees' positive attachment with organisations enhances their regularity and reduces absenteeism. While prior studies suggest that organisational commitment decreases absenteeism (Savery *et al.*, 1998), an interesting observation in this study is that, the continuance commitment of employees does not influence their regularity at the workplace.

## Conclusion

Indian culture is ancient yet continuously living and evolving. Society appears to be in a period of major transition toward power equalisation. Although collectivism and humane orientation continue to be the most important characteristics of Indian culture, there is an increasing preference for individualism (Chhokar *et al.*, 2007). Indians may value hierarchy, maintain power distance but like freedom and friendliness. In his famous book, "Development as Freedom", Amartya Sen considers freedom as the primary element of development (cited in O'Hearn, 2009). Most of the Indian employees value freedom and respect and seek for their dignity.

Supervisors/organisations and employees exchange not only impersonal resources such as money, but also socio-emotional resources such as approval, respect, recognition, and support (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2001). The exchange relationship between

them often goes beyond economic exchange and includes social exchange. In this study, the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and organisational support theory have been applied to describe the socio-emotional and psychological processes underlying employees' attitudes and behaviours. The concept of PSS which refers to the extent to which supervisors on behalf of organisations value their employees' contributions and care about their well-being has been used to describe the social exchange relationship between the supervisors/organisations and the employees. Because the supervisors act as agents of the organisations, the treatment employees receive from supervisors tends to contribute to employees' perceptions of the support they receive from organisations. Once employees assess the supervisory support they receive, they act in accordance with a norm of reciprocity. This study suggests that an open, honest, and need-based communication can increase PSS that can foster communication satisfaction and organisation-based self-esteem. Communication satisfaction can increase affective commitment that can decrease absenteeism and organisation-based self-esteem can boost their job performance.

A scale is developed to measure the communication styles of managers as perceived by the employees. The role of managerial communication styles in fostering PSS can meet the need for a more relationship-based approach in human resource management literature.

The findings of the study can be placed under a theoretical framework. In accordance with the social exchange theory and organisation support theory, the quantitative study suggests that an assertive communication style of managers can increase PSS to employees. The elevated support can increase communication satisfaction and the organisation-based self-esteem of employees. While the former can increase the affective commitment of employees and reduce their absenteeism, the latter can improve their job performance.

### **Implications**

The study has practical implications for managers. Two sets of values – vertical collectivism and individualism coexist in Indian organisations (Sinha and Tripathi, 1994). Possibly, the existence of such contradictory sets of values demands assertive managers in Indian organisations. Organisations can conduct training programmes to develop assertive communication style in their supervisors to increase the support to subordinates, thereby its positive consequences will follow in increasing employees' performance and commitment and reducing absenteeism.

### **Limitations**

Though the study provides useful insights, it has certain limitations. First, data have been collected through self-reported questionnaire that are likely to be tainted with social desirability effects. Employees reporting daily to their supervisors might have overassessed their superiors and also their own attitudes and behaviours. Second, the observations made were limited to descriptions of what happened in private organisations in a few states in India. So caution must be exercised in generalising the findings to public sectors in the same or other states. Here, it is interesting to note that the ten private organisations from eastern India had similar range of employees with more or less similar structural hierarchy. The dynamism and the flexibility have enabled Indian culture to survive despite its diversities and heavy odds. Through these diversities run the unity of outlook that can be noticed from north to south and east to west. Though verbal communication changes at every region, the basic essence of

culture remains the same and so also the attitudes and behaviours of employees in Indian organisations.

### Agenda for future research

Because every investigation raises issues for further investigation, there is no dearth of scope for future research. First, research can be replicated in a sample of employees from public sectors. This will establish the external validity of results. Second, a comparative study can be made on the communication of male and female managers and their influence on employees' attitudes and behaviours. Third, future study can be conducted to measure performance more accurately through balanced scorecard or from performance appraisal records of organisations.

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