Psychosocial Demands at the workplace - Will it hamper self-directed learning in the IT sector?

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Abstract

Organizations have understood the importance of IT as an integral part of the infrastructure to thrive in the competitive market. Self-directed learning is the new flavour for the current workforce, with digital disruption happening in all the leading industries and companies. It is easy for learners to choose what they learn but some organizations find it difficult to convince them of their learning approach. On one hand, experts believe that there is a huge skill shortage and that sharing knowledge is very critical. On the other hand, for HR professionals, one of the biggest challenges is to get people to learn when they are not inclined toward learning. To add to it, nowadays employees believe in learning in their own way. It also makes them ready to battle any change in technology through such learning. It further aims to measure the level of self-directed learning in the IT sector. The overall aim of the research paper is to assess the Impact of social support, psychological demands, and Skill discretion on Self-directed learning.

1. Introduction

IT companies have constantly faced the challenge of skill updation in the last few decades. The industry terminates most of the employees for lack of skill upgradation. They have understood the importance of learning and tech-enabled learning as an integral part of thriving in the competitive market. With digital disruption happening, experts believe that there is a huge skill shortage and that sharing of knowledge is very critical. On the other hand, for HR professionals, one of the biggest challenges is to enable employees to learn, more so that their interest in learning is dwindling. To add to it, nowadays employees are also bombarded with a lot of opportunities to learn from different avenues both formal and informal. Learning in their own peace. It also makes them ready to battle any change in technology through such learning. Self- directed learning is the new panacea for the current workforce grappling with skill deficits. Self-directed learning is the future of workplace training, and that's a good thing: it's decentralized, flexible, and a good fit for our new digital normal. But leaving learners to fend for themselves in a sea of training content is a recipe for failure, both for the employee and for the organization. Self-Directed Learning develops when employees take the initiative for their learning, recognize needs, formulate goals, identify resources, implement appropriate strategies and evaluate learning outcomes (Lucia Cadorin,2016). According to LinkedIn's Workplace Learning Report, 74% of learners want the freedom to take training courses during their spare time, at their own pace. Self-directed learning might sound like a hands-off affair, but that isn't the case. If companies give their employees more ownership over their training, it is on the right track. But without a solid L&D infrastructure, freedom quickly crumbles into confusion and aimlessness. Researchers often assume that an individualist orientation influences learning preferences and outcomes (Hudson and Ramamoorthy, 2009). According to Peter (2000), there will be greater emphasis placed on the ability to learn and to continue to learn independently and autonomously. To make self-directed learning work, L&D must support it with the right tools, culture, and systems. Employees' self-directed learning ability is influenced by several factors like psychological demand, social support, and Skill discretion.

Through the Adoption of self-directed learning, the IT service sector can withstand the fast change in technology. Skill upgradation should take place by itself, many layoffs and terminations on due to skill shortages are expected to reduce. In this paper, the researcher has researched on the factors that influence Self-directed learning in an organization.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Background

By Goal setting theory (Edwin Locke,1960), goals indicate and give directions to an employee what needs to be done and how much effort is needed to achieve it. Upskilling to new changing technological demands are the most important aspects of sustaining and career development in the IT sector. It is the employee's responsibility to set their goal on learning new things which they believe would make good progress in their career life. Their goal should be specific, very clear, realistic, and attainable. Self-efficiency and Goal-commitment are two most vital elements that an employee must stick on to touch the achievement. Factors like Psychological demands, Skill discretion, and Social support influence once self-directed learning behavior. Those attribute relationships are discussed below. Employees' willingness to commit to self- directed learning depends on the current psychological demands. Higher levels of commitment help in the achievement of the goals. The next component clarity in work is related to skill discretion of how they use current skills to improve skills indicating better clarity on job skills and clarity in using it to progress. Likewise social support by superiors and peers helps employees stick to their goal of learning which will uplift their career progress.

2.2. Skill Discretion

Skill discretion means an individual's chance to get and use particular job skills while doing work (Karasek RA,1979). Skill discretion among job resources is construed as those facets of the work conditions that aid in job goals and decrease stipulations of job and the connected psychological expenses. Skill discretion does not mean only the chance to use skills, but also to the method of gaining knowledge of different aspects and possessing creativity (Viotti, Sara; Converso, Daniela,2016). Skill discretion is related to the chance to get to know about and grow the skills at the workplace (Burr, Hermann; Müller, Grit; Rose, Uwe; Formazin, Maren; Clausen, Thomas; et al,2021). Skill discretion implies the set of skills that are useful for the job.

2.3. Social Support

Social support points to a psychological idea that arises from physical assistance given because of communication among people, groups of people, people belonging to a sect, or a company (Heaney and Israel 2008). Social support originates from social support theory that demonstrates the consequences of reactions, actions, and a person's perceptions leading to social relationships (Crocker and Canevello 2008; Lakey and Cohen 2000). Social support has been defined by a few researchers as the perception of aid that people receive as involvement, mobilization, and support(emotional and informational) from different individuals within their connections. A feeling of closeness, admiration and care that results in them evolving a consumer's point of view is meant by social support (Shanmugam et al.2016; Bolger and Amarel 2007). Past research has proved that social support (emotional and informational) leads to trustworthiness by getting other people's advice (Liang et al. 2011; Hajli et al.2015a).

2.4. Psychological Demands

Psychological demand is connected with "how hard workers work"(mental workload; Meshkati, Hancock, & Rahami, 1990) and company's restrictions on work completion and clashing needs. It is construed as "favourable" and "unfavorable" reactions from the communal setting which assist or hamper contiguous procedures in an individual's progress" (B. J. Biddle,1986). Psychological demands are like the view of social pressure and anticipation, which are outside things that pressurize a person to conduct oneself in a particular way or to embrace a specific character (L. E. Sullivan,2009). Social pressure is related to the extent of intuitive opinions held by individuals around a person which influences him/her to conduct themselves in a particular manner (Kurniati Rahayuni,2018). Supposition and aspirations could be denied by a particular individual also, which possibly results in psychological demand for the person. Social pressure, suppositions, and aspiration are closely connected to the view of the role, and social situation possessed by a person in a firm (B. J. Biddle,1986).

2.5. Self-Directed learning

Self-Directed learning delivers a propitious new area for executives since it permits individuals to design their own knowledge-gaining endeavors around their particular desires. It is an adult education methodology that displaces the control point for learning from the person who trains to another person (Stefanie L.Boyer,2012). Its victory originates from enabling the employee to take care of his/her individual learning action and attitude, and side by side permitting the employee's boss to find out how well an employee's knowledge meets the company's goals. It is a method to boost learning in the company by deputing the training process to the lower level and instructing every employee to manage their professional progress within rules framed by the bosses (Stefanie L. Boyer,2012). Self-directed learning signifies a person's self- determination, self-authority, and individual progress with regard to gaining knowledge (Zhou et al., 2018). Due to an employee's unique work needs and individual features, self-directed learning has been advised as another method. In order to productively attain a company's aims, SDL can be utilized to customize employee training and development (Stefanie L.Boyer,2012). Self-directed learning fosters features of keenness to carry out like victory and proficiency targets, individual stimulus, and high self-belief to achieve specific goals in the knowledge-gaining process (Jennings-Arey, 2020).

3. Hypothesis

According to Efklides (2017), emotions, such as relief and contentment, can have a favorable impact on learning behaviors (Pekun,2002). The control-value theory of Pekrun predicts that when employees use self-directed learning strategies, their confidence levels would rise (Pekuren,2007) The three psychological states of a job incumbent—meaningfulness of the work performed, work outcomes responsibilities, and knowledge of the results of the work performed—is purported to be fostered by the job design and are associated with successful outcomes.

H1: Psychological demands have a positive impact on self-directed learning.

A job resource called skill discretion gives employees control over their work, aids in coping with expectations, and as a result, helps maintain job well-being and lowers stress levels. (Karasek RA,1979). The possibility to learn and advance one's skills while working is the focus of skill discretion (Burr, Hermann; Müller, Grit; Rose, Uwe; Formazin, Maren; Clausen,

Thomas; et al.,2021). When the new skill is used, learning takes place. When an employee recognizes that his or her performance isn't meeting the needs of both the employee and others, self-directed learning is needed.

H2: Skill discretion has a positive impact on self-directed learning.

This is social support (associated with work), by which we mean having positive relationships with coworkers, being able to rely on others, getting correct information from others, and receiving real assistance, understanding, and attention when issues arise (de Jonge & Dormann, 2003). One's freedom to investigate things will, to a significant extent, depend on how coworkers assist one another and how one's superiors demonstrate their comprehension; as a result, self-directed learning occurs. When there is a balance between high job demands, high job control, and strong social support, workplace self-directed learning is predicted to benefit the most from these conditions. According to Schaufeli et al., strong social support has a bigger overall impact on workplace learning behavior (Self-directed learning) than all other factors combined (2003).

H3: Social Support has a positive impact on self-directed learning.

4. Methodology

The study followed a Relational or correlational research design, and tries to assess psychosocial demands at workplace with self directed learning behaviour. According to IBEF (India Brand Equity Foundation), India is the topmost offshoring destination for It companies across the world. It is expected to grow to US$19.93 billion by 2025. To collect samples, we have selected top 10 IT companies which are listed by hindustan times with a combined population of 19,05,561 employees. We have considered IT parks from top cities like Chennai, Hyderabad, Cochin, Bangalore and Noida for collecting data. Self-directed learning will help employees sustain in the fast growing technological market and help in career enhancement. It would also help in enriching quality of life and workplace culture. The sampling method used is Stratified random sampling. 10 Top IT companies at selected IT hubs were contacted for collecting data through the structured questionnaire, out of which 196 respondents have participated in the research study.

4.1. Measures

4.1.1. Skill discretion of IT employee

Skill discretion does not mean only the chance to use skills, but also to the method of gaining knowledge of different aspects and of possessing creativity (Viotti, Sara; Converso, Daniela,2016). Skill discretion is related to the chance to get to know about and grow the skills at the workplace (Burr, Hermann; Müller, Grit; Rose, Uwe; Formazin, Maren; Clausen, Thomas; et al,2021). Some sample statements used for measurement include "my job requires me to be creative", and" my job requires me to assimilate new knowledge" will voice their opinion and exhibit their quality in that construct. The scale is adopted from Robert Karasek (2013). The statements were measured on 5 points scale (1-Strongly Disagree to 5-Strongly Agree).

4.1.2. Psychological Demands of IT employee

Psychological demands are things that pressurize a person to conduct oneself in a particular way or to embrace a specific character (L. E. Sullivan,2009). Social pressure is related to the

extent of intuitive opinions held by individuals around a person which influences him/her to conduct themselves in a particular manner (Kurniati Rahayuni,2018). Some sample statements used for measurement include "I'm exposed to conflicting demands from others","my job requires long periods of intense concentration" will voice their opinion and exhibit their quality in psychological demands. The scale is adopted from Robert Karasek(2013).

4.1.3. Social Support among IT Employees

Social support has been defined by a few researchers as the perception of aid that people receive as involvement, mobilization, and support (emotional and informational) from different individuals within their connections. A feeling of closeness, admiration and care that results in them evolving a consumer's point of view is meant by social support (Shanmugam et al.2016; Bolger and Amarel 2007). Some sample statements used for measurement include "I am sufficiently informed of what is happening in work","Aggressiveness is rare among my colleagues and me" will voice their opinion and exhibit their quality in social support. The scale is adopted from Robert Karasek(2013).

4.1.4. Self-directed learning among IT Employees

Self-directed learning signifies a person's self-determination, self-authority, and individual progress with regard to gaining knowledge(Zhoc et al., 2018). Due to an employee's unique work needs and individual features, self-directed learning has been advised as another method. It is an adult education methodology that displaces the control point for learning from the person who trains to another person (Stefanie L.Boyer,2012). The self-directed learning questionnaire includes statements used for measurement including "I am sufficiently informed of what is happening in work", "Aggressiveness is rare among my colleagues and me" is used to will voice their opinion and exhibit their quality in self-directed learning. The scale is adopted from Robert Karasek(2013).

Other general demographic data such as Gender, Marital status, Salary range, Designation level, and nearest place of work were collected.

This design does not collect any official data, Name, or company name to ensure the reliability of the data.

5. Results and Discussions

5.1. Reliability and Validity

In order to measure the construct most of the social researchers preferably use reflective indicators. The variances are then measured by the indicators, which is called indicator reliability. Using a bivariate Pearson correlation between the indicator and the construct, the indicator loading is squared to calculate the variance explained. By 0.78 of the indicators, loading is suggested by social studies research. The indicator value of 0.40 is considered a low- value loading by which it is removed from the measurement model.

The next step to assess the internal consistency reliability is the reflective measurement model. This is an attempt to quantify how closely related the components of one construct are to one another. A value between 0.6-0.7 is considered excellent for exploratory studies. A value above
0.7 is suitable for the research studies, but not more than 0.9 is calculated as problematic.

5.2. Internal Consistency (Reliability)

.	SS	P	SD	SDL
SS1	0.746			
SS2	0.839			
SS3	0.709			
SS4	0.834			
SS5	0.755			
SS6	0.525			
SS7	0.675			
P1		0.842		
P2		0.79		
P3		0.787		
P4		0.794		
P5		0.86		
P6		0.845		
P7		0.835		
P8		0.749		
P9		0.787		

SD1			0.827	
SD2			0.822	
SD3			0.653	
SD4			0.838	
SD5			0.856	
SDL1				0.669
SDL2				0.719
SDL3				0.541
SDL4				0.606
SDL5				0.694
SDL6				0.822
SDL7				0.695
SDL8				0.562
SDL9				0.525
SDL10				0.677

5.3. Convergent Validity

The convergent validity is measured based on the test of reliability. This is an understanding of how well the construct congregates to explain the variance of the items in the units. The Average Variance Explained (AVE) metric, which is calculated as the sum of the squared loadings of the construct's elements, is used to gauge this. The acceptance rate of AVE is above

0.50. The higher rate of AVE is considered an indicator of construct that explains 50% of the variance. It means the items make up the construct (Hair et al., 2022).

5.4. Discriminant Validity

The discriminant validity is to be measured for the measurement model. Discriminant validity is the degree to which one construct is empirically distinct/different from the other constructs. Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion is used as the traditional measure of the outcomes. They are included in the table's brackets since they have some drawbacks, according to Henseler According to et al. (2015), the heterotrait monotrait ratio (HTMT Criterion) is a superior alternative strategy of correlations (HTMT).

	SS	PD	SD	SDL
SS	(0.733)			
P	-0.018	(0.811)		
SD	0.414	0.125	(0.803)	
SDL	0.477	0.341	0.396	(0.657)
Note: Square roots of average variances extracted (AVEs) shown on diagonal.

5.5. Collinearity

The use of PLS-SEM is very crucial to format and eliminate any chance of collinearity. The variance inflation factor is used by most researchers to measure collinearity. If the VIF value is higher, it indicates higher collinearity, especially with a threshold of 5 and above. A value lesser than 3 is considered ideal.

Constructs	CR	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	VIF	R2	Adj R 2	Q Sqrd
SS	0.889	0.852	0.537	1.478			
P	0.945	0.934	0.657	1.191			
SD	0.9	0.859	0.645	1.29			
SDL	0.882	0.85	0.431	1.609	0.432	0.414	0.428

5.6. Results of Hypothesis testing
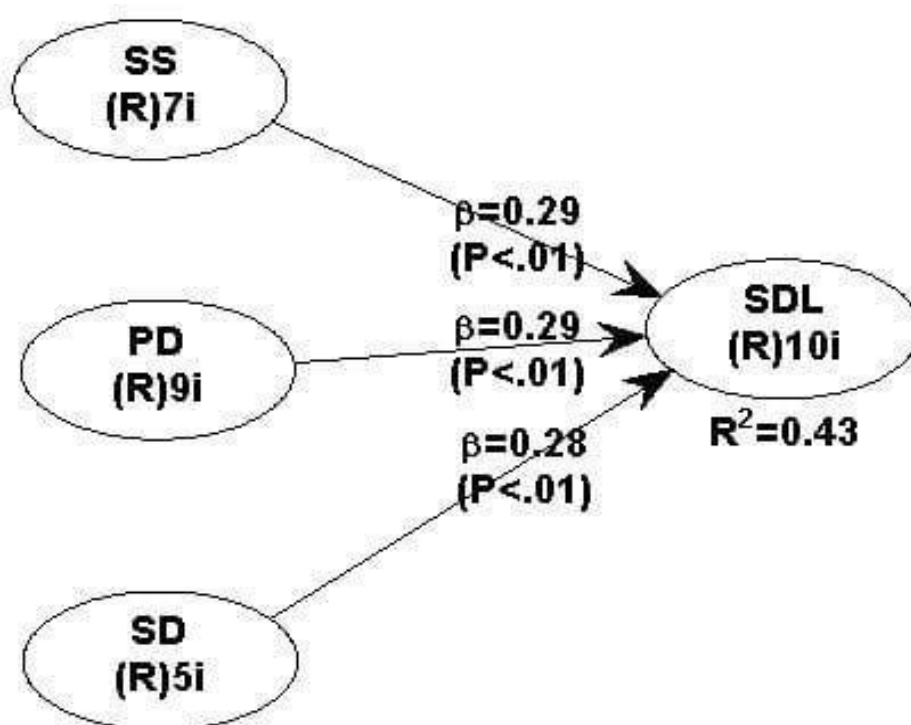
Hypothesis	Pathway	Path coefficient	T statistics	Sig	Hypothesis Supported /Rejected
H1	SS ->SDL	0.289	5.739	0.000	Supported
H2	P -> SDL	0.291	4.080	0.000	Supported
H2	S -> SDL	0.277	4.476	0.000	Supported

The above table contains the results of hypothesis testing for the three paths.

The first aspect is proving the psychological demands that influence Self-directed learning. The presence of Social support increases the behavior of self-directed learning in an individual in an organization. Skill discretion positively influences self-directed learning. The coefficient rates of 0.289,0.291,0.277 are indications of to influence of self-directed learning behavior. All the hypotheses were supported with a significance value of less than 0.01.

5.7. Testing for Goodness of Fit

The goodness of fit measurement includes the structural model. More than 1 measure to indicate the goodness of fit is indicated by the results of Warp PLS. The average path coefficient, R squared and Adjusted R Squared were all found to be crucial. The statistics of multicollinearity were within the stated limits. Tenenhaus Goodness of Fit the index was medium. The GoF results indices are depicted. All of the model fit indices and quality standardswere within acceptable ranges.

Result of Goodness of fit criteria

Goodness of fit and other criteria	Result	Acceptable Level
Average path coefficient (APC)	0.286	P<0.001
Average R-squared (ARS)	0.432	P<0.001
Average adjusted R-squared (AARS)	0.414	P<0.001
Average block VIF (AVIF)	1.296	acceptable if <= 5, ideally <= 3.3
Average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF)	1.392	acceptable if <= 5, ideally <= 3.3
Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)	0.495	small >= 0.1, medium >= 0.25, large >= 0.36
Sympson's paradox ratio (SPR)	1	acceptable if >= 0.7, ideally = 1
R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR)	1	acceptable if >= 0.9, ideally = 1
Statistical suppression ratio (SSR)	1	acceptable if >= 0.7
Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR)	1	acceptable if >= 0.7

6. Implications

6.1. Implications for Organisations

Organizations can build a greater workplace environment. It can facilitate team-building activities such as team outings, team lunches or dinners, and team trips. Firms can give awards and incentive prizes periodically to encourage performance. Firms can arrange sessions or workshops on future trends and in-demand skills in the market. Firms can facilitate free access to paid professional courses by which employees can have an opportunity to explore a wide field of learning. Any grievances should be addressed very quickly so that problems should get sorted as soon as possible to maintain peace work environment. A flat hierarchy should be maintained so that anyone should be able to connect with any level of employee to interact and build professional relations.

6.2. Implications for Employees/Bosses

Psychological demands are maintaining both interpersonal and emotional competencies in equilibrium. One has to build qualities such as Concentration, confidence, control, and Commitment. Every employee should set up an attainable goal and perceive it with self- determination. This will have constructive impacts on employee behavior which includes reducing stress and anxiety, increasing resilience, and promoting individual growth, well- being, and quality of work life. Creating positive relationships, and being humble and responsive will create good social support in the workplace. Managing your emotions with others will build a good relationship. Skill discretion can be increased by deploying all learnings into the workplace so that new learning occurs and the purpose for future learning is known. Good peer relationships will also help in increasing skill discretion in one's career learning path.

7. Conclusion

The objective of the study was to measure psychological demands, Skill discretion, and Social support and their impact on self-directed learning. It can be seen from the study that psychological demands and social support impact self-directed learning followed by Skill discretion. The work also highlights the implications of the above 3 constraints for improving self-directed learning. Organizations through these policy measures can adopt a practice of Self-directed learning. Managers can extend their support to employees to be lifelong learners. Leveraging coworkers' support through collective learning initiatives can improve self- directed learning using SMART goals which can enable employees to be focused on their learning initiatives.

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