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Leadership, Social Support and Work Influence: A Study of the Group Form of Working in a Swedish Psychiatric Hospital

Annika Lantz and Lucie Laflamme

Article abstract

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This paper studies leadership, conditions of influence and effectiveness in workplaces where a group form has been chosen. The study focuses on the interaction within work groups and between employees working in groups and their immediate superiors in a Swedish psychiatric hospital. Its aims are to investigate the effects of this interaction on degree of influence over work and on preconditions for working effectively. An attempt to achieve these aims is made by obtaining a more refined picture of the relation between superior and subordinate. The results show that there is a relationship between the support and opportunities for development that subordinates receive from their superior and the support that subordinates themselves give to their superior. Further, there are positive relationships between, on the one hand, the volume of exchange of social support and, on the other, personal work influence and preconditions for working effectively.

This paper studies leadership, conditions of influence and effectiveness in workplaces where a group form has been chosen. The aim of the investigation is to supplement previous research by shedding light on how the exchange of social support within work groups and between managers

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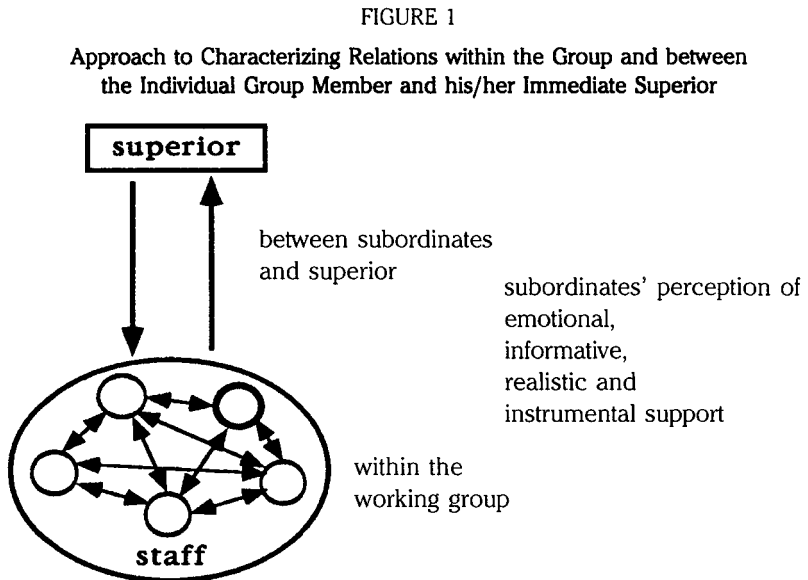
and staff is related to opportunities for exercising influence at work and performing occupational activities in a manner that is perceived as the most effective.

Working in groups has become increasingly common both in Sweden and throughout Europe. Since the early 1970s, Swedish industry has promoted the development of new work organization arrangements, in which the group form of working has been an important component. Moreover, working in groups became common in the health-care sector at an early stage. As well as being a means for the effective performance of work and a support for the individual group member, group-based work within certain caring organizations was also seen as serving an educational/treatment function. To be able to collaborate and to develop activities jointly came to constitute a new occupational demand that work imposed on the skills of personnel.

This study examines the interaction within work groups and between group members and their immediate superiors in a Swedish psychiatric hospital. The focus is on those aspects of interaction that have a supportive and developmental function for personnel. With regard to the nature of leadership, the introduction of a group organization that makes the social and professional skills development of personnel possible requires changes in forms of management. There is a need for a change from "planning/ controlling" to "supporting," involving a shift from directing operations to creating the preconditions for group working and the development of interaction between work groups.

The study offers a variegated picture of the relation between subordinate staff and their immediate superior, treating it as involving mutual "giving-and-taking" from the perspective of the subordinate. Thus, the relationship between subordinates and superior is described as both "top-down" and "bottom-up." This involves a shift in focus from the questions commonly addressed in this area, namely "What does my boss have to offer me?" and "Am I happy with what I get", to the questions "What am I offered and what do I have to offer?" and "Am I content with the interaction that we have jointly created?". The latter questions reflect a perspective which is demanding for both managers and staff, and imposes new demands at managerial level. Raising such questions involves a shift of focus from the performance of work to interaction, i.e., towards that which takes place in the space between individuals, between groups and between hierarchical levels. The interaction is described in terms of four dimensions of social support (see House 1981); (1) emotional support, which encompasses empathy, sympathy and caring; (2) informative support, which facilitates coping at work; (3) realistic support, in the form of evaluative feedback relevant to self-evaluation; (4) instrumental support, in terms of offering

good conditions for work performance. The model employed for the current study is presented in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1

Approach to Characterizing Relations within the Group and between the Individual Group Member and his/her Immediate Superior

The questions posed are as follows: (1) What is the nature of the relationship between the occupational support and opportunities for development that the group member/subordinate receives from his/her immediate superior and the support the subordinate provides to the superior? (2) What is the nature of the relationship between the exchange of support between subordinate and superior and the exchange of support within the work group? (3) Is there a relationship between the nature of exchange of social support between subordinate and immediate superior and the degree of personal work influence? (4) Is there a relationship between the nature of exchange of social support within the work group and the degree of personal work influence? (5) Is there a relationship between the nature of exchange of social support within the work group and the conception of how effectively work is organized in one's own department?

The reason for studying a psychiatric hospital lies in the fact that Swedish psychiatric care possesses a long tradition of teamwork; the nature of the work is such that, for a favourable work outcome to be achieved, personnel are dependent on what others perform. Psychiatric work imposes considerably greater demands for collaboration within work groups and between members of different occupational groups than is the case in occupations where individual group members stand in a relation of "chain"

dependence to each other. Also, in psychiatry, the ways in which person-
nel collaborate constitute a means for providing treatment. This imposes
further demands on their capacity to solve problems and handle conflicts,
both within groups of personnel and between personnel and care recipi-
ents. People involved in psychiatric care tend to express the matter as
follows: "The work stands and falls on how we work together."

Interaction within groups and between hierarchical levels gives rise to
two general questions concerning the nature of the relations involved: "In
terms of what qualities shall relations be described?"; and "What meaning
shall be given to the concept of inter-personal relations?". We start by
considering how these questions have been treated in the specialized literature.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Qualities of Relations

Looking back at how thinking on relational qualities has developed in
the occupational arena, two main dimensions can be identified: task direc-
tion and socioemotional support (Bales 1958). These dimensions under-
went a study process of differentiation in response to the findings of the
extensive research conducted over the last half-century. Major summaries
can be found in Hare (1976), Shaw (1981), McGrath and Kravitz (1992),
and Gist, Locke and Taylor (1987).

With regard to the qualities of leadership, more recent terminologies
show signs of a certain crystallization and refinement: task direction has
been supplemented by such concepts as production-centring, initiating struc-
ture, delegating, controlling and participating; socioemotional support by
consideration and personnel-centring.

Characteristic of the development is a more variegated approach to
one of the two main dimensions, namely task direction. This may have its
roots in the great interest shown in social-psychological research on leader-
ship by persons who direct responsibility have for business and production-
related problems (Westlander 1993). But, from a social and work-environmental
perspective, it is also important to develop the other main dimension, namely
socioemotional support.

A number of researchers (Payne and Jones 1987; Sarason and Sarason
1985; Shumaker and Brownell 1984; Wills 1985) have pointed to the need
to specify the qualities of social support in a more sophisticated manner. In
this regards House (1981), Thoits (1982), House and Kahn (1985), Buunk
(1990) and Macintosh (1991) have been major sources of inspiration. House
arrived at a number of conceptual dimensions, namely the emotional, the

informative, the realistic and the instrumental, which represent a refinement of the original model of social support presented by Bales in 1958. The current study builds on House's (1981) account so as to be able to describe perceived interaction both between members of task-oriented groups and between individual group members and their immediate superiors.

The Meaning of the Concept "Relation within Groups"

The composition of work groups and how they are demarcated in relation to their surrounding environment constitute one key aspect of the group form of working. Consideration of this aspect prompts the question of how a group is to be defined: as a collection of elements *without* specified interrelations, or as a structured assembly of elements *with* functional inter-relations? Similarly, the question arises of whether a work group is to be defined as an aggregate of a number of individuals, geographically separated on the basis of the work process, or as a number of individuals with mutual relations founded in the tasks they undertake (see reviews in Brewer and Kramer 1985; Messick and Mackie 1989; Sandelands and Clair 1993). We shall adopt the latter approach, in which questions of relations of dependence between group members become central.

In empirical research, complex interpersonal processes tend to be divided according to five levels: behaviour, emotions, norms, goals and values. Research in this area has been extensive.[1] Relations between group members are described in terms of "giving-and-taking" and as a "process of mutual influence." It seems self-evident that the concept of "relation," as it is used here, conforms to the standard dictionary definition, "the mode in which one thing or entity stands to another" (Websters 1978).

The Meaning of the Concept "Relation between Hierarchical Levels"

Leadership refers to one quality of the relation between subordinate and superior. The exchange between the parties can be described theoretically in terms of direction: solely "top-down", solely "bottom-up", or exchange in both directions. A major review of the literature[2] in the leadership arena was conducted on the basis of the question of direction: "How has

1. Extensive summaries can be found in Brewer and Kramer (1985), Hare (1976), Gist, Locke and Taylor (1987), McGrath and Kravitz (1992), Messick and Mackie (1989), Sandelands and Clair (1993) and Shaw (1981).

2. Searches were conducted in databases and by surveying articles published in the journals: the *Academy of Management Journal*, the *Academy of Management Review*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, the *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, the *Journal of Management and Personnel Psychology*, and the *Journal of Management Studies*. These searches were restricted to the period January 1990 to July 1994. A further survey was made of articles published in the *Annual Review of Psychology*, the *European Journal of Social*

the direction of the relation been examined in previous research?". The extensive research findings on how leaders affect organizational outcomes in other respects were excluded.

The review demonstrated that the bulk of the literature concerns questions of the kinds of leadership provided by managers, the work conditions these create, and the manner in which employees' job satisfaction and work performance are affected (Ball, Trevinom and Sims 1994; Bartl and Martin 1990; Beehr and Gupta 1987; Chay 1993; Deshande and Schoderbek 1993; Deshande, Schoderbek and Joseph 1994; Fenlason and Beehr 1994; Fried 1989; Hinkin and Schriesheim 1990; Jones-Johnson and Johnson 1992; Larson et al. 1986; Lee et al. 1991; Nelson and Quick 1991; O'Driscoll and Evans 1988; O'Driscoll and Beehr 1994; Scandura, Graen and Novak 1986; Shipper 1991; Stepina and Perrewe 1991; Trempe, Rigny and Haccoun 1985 and Williams, Podsakoff and Huber 1992). In these cases the direction is "top-down."

One issue in this context that has received considerable attention concerns correspondence between superiors' and subordinates' conceptions of the performance of the manager or the personnel (Arnold and Mackenzie Davey 1992; Coutney Staley and Schockley-Zalabak 1986; Daves and Holland 1989; Williams and Levy 1992; Furnham and Stringfield 1994; London and Wohlers 1991; Salzmann and Grasha 1991; Macfarlane Shore and Bleicken 1991) and, moreover, the effects of such conceptions on managerial effectiveness in relation to personnel (Riggio and Cole 1992; Callan 1993; Wilhelm et al. 1993). Duaret, Goodson and Klich (1993) examined the effect of leader-group member exchange on the relationship between employee performance and supervisor's rating of that performance. In these cases, the relation is considered in terms of what the superior gives his/her subordinates; thus the direction is "top-down."

Yammarino and Dubinsky (1992) take their point of departure in the extensive earlier research that has examined what characterizes superior-subordinate relationships in general, and have shown that such relationships differ according to the nature of the interpersonal relation involved. Again, the direction of the relation in these cases is implicitly "top-down."

Other researchers have illuminated factors that affect the benefits that subordinates/employees obtain from their immediate superior. The orientation here is towards the conditions that influence managerial behaviour and performance. Some of these researchers, such as Blank, Weitsel and Green

(1990), Dedrick and Dobbins (1991) and Wayne and Green (1993), focus on the subordinate. A second group of researchers investigate the manager's personality and behaviour (Atwater and Yammarino 1992, 1993; Yammarino and Bass 1990; Fry, Kerr and Lee 1986; Fortado 1994). A third group studies the personalities and behaviours of both superior and subordinates (Richarsen and Piper 1986; Fried, Tiegs and Bellamy 1992, Turbans and Jones 1988; Steiner 1988). Still others examine both superiors/subordinates and the organizational conditions that influence managerial behaviour and performance (Klaas and Wheeler 1990; Trahan and Steiner, 1994; Martinko and Gardner 1986). Researchers such as Kinicki and Vecchio (1994) and Mosholder et al. (1990) study how external factors (like duration of contact) affect the relationship between superior and subordinate. Implicitly this relation is treated in one direction, "top-down."

In a case study, Kets de Vries (1989) adopts a psychodynamic/psychoanalytic perspective, focusing on the significance of unconscious processes to the relation between superior and subordinate. The relationship is described as one of mutuality, involving a process of mutual influence.

Looking at the research which examines managers' relations with their own superiors, we can distinguish studies that concern the differences between the work conditions of male and female mangers and how they relate to their superiors (Ragins 1989, 1991; Powell and Butterfield 1994) and those that concern the effects of mentoring (Whitely et al. 1992; Turban and Dougherty 1994; Scandura 1992). Here too, the direction of the relation between manager and his/her superior is described as "top-down."

Subject to reservations concerning the scope of the research reviewed (see footnote 2), and with the exception of Kets de Vries's (1989) study, our results suggest that the general approach has been non-reciprocal – in the sense that no account is taken of the alternating and on-going "give-and-take" between manager and employee. The most common approach has been to investigate the manager's modes of action, reactions, attitudes and staff evaluations, and to then place these in relation to the reactions, attitudes and manager evaluations of staff. This approach is dominated by the issue of whether the manager, in his/her encounter with subordinates, provides staff with the job satisfaction they need and how this is perceived by employees. These are indeed also the questions we address in this study. But, how well managers succeed in establishing good relations with their staff depends in part on how well they are themselves received – by both subordinates and their own superiors.

Our point of departure is the view that leadership or management presupposes a relation, and that a relation is created and obtains its qualities from the persons who are relating to each other. Naturally, roles, mandates and scopes of authority vary. We wish to offer a variegated picture of how

the relation between manager/superior and subordinate/staff member may be studied, from the subordinate's perspective, by posing questions on how the subordinate receives/encounters his/her *superior*. Thus, the relation is examined both "bottom-up" and "top-down", from the perspectives of sub-ordinates' conceptions of the social support provided to them *by* their superior and the social support that they themselves provide *to* their superior. As was seen above, this question does not seem to have been previously examined. Thus, it seems natural to start by testing empirically whether there is a connection between subordinates' perceptions of what they give and what they receive in such a relationship, and, if there is a connection, what its nature is.

Effects of Group-organized Work

Hackman and Walton (1985) conceptualized "group effectiveness" as a composite of the extent to which group output meets organizational stand-ards, the degree to which the group process increases members' capacity for working independently, and the extent to which the group contributes to the growth and personal well-being of group members. In their comprehen-sive review of the literature, Gist, Locke and Taylor (1987) state that they found no research that supported this model empirically. A survey of Swed-ish research, restricted to the use of work groups in industry, showed that the relationship between the group process and a possible increase in the group member's capacity to work independently had not been examined (Lantz 1994). A review of research presented in German (Binkelmann, Braczyk and Seltz 1993) suggested the same conclusion. In the current study, however, the relationship between the exchange of social support in the work group and influence over work is investigated.

A second measure of group effectiveness lies, according to Hackman and Walton (1985), in the extent to which group output meets organiza-tional standards. Within the context of the current study we had no oppor-tunity to investigate goal achievement (or the quality of care provided by the hospital), but restricted ourselves to questions designed to establish whether, in the respondents' views, preconditions had been met for effec-tive work to be conducted. In this respect, we have considered time pres-sure, the presence of "split" occupational tasks and opportunities for peace and seclusion in performing work tasks.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The Questionnaire

Based on previous research a number of questions were constructed for the survey instrument used in the current study. Their reliability and

validity had been tested in earlier studies (Lantz, Westlander and Laflamme 1993; Lantz and Laflamme 1993). On the basis of these questions, an attempt was made to arrive at a multi-dimensional measure, founded on the general theoretical model illustrated in Figure 1.

The statements presented to respondents concerning interaction between group members and between group members and immediate superiors are listed in Table 1, with an indication of where they belong in House's social-support terminology. The following preambles were employed to introduce the statements to respondents: "Try to specify the relationship between you and your immediate superior by stating your position on the following. Please circle the number which best reflects your own experience" (Table 1a); and "Try to specify the relationship between you and your fellow workers by stating your position on the following. Please circle the number which best reflects your own experience". (Table 1b/c) All responses were on five-point scales, ranging from 1 = agree entirely to 5 = do not agree at all.

TABLE 1

The Statements on Different Kinds of Social Support

a) *The eight statements on conceptions of* *social support given by superiors*	*Social-support dimensions* *according to House* *(1981)*
a) I have the opportunity to talk about difficulties in my work with my immediate superior/supervisor.	Emotional support
b) I get the encouragement and support I need from my immediate superior/supervisor.	Emotional support
c) My immediate superior/supervisor provides me with the information on conditions at the workplace I need to carry out my job tasks.	Informative support
d) My immediate superior/supervisor usually informs me about changes which may be of importance for my work.	Informative support
e) My immediate superior/supervisor shares my own view on where my skills lie.	Realistic support
f) My immediate superior/supervisor gives me the feedback I need to know whether I am doing a good job.	Realistic support
g) My immediate superior/supervisor is an asset for me in critical situations.	Instrumental support
h) My immediate superior/supervisor provides good conditions for my personal development at work.	Instrumental support

TABLE 1 (Continued)

b)	*The eight statements on conceptions of social support given by subordinates to their immediate superior*	
a)	I have understanding for my superior/supervisor not being up to things on occasions.	Emotional support
b)	I give my superior/supervisor the encouragement and support he/she needs.	Emotional support
c)	I inform my superior/supervisor continually on how work is developing.	Informative support
d)	I inform my superior/supervisor on conditions that may be important for his/her way of leading activities.	Informative support
e)	I give my superior/supervisor feedback on his/her way of leading activities.	Realistic support
f)	I offer my superior/supervisor suggestions and opinions on how to develop activities.	Realistic support
g)	When my superior/supervisor expresses a need for it, I am open to taking on new duties.	Instrumental support
h)	I am an asset to my superior/supervisor when he/she is in need of some form of help.	Instrumental support
c)	*The eight statements for describing the exchange of social support within the work group*	
a)	I have the opportunity to talk about difficulties in my work with my fellow workers.	Emotional support
b)	My fellow workers give me the encouragement and support that I need.	Emotional support
c)	There is the openness that is needed between me and my fellow workers.	Informative support
d)	My fellow workers inform me of conditions that may be of importance for my work.	Informative support
e)	My fellow workers have the same view as I do on where my skills lie.	Realistic support
f)	My fellow workers give me the feedback I need for me to know whether I am doing a good job.	Realistic support
g)	We have good conditions for jointly discussing and solving problems at work.	Instrumental support
h)	Our way of utilizing each other's knowhow and experiences means that I develop in my work.	Instrumental support

The questions on personal work influence and preconditions for working effectively were designed and tested by Aronsson (Aronsson, Lantz and Westlander 1992). The questions are presented in Table 2. The following preambles were employed to introduce the questions to respondents: "Try to describe your work by stating your position on the following. Please

circle the number which best reflects your own experience" (tables 1 and 2) All responses were on five-point scales, ranging from 1 = yes, usually to 5 = no never.

TABLE 2

The Seven Questions for Describing Influence and Preconditions for Working Effectively

a)	Do you think you have sufficient opportunities to discuss and affect the overall arrangement of your own work?	Influence
b)	Do you think you have sufficiently great influence on decisions affecting the department where you work?	Influence
c)	Do you have enough influence over your own work to postpone things that were already planned — for example, if you have too much to do?	Influence
d)	Do you have the opportunity to plan and perform job tasks in the way you yourself consider most effective?	Influence
e)	Does it happen that time pressure compels you to do a worse job than you otherwise would have done?	Preconditions for working effectively
f)	Do you have so many job tasks that it hinders your opportunities for working effectively?	Preconditions for working effectively
g)	Do you find it hard to get the peace and seclusion you need to perform some of your job tasks?	Preconditions for working effectively

Data Collection

Data were collected in the spring of 1994 by means of the administration of a postal questionnaire to all members of staff in the hospital. The questionnaire form was accompanied by a letter describing the aim and purposes of the investigation.

Sample and Missing Cases/Data

The questionnaire was sent to all personnel (n= 271). The response rate was 77%. Of the study group of 210 persons, 70% were women and 30% men. A restricted analysis of missing cases showed no differences with regard to gender, age or (within-hospital) occupation between the sample and the study group. A final total of 138 people were studied, based on the following inclusion criteria: they specified their position in the organization, worked in only one department, and worked in a group (or team); they expressed their view on all (or nearly all) questions included for each of

the three indexes relevant to the study (social support received from immediate superior, social support given to immediate superior, and exchange of social support within the work group).

Statistical Methods

Classification of Social Support Received and Given, and of Exchange of Social Support within the Work Group

In order to classify the individuals studied according, on the one hand, to their response profile in social support received from immediate superior and social support given to immediate superior and, on the other, to exchange of social support within the work group, two complementary methods of analysis were employed: the Factorial Analysis of Correspondence (FAC) and the Hierarchical Ascendant Classification (HAC). These techniques are particularly appropriate where category data are utilized and where a search for patterns in the data is made (Benzécri 1985; Benzécri et al. 1985; Fénelon 1981; Greenacre 1984). They have already been applied (in sequence) in other studies designed to highlight patterns in the characteristics of negative occupational safety outcomes (see, for example, Laflamme and Vinet 1988; Laflamme and Duguay 1993).

The FAC searches for similarities and contrasts across all individual response patterns. It allows a simultaneous spatial representation of both individuals and their attributes (Benzécri 1985; Fénelon 1981; Greenacre 1984). Application of the method is based on a disjunctive table, where the rows represent the subjects and the columns the category of each variable. In such a table, each individual is given the value 1 for the single attribute that defines him/her in each variable, and the value 0 in all other categories. The FAC is used to study the internal variation (inertia or variance) of the table. It looks for contrasts among the individual "profiles" and highlights the attributes (categories) which covary and give rise to contrasts.

The HAC is used as a complement to the FAC. The method is a classification technique that divides subjects into a number of (unempty) classes in such a way that each of them may belong to one and only one class (Benzécri 1985; Benzécri et al. 1985; Fénelon 1981). The system of classes formed by the HAC is dichotomous; the variance within the groups is minimized, while that between them is maximized. Once the system of classes is structured, four criteria are employed to determine the number of classes to be retained: (1) compactness of a class (intra-class inertia or variance); (2) separatedness of the classes (inter-class inertia or variance); (3) consistency in interpretation of the classes, on the basis of which two classes may be merged into one, or one divided into two; (4) informational

benefit of adding a class (descending one step in the hierarchy) or of eliminating a class (ascending one step in the hierarchy).

In the two FACs conducted (prior to the HAC on social support received from immediate superior, social support given to immediate superior, and exchange of social support within the work group), all variables were given the same weight and treated simultaneously. A 5% limit was imposed on the categories so that "no-response" categories would not "distort" the factoring as a result of low frequencies. The negative categories were merged because of the small number of people providing extremely negative responses.

Testing for Relationships

A chi-square test was used (5% level of significance) to test for relationships relating to research questions 2 to 5 (described earlier). The classes of individuals obtained from the FAC and HAC on social support received from immediate superior, social support given to immediate superior and exchange of social support within the work group were cross-tabulated with each of the categories of variables related to "influence on work" and "preconditions for effective work". In these variables, the two negative categories obtained were merged, for few people expressed extremely negative views.

RESULTS

What is the Nature of the Relationship between Social Support Received from Immediate Superior and Social Support Given to Immediate Superior?

The results of the factorial analysis indicated that the data could be summarized in two factors (factor 1 = 16.44% inertia; factor 2 = 9.8% inertia). Factor 1 captures the responses "agree entirely" to all statements included in the two indexes through to the responses "scarcely agree"/"do not agree at all" to statements concerning the four dimensions of social support given to immediate superior and the four dimensions of social support received from immediate superior, plus intermediate (indifferent) responses to the four statements in each one of the two indices. Factor 2 captures extreme responses ("agree entirely" and "scarcely agree"/"do not agree at all") to statements included in the two indexes through to intermediate responses.

The classification performed on the first two factors generated by the FAC brought to light three classes of individuals. These can be described as "rich exchange of social support", "relatively rich exchange of social support" and "poor exchange of social support". Tables 3a and 3b show

TABLE 3a

Classification of the Individuals Based on their Perception of the Exchange of Social Support between Superior and Subordinate — Support Received

Question		Class 1 (n=32)	Class 2 (n=66)	Class 3 (n=40)	Total (n=138)
f. Feedback	very positive	22	–	–	22
	positive	8	29	–	37
(9.5 + 11.8%)	moderate	1	23	3	27
	negative	1		36	50
	no answer	–	*1*	*1*	*2*
b. Encouragement and	very positive	27	7	2	36
support	positive	3	27	–	30
(8.7 + 10.8%)	moderate	2	25	9	36
	negative	–	7	28	35
	no answer	–	–	*1*	*1*
h. Good conditions for	very positive	21	3	1	25
personal development	positive	11	23	1	35
at work	moderate	–	26	6	32
(8.7 + 10.4%)	negative	–	13	31	44
	no answer	–	*1*	*1*	*2*
g. Asset in critical	very positive	24	7	–	31
cal situations	positive	8	19	2	29
(9.1 + 8.9%)	moderate	–	34	6	40
	negative	–	6	32	38
a. Opportunity to talk	very positive	29	17	4	50
about work-related	positive	3	36	2	41
difficulties	moderate	–	11	12	23
(7.3 + 10.4%)	negative	–	2	22	24
c. Get information on	very positive	22	9	–	31
workplace conditions	positive	10	33	3	46
(8.5 + 8.7%)	moderate	–	21	19	40
	negative	–	3	18	21
e. Shared views on	very positive	26	6	1	33
where one's skills lie	positive	5	24	5	34
(8.0 + 4.9%)	moderate	–	31	15	46
	negative	–	2	17	19
	no answer	*1*	*3*	*2*	*6*
d. Get information on	very positive	27	17	–	44
changes of importance	positive	3	30	7	40
for one's work	moderate	2	12	14	28
(8.7 + 10.4%)	negative	–	6	19	25
	no answer	–	*1*	–	*1*

Questions ordered based on their contribution (in %) to factors 1 and 2 in the FAC

TABLE 3b

Classification of the Individuals Based on their Perception of the Exchange of Social Support between Superior and Subordinate — Support Given

Question		Class 1 (n=32)	Class 2 (n=66)	Class 3 (n=40)	Total (n=138)
c. Inform conti-	very positive	22	9	7	38
nually about work	positive	5	35	5	45
development	moderate	4	15	7	26
(6.5 + 7.6%)	negative	1	6	21	28
	no answer	–	1	–	1
b. Give support	very positive	22	18	3	43
and encouragement	positive	7	25	10	42
(6.2 + 5.3%)	moderate	1	21	13	35
	negative	1	2	13	16
	no answer	1	–	1	2
e. Feedback on	very positive	13	3	1	17
way of leading	positive	8	19	4	31
(4.6 + 5.7%)	moderate	5	33	12	50
	negative	4	10	23	37
	no answer	2	1	–	3
d. Inform on important	very positive	18	8	7	33
conditions	positive	9	31	8	48
(4.6 + 4.8%)	moderate	3	22	12	37
	negative	1	4	13	18
	no answer	1	1	–	2
g. Open to take on	very positive	22	18	12	52
new duties	positive	9	31	13	53
(2.9 + 2.3%)	moderate	1	14	12	27
	negative	–	2	3	5
	no answer	–	1	–	1
a. Understanding for	very positive	27	35	12	74
not being up to thinks	positive	4	22	17	43
(3.7 + 0.5%)	moderate	–	7	8	15
	negative	–	2	3	5
	no answer	1	–	–	1
h. Being an asset	very positive	20	14	6	40
when help needed	positive	10	27	10	47
(3.0 + 1.1%)	moderate	1	22	16	39
	negative	1	3	6	10
	no answer	–	–	2	2
f. Suggestions and	very positive	10	7	5	22
opinions on how to	positive	13	27	14	31
develop activities	moderate	3	21	7	31
(1.8 + 1.9%)	negative	5	10	14	29
	no answer	1	1	–	2

Questions ordered based on their contribution (in %) to factors 1 and 2 in the FAC

the results of the classification of individuals across the classes one index at a time; the questions corresponding to each index are arranged in descending order according to their cumulative contribution to the formation of the first two factors in the FAC (the contribution made is indicated under each variable's name). Table 3a shows all variables concerning social support *received* from immediate superior, and Table 3b all those concerning social support *given* to immediate superior.

Rich exchange of social support between superior and subordinate. Class #1 (32 individuals, 4.04% inertia): The individuals in Class #1 more often than expected by chance chose the response alternative "agree entirely" (response alternative 1) to the statements on the four dimensions of social support *received* from immediate superior, with the exception of one of the statements on realistic support (statement f, Table 1a). The pattern was the same for the statements on instrumental support *given* to immediate superior, but again with one exception (statement h, Table 1b).

Relatively rich exchange of social support between superior and subordinate. Class #2 (66 individuals, 9.07% inertia): Class #2 comprises a group of people who more often than expected chose the response alternative "agree" (response alternative 2) to the statements on emotional, informative and realistic support *received* from immediate superior. At the same time, they more frequently "partially agreed" (response alternative 3) to one statement on emotional support (question b, Table 1a) and the questions on realistic support. With regard to instrumental support they more often than expected chose the response alternative "partially agree" (response alternative 3).

For social support *given* to superior the frequency distributions are more even, but the group more often than expected chose the response alternative "agree" (response alternative 2) to statements on informative support and "partially agree" (response alternative 3) to statements on realistic support.

Poor exchange of social support between superior and subordinate. Class #3 (40 individuals, 5.44 % inertia): The individuals who fell into Class #3 more often than expected by chance chose the response alternative "do not agree at all" (response alternatives 4 and 5 merged) to all the statements on social support *received* from immediate superior. At the same time, they more often than expected chose the response alternative "partially agree" (response alternative 3) to one statement on emotional support (statement a, Table 1a) and the two statements on informative support.

With regard to social support *given* to immediate superior, perceptions are more evenly distributed across response alternatives. But to the statements on informative support, one of those on emotional support (statement

b, Table 1b) and one on realistic support (statement e, Table 1) the group more often than expected chose the response alternative "do not agree" (response alternatives 4 and 5 merged).

What is the Nature of the Relationship between the Exchange of Social Support between Superior and Subordinate and the Exchange of Social Support within the Work Group?

Classification of Exchanges of Social Support within the Work Group

The classification performed on the first two factors of the FAC (factor 1 = 23.43% inertia; factor 2 = 14.96% inertia) revealed three classes of individuals. Table 4 presents results from classifying individuals across classes one statement at a time, arranging these in descending order according to their cumulative contribution to the formation of the first two factors in the FAC. The contribution of each variable is again indicated under the name of the variable.

Rich exchange of social support within the work group. Class #1 (59 individuals, 8.91% inertia): The individuals in Class #1 more often than expected by chance chose "agree entirely" (response alternative 1) on all four dimensions of social support (Table 1c).

Relatively rich exchange of social support within the work group. Class #2 (57 individuals, 10.39% inertia): The individuals in Class #2 more often than expected chose "partially agree" (response alternative 2) to most of the statements, with the exception of the statements on realistic support and one statement on instrumental support (question h, see Table 1c). At the same time, they chose the response alternative "partially agree" (response alternative 3) more often than expected to most questions, with the exception of one statement on emotional support and one on informative support (statements a and d, Table 1c).

Poor exchange of social support within the work group. Class #3 (22 individuals, 6.27% inertia): Class #3 comprises a group of people who more often than expected chose "do not agree at all" to all statements (Table 1c). They are also more indifferent than expected in their response to two statements, one on emotional support and one on informative support (statements a and d, see Table 1c).

Test for Relationship between the Two Classifications

Table 5 indicates that there is a strong and positive association between the two forms of exchange of social support (Chi-square = 17.84, d.f. = 4, p = 0.0013).

TABLE 4

Classification of the Individuals Based on their Perception of the Exchange
of Social Support within the Work Group

Question		Class 1 (n=59)	Class 2 (n=57)	Class 3 (n=22)	Total (n=138)
c. Open climat	very positive	47	3	1	51
	positive	12	33	–	45
(14.4 + 16.1%)	moderate	–	20	7	27
	negative	–	1	14	15
b. Get support and	very positive	50	8	1	59
encouragement	positive	7	27	–	34
(13.1 + 15.5%)	moderate	2	20	8	30
	negative	–	1	13	14
	no answer	–	1	–	1
f. Get feedback	very positive	33	2	–	35
	positive	18	21	2	41
(13.1 + 14.2%)	moderate	7	32	5	44
	negative	–	2	15	17
	no answer	1	–	–	1
d. Get necessary	very positive	51	2	1	54
information	positive	7	39	4	50
(12.4 + 14.7%)	moderate	1	15	9	25
	negative	–	1	8	9
g. Good conditions	very positive	43	8	–	51
for discussing jointly	positive	13	23	1	37
(13.1 + 12.6%)	moderate	2	24	6	32
	negative	1	2	15	18
a. Can talk about	very positive	56	18	1	75
work difficulties	positive	3	33	4	40
(11.5 + 12.9%)	moderate	0	5	8	13
	negative	–	–	9	9
	no answer	–	1	–	1
h. Personal develop-	very positive	32	2	–	34
ment possible	positive	19	23	–	42
(12.0 + 7.2%)	moderate	5	20	5	30
	negative	3	12	17	32
e. Agreement about	very positive	42	3	2	47
where one's skills lie	positive	15	22	3	40
(10.5 + 6.8%)	moderate	1	25	9	35
	negative	–	4	5	9
	no answer	1	3	3	7

Questions ordered based on their contribution (in %) to factors 1 and 2 in the FAC

TABLE 5

Association between Social Support Given to and Received by Immediate Superior and Social Support Exchanged within the Work Group

Support given to and received by the immediate superior	Support exchanged within the group						
	Rich		Relatively rich		Poor		Total
Rich exchange	33	(27,3)	9	(13,2)	15	(16,5)	57
Relatively rich exchange	24	(28,2)	22	(13,7)	13	(17,1)	59
Poor exchange	9	(10,5)	1	(5,1)	12	(6,4)	22
Total	66		32		40		138

Chi-square= 17,84, d.f.= 4, p= 0.0013

Is there a Relationship between the Exchange of Social Support between Superior and Subordinate and Influence over Work?

Table 6 indicates that there is a strong and positive association between individual positioning on the exchange of social support between superior and subordinate and perceived level of influence as measured by all of the four questions posed. The richer the exchange of social support between superior and subordinate, the more the individual feels he/she has the opportunity to influence departmental decisions, set a personal agenda and perform tasks in the manner he/she considers to be most effective.

Is there a Relationship between Exchange of Social Support within the Work Group and Influence over Work?

Table 7 indicates that there is a strong and positive association between individual positioning on exchange of social support within the work group and perceived level of influence as measured by three of the four questions posed. The richer the exchange of social support within the work group, the more the individual feels he/she has the opportunity to influence departmental decisions, set a personal agenda and perform tasks in the manner he/she considers to be most effective.

Is there a Relationship between Exchange of Social Support within the Work Group and Preconditions for Working Effectively?

Table 8 indicates that there is a strong and positive association between individual positioning on exchange of social support within the work group and perceived preconditions for being able to work effectively as

measured by two of the three questions posed. The more positive the individual is to exchange of social support within the work group, the more seldom he/she perceives work tasks to be "split", and the greater are his/her opportunities for enjoying the peace and seclusion needed to perform certain occupational tasks. Exchange of social support within the work group, however, is not strongly related to perception of time pressure.

TABLE 6

Relationship between the Perceived Exchange of Social Support
Superior/Subordinate and the Possibilities Perceived to Influence the Work

Question		Rich (n=32)	Relatively rich (n=66)	Poor (n=40)	Total (n=138)
a. Influence on arran-	never or seldom	2	6	10	18
gement of ones work	sometimes	4	17	15	36
	often	8	29	9	46
	most often	18	14	6	38
Chi-square = 27,70; d.f. = 6; p = .0001					
b. Influence on deci-	never or seldom	8	16	21	45
sions affecting the	sometimes	8	23	12	43
department	often	8	21	3	32
	most often	8	6	4	18
Chi-square = 18,52; d.f. = 6; p = .005					
c. Influence on own	never or seldom	2	5	9	16
work, i.e. postpone	sometimes	8	28	9	45
things	often	5	24	14	43
1 missing value	most often	17	8	8	33
Chi-square = 28,23; d.f. = 6; p = .0001					
d. Opportunity to plan	never or seldom	2	6	3	11
and perform job tasks	sometimes	5	14	8	27
1 missing value	often	6	31	15	52
	most often	19	15	13	47
Chi-square = 13,56; d.f. = 6; p = .0349					

TABLE 7

Relationship between the Perceived Exchange of Social Support within the Work Group and the Possibilities Perceived to Influence the Work

Question		Rich (n=59)	Relatively rich (n=57)	Poor (n=22)	Total (n=138)
a. Influence on arrangement of ones work	never or seldom	6	7	5	18
	sometimes	7	19	10	36
	often	22	18	6	46
	most often	24	13	1	38
Chi-square = 19,82; d.f. = 6; p = .003					
b. Influence on decisions affecting the department	never or seldom	16	19	10	45
	sometimes	14	21	8	43
	often	16	12	4	32
	most often	13	5	0	18
Chi-square = 11,56; d.f. = 6; p = .0725					
c. Influence on work, i.e. postpone things	never or seldom	9	3	4	16
	sometimes	11	26	8	45
	often	17	18	8	43
1 missing value	most often	21	10	2	33
Chi-square = 16,71; d.f. = 6; p = .0104					
d. Opportunity to plan and perform job tasks	never or seldom	1	10	0	11
	sometimes	9	15	3	27
1 missing value	often	14	22	16	52
	most often	35	10	2	47
Chi-square = 43,66; d.f. = 6; p = .0001					

TABLE 8

Relationship between the Perceived Exchange of Social Support within the Work Group and the Perceived Existence of Preconditions for Working Effectively

Question		Rich (n=59)	Relatively rich (n=57)	Poor (n=22)	Total (n=138)
e. Time pressure	never or seldom	28	14	6	48
	sometimes	20	23	12	55
	often	8	15	3	26
	most often	3	5	1	9
Chi-square = 10,15; d.f. = 6; p = .1183					
f. Work load and efficiency	never or seldom	41	18	8	67
	sometimes	15	25	9	49
1 missing value	often	3	11	4	18
	most often	0	3	0	3
Chi-square = 21,54; d.f. = 6; p = .0015					
g. Peace and seclusion	never or seldom	26	11	5	42
	sometimes	22	17	5	44
1 missing value	often	7	18	5	30
	most often	3	11	7	21
Chi-square = 21,35; d.f. = 6; p = .0016					

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Relations between Subordinate and Superior

As stated previously, the most common empirical approach to the study of the relation between superior and subordinate is "unidirectional" and "top-down". One of the main questions addressed by this study was whether it was meaningful to simultaneously examine this relation from a "bottom-up" perspective. The results demonstrate that this is the case. There is a relationship between the social support respondents feel that they receive from their immediate superior and the social support that they perceive themselves as giving to that superior. Our view is that the perspective we have adopted offers greater potential for practical work in the field of organizational development and change, in that subordinates are regarded as active agents who are able to affect indirectly the rewards they obtain from their relationship with their superior through the support they offer to that person. There is educational value in drawing the attention of both superior and subordinate to the fact that, by definition, relations are mutual, and in stressing that both of the parties involved have opportunities to influence the interaction between them. A further contribution made by the study, especially to those with the task of developing work groups, is the variegated picture it offers of relations between group members. This can provide a basis for discussions about how changes in the nature of interaction within a work group can be accomplished.

The study also showed that there were differences between the three "patterns of exchange" (the classes) with regard to the balance between the "giving-and-taking" of social support. The group of persons who report "rich exchange" state that "they receive as much as they give." The group which reports "relatively rich exchange" of social support between themselves and their immediate superior perceive themselves to "receive" more than they "give." By contrast, the group reporting "poor exchange" state that they "give" more than they "receive". The "imbalance" between "giving" and "taking" is greatest in Class 3 (poor exchange of social support). Whether this imbalance between perceptions of giving and taking affects the volume of the exchange remains to be tested empirically, but we would suggest that this may be the case.

The Balance of Exchange

Let us now look at the balance of exchange in terms of particular qualities of social support *within* classes. For the group of persons who report "rich" exchange between subordinate and superior, it can be stated that there is a small difference between that which is perceived to be

provided in each direction, i.e., between "what is received" and "what is given": relatively speaking, less realistic support in the form of feedback on job performance (statement f, Table 1a) was *received*, and less of one aspect of instrumental support, namely being an asset to one's superior when he/she was in need of help (statement h, Table 1b), was *given*. The persons reporting "relatively rich" exchange perceive themselves to *receive* relatively less instrumental support from their immediate superior and to *give*, again relatively speaking, more informative support. The group of persons reporting "poor exchange" (Class 3) perceived no difference between dimensions of social support in terms of what they *received* from their superior. However, they perceived themselves to *give* relatively less informative support, relatively less of one aspect of emotional support (encouragement) and relatively less of one aspect of realistic support (feedback to superior on how he/she is leading activities).

Social Support

The results show that the different dimensions of social support do not correspond directionally. The dimensions of social support which differentiate the classes (see the overall frequency distributions in tables 3a and 3b) are informative, realistic and instrumental support. With regard to the social support *received* by subordinates from their superior, it is primarily on the dimension of instrumental support that deficiencies emerge. With regard to the support *given* by subordinates to their superior, deficiencies appear primarily on the dimension of realistic support, but also on the informative-support dimension. One interpretation of this is that for managers to provide adequate instrumental support, they need informative support from their staff. And, perhaps more importantly, they require realistic support — in the form of feedback on their ways of leading activities and proposals and opinions on how activities can be developed.

Contributions of the Study

The results showing the positive relationship between perception of degree of influence over one's own work and perception of the exchange between superior and subordinate provide further support for our view that it may be meaningful to attempt to obtain a still more variegated picture of the relation between subordinate and superior in future research.

With regard to the exchange of social support within the work group, the results show that exchange of emotional support is richer than exchanges of other kinds of social support. The exchange of instrumental support was described as being rather uncommon.

The results demonstrated that there is a relationship between exchange of social support between subordinates and superior and the exchange of social support within the work group. In relation to the principal question addressed by the study, we can (as above) interpret the result to imply that a subordinate can influence exchange within the work group by affecting exchange with his/her superior.

The effects of teamwork have been examined here in terms of perceptions of influence over one's own work and preconditions for being able to work effectively. The results make a contribution to research into the group form of working in that they offer empirical support for Hackman and Walton's (1985) theoretical model.

In this study, questions on the exchange between subordinate and superior have been posed only to subordinates (the staff of a psychiatric hospital). From a relational perspective, this is one of the study's greatest limitations. Because of the rather small number of persons occupying staff-supervisory posts in the organization, it was not possible to relate subordinates' pictures of exchange with their superior with the latter group's perceptions of the same exchange, or with the latter's perceptions of what is required to manage activities.

The study design in this case did not enable us to study interaction as a process. From this point of view, a change in the nature of leadership prompts a change in the behaviour and attitudes of subordinates, which in turn generates a change at managerial level. We are then involved in a dialectical relationship, which requires that social interaction is studied in a time perspective. Anonymous responses to a questionnaire, provided at a particular point of time, clearly do not offer an opportunity to shed empirical light on a dialectical process.

The instrument for illuminating the developmental and supportive dimensions of occupational interaction is a general measure in the sense that it is not tied to any particular kind of organized activity. As mentioned above, teamwork is well-developed in psychiatric care, and the nature of the work is such that personnel are accustomed to thinking in terms of their relations with others. It is likely that this has affected the volume of exchanges that employees described. It is a matter for future research to establish whether such exchange can be described in the same way in other areas of occupational life.

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RÉSUMÉ

Leadership, support social et influence sur le travail : une étude du travail en équipe réalisée dans un hôpital psychiatrique suédois

Cette étude porte sur le leadership, les rapports d'influence et le sentiment d'efficacité au travail dans une forme particulière d'organisation du travail, celle du travail en équipe. L'étude a été conduite en milieu hospitalier. Elle questionne les relations de support qui s'établissent tant entre supérieur et subordonné qu'au sein des équipes de travail, entre collègues. Elle apporte une perspective nouvelle à la recherche dans le domaine du support social en abordant les rapports supérieur-subordonné et entre collègues comme étant intrinsèquement réciproques plutôt qu'unidirectionnels (du supérieur vers le subordonné). Ainsi, au lieu de formuler la question du support social dans les termes suivants: "Qu'est-ce que j'obtiens de mon chef et en suis-je satisfait?, la question est posée comme suit: "Qu'est-ce que j'obtiens, qu'est-ce que j'offre, et suis-je satisfait de cette interaction?"

L'individu est en fait étudié à la fois dans la dynamique du support hiérarchique (ou verticale) et dans celle intragroupe (ou horizontale).

L'instrument de mesure consiste en trois indices, soit un pour chaque dimension/direction relationnelle: le support reçu du supérieur hiérarchique, le support qui lui est donné de la part du subordonné, et le support intragroupe de travail. Chaque indice consiste en huit questions, couvrant par bloc de deux, chacune des quatre composantes du support social employées par House (1981): le support émotionnel, l'informatif, le réaliste, et l'instrumental (voir aussi Aronsson et al. 1992; Lantz et al. 1993; Lantz et Laflamme 1993). Le questionnaire utilisé dans cette étude (inspiré de Aronsson et al. 1992; Lantz et al. 1993) intègre aussi des questions concernant le degré perçu d'influence sur son propre travail (4 questions) et l'impression de bénéficier de conditions de travail qui permettent de travailler efficacement (3 questions).

L'étude tente de répondre aux cinq questions suivantes: (1) Comment sont liés le support social reçu de la part du supérieur hiérarchique par l'employé et le support que ce dernier donne au supérieur? (2) Comment est lié cet échange avec celui qui prévaut à l'intérieur du groupe de travail? (3) Existe-t-il un lien entre l'échange de support social supérieur-subordonné et le degré perçu d'influence sur son propre travail? (4) Existe-t-il un lien entre l'échange de support social intragroupe et le degré perçu d'influence sur son propre travail? (5) Existe-t-il un lien entre l'échange de support social intragroupe et la perception individuelle de bénéficier de conditions de travail qui permettent de travailler efficacement?

L'étude a été conduite dans un hôpital psychiatrique de la région de Stockholm. La collecte de données a eu lieu au printemps 1994 et a été réalisée sous forme d'enquête postale couvrant l'ensemble du personnel (271 employés). Le taux de réponse a été de 77%. Compte tenu des objectifs de cette recherche, les questionnaires de 138 répondants ont été analysés plus à fond, sur la base des critères d'inclusion suivants: ce sont des individus en relation de travail supérieur-subordonné, ils travaillent en équipe, ne travaillent que dans un département, et en ont précisé le nom. Ils ont aussi répondu à l'ensemble (ou la presque totalité) des questions relatives au support social (reçu du supérieur, donné au supérieur, et échangé dans l'équipe de travail).

Les profils de réponses aux questions relatives au support reçu par et donné au supérieur hiérarchique ont été regroupés en classes à partir de l'usage complémentaire de deux techniques d'analyse mutidimensionnelles: l'analyse factorielle des correspondances (AFC) et la classification ascendante hiérarchique (CAH). Il en a été de même des réponses aux questions portant sur l'échange de support intragroupe. Une fois ces deux classifications effectuées, des tests de chi-carré ont été utilisés (niveau de

signification retenu de 5%) pour mesurer si des associations existaient, eu égard aux questions de recherche 2 à 5 formulées ci-haut.

L'usage combiné de l'AFC et de la CAH a permis de mettre en évidence trois "niveaux" de profils types de réponse relativement à l'échange de support social entre supérieur et subordonné (question 1). Ces profils montrent d'abord qu'il existe un lien étroit entre le support social qu'un individu estime recevoir de la part de son supérieur hiérarchique et le support qu'il estime d'autre part donné à ce dernier, ces deux indices variant dans le même sens. Certaines différences sont aussi apparues dans l'équilibre relatif du support social échangé (reçu et donné). Ainsi, par exemple, les individus qui estiment bénéficier d'un échange riche jugent toutefois recevoir relativement moins de support réaliste (du feedback en particulier) et donner moins de support instrumental au supérieur (dans des situations où ce dernier aurait besoin d'une certaine forme de soutien). Les individus en situation d'échange relativement riche tendent à exprimer un manque de support instrumental alors qu'ils donneraient plus de support informatif. Ceux qui se trouvent en situation d'échange pauvre semble donner moins de support informatif qu'ils n'en reçoivent de même que, en partie, de support émotionnel (le feedback) et de support réalistique.

En outre, il a été observé qu'il y a un lien positif et significatif entre classe d'opinions relativement à l'échange de support social et degré perçu d'influence sur son propre travail (question 3). En d'autres termes, il semble que plus un individu estime être en situation d'échange riche (et équilibré), plus il estime aussi avoir de l'influence sur son propre travail.

La classification effectuée en relation avec l'échange de support social intragroupe montre que l'échange de support émotionnel est la dimension du support social la plus riche entre collègues, alors que le support instrumental échangé semble ici aussi plus rarement présent. Il est apparu de plus qu'il existe un lien étroit entre le support social échangé entre supérieur et subordonné, d'une part, et celui qui est échangé à l'intérieur de l'équipe (question 2). En d'autres termes, plus l'échange de support social supérieur-subordonné est considéré riche, plus l'échange intragroupe l'est aussi, et réciproquement.

Finalement, des liens positifs et significatifs ont aussi été mis en évidence entre la richesse perçue du support social intragroupe (3 classes) et le degré perçu d'influence sur son propre travail (question 4) ou encore la perception individuelle de bénéficier de conditions de travail qui permettent de travailler efficacement (question 5). En d'autres mots, plus le support social intragroupe est jugé riche, plus aussi l'individu a tendance à estimer pouvoir influencer son travail et bénéficier des conditions requises pour travailler efficacement.

En conclusion, l'ensemble de ces résultats indiquent fortement que le support social au travail est un champ d'étude qui gagne à positionner l'individu dans sa dynamique interactive d'échange de support tant "vertical" que "horizontal". Ces résultats suggèrent aussi que les liens entre l'estimation qui est faite du support reçu de la part du supérieur, du support donné à celui-ci et, finalement, du support échangé intragroupe sont essentiellement interactifs. Ce qui alimente un courant récent à l'effet que le support social est d'abord et avant tout le résultat d'un échange et non pas unidirectionnel.

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