Factors affecting perceived organizational support levels of employees in container shipping agencies

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Abstract
This study explores determinants of organizational support perceptions among employees within container shipping agencies. It examines the influence of leadership styles employed by shipping agency managers on perceived organizational support. Employing correlation and multiple regression analyses, the non-normally distributed data prompts the utilization of the Kruskal-Wallis H test. A survey was administered to 258 employees in 255 shipping agencies from major Turkish shipowner companies dominating the maritime transport sector. A positive correlation is established between perceived organizational support and leadership style dimensions. Additionally, it suggests that efforts to create a supportive environment, especially for junior employees, can mitigate high turnover rates and enhance organizational performance. Practical implications include the recommendation for shipping agencies to focus on leadership development, communication improvement, and skill-building initiatives to foster a supportive workplace environment.

Introduction

Maritime transport, with its intricate structure and significant capital and labor intensity, involves various stakeholders such as ship owners, operators, intermediaries, ship supply entities, and governmental authorities related to maritime transport (Deveci & Çetin, 2013). Among these stakeholders, the shipping agency plays a vital role in safeguarding the rights of maritime transport customers and contributing to revenue generation through essential ship services (DTO, 2007). Shipping agencies, specializing in diverse maritime transport realms, have become indispensable elements in meeting ship navigation requirements and conducting official transactions with shipowners. The taxonomy of shipping agents – categorized into charter agents, protective agents, port agents, reservation agents, scheduled shipping agents, and main agents (Akdoğan, 1988; Institute of Chartered Ship Brokers, 2012, p. 17) – includes liner shipping agencies that provide comprehensive services encompassing sales and marketing for all operational shipping activities.

The nexus between leadership styles and perceived organizational support (POS) is considered a critical determinant in motivating employees within shipping agencies. Distinct leadership styles may exert varying influences on employees' perceptions of support from the company, impacting motivation and performance outcomes. Leaders perceived as supportive and empowering may cultivate heightened levels of POS, fostering increased motivation and productivity. Conversely, leaders characterized as unsupportive or authoritarian may contribute to diminished POS, engendering a demotivated workforce. Maritime transport employees are expected to demonstrate exceptional effort and maintain a rigorous work pace, which requires dynamism, adaptability to change, and experience. Shipping agency personnel, in particular, must exhibit proactivity and swift adaptability to elastic time cycles dictated by each ship's arrival-departure schedules. Failure to address conflicts with the company, especially with managers, or a lack of requisite company support may result in suboptimal performance or employee attrition, potentially causing delays in berthing or sailing times.

The maritime sector's complexity underscores the need for a thorough exploration of factors influencing employee perceptions within this domain. Notably, the role of shipping agencies – categorized into charter agents, protective agents, port agents, reservation agents, scheduled shipping agents, and main agents (Deveci & Çetin, 2013) – has not received adequate attention in the existing literature. Liner shipping agencies play a pivotal role by providing comprehensive services that encompass sales and marketing for all operational shipping activities. This study aims to address specific gaps in the literature, focusing on the relationship between leadership styles and perceived organizational support (POS) within the maritime sector, with a particular emphasis on container shipping agencies. The identified gaps include a limited focus on shipping agencies, the unique dynamics of the maritime sector, and the absence of targeted research on container shipping agencies. This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining the relationship between leadership styles and organizational support perceptions, providing valuable insights into effective leadership and employee motivation within the shipping agency sector. The study's primary objective is to investigate factors shaping the organizational support perceptions of container shipping agency employees. What makes this research novel is its contextual relevance, exploring transformative, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles within the specific context of container shipping agencies. By narrowing the scope to this subset of shipping agencies, this study aims to provide industry-specific insights into organizational support dynamics. This research not only contributes to the existing body of knowledge within the maritime sector but also serves as a pioneering exploration into an under-researched domain. The findings are anticipated to offer valuable perspectives for both academia and industry practitioners, advancing the understanding of organizational support in the unique context of container shipping agencies.

The forthcoming sections of this paper will unfold as follows. The literature review will offer a comprehensive overview of pertinent studies and theories related to the study's focal points. By examining the current state of knowledge, this section will identify existing gaps in research and elucidate the rationale for the current study. The methodology section will delineate the research design, participants, data collection methods, and analysis procedures employed. The findings will be presented in detail, including any discerned patterns or trends that are substantiated by tables, figures, and statistical analyses. The ensuing discussion and conclusion section will offer an interpretive analysis of the results, emphasizing their implications for the maritime transport sector. Notably, this section will underscore study limitations, propose directions for future research, and culminate in a concise summary of the study's main findings and their implications for the maritime transport sector.

Literature review

A definition of organizational support

Organizational support is defined as "an organization's staff being aware of their contribution to the organization and giving importance to staff welfare" (Natunann, Bies & Martin, 1995). It also requires that organizational values consider the employees' well-being and increase their happiness. Organizational support describes the set of values and contributions that institutions give to their employees. The theory of organizational support and the construct of perceived organizational support was improved by Eisenberg and his research scholars when utilizing the social exchange theory. By using the latter, scholars have started to research perceived organizational support in interpersonal relations with organizations and identified it as

a vital content in subordinate-manager relations (Shannock & Eisenberger, 2006). A meta-analysis conducted by Rhoades and Eisenberger (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) revealed that favorable treatments such as rewards from the organization, beneficial working conditions, and fairness received by employees are directly linked to POS. It promotes favorable outcomes including low turnover rate, high job satisfaction, good job dedication, and performance (Yu & Frenkel, 2013). Scholars (Porath et al., 2012; Abid, Zahra & Ahmed, 2015; Walumbwa et al., 2017) also stated other favorable outcomes such as innovative work behavior, learning goal orientation, core self-evaluations and organizational commitment. More specifically, the organization's acceptance of its employees as an asset and reflecting this to its employees will strengthen the employees' emotional relations with the organization and increase their performance (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Their level of workplace satisfaction is also one factor that determines their decision to change jobs or continue working in their current institution.

A scale of organizational support

After Eisenberger et al. (Eisenberger et al., 1986) proposed the concept of perceived organizational support, empirical studies have mainly focused on developing a measurement scale, the "organizational support scale", identifying the factors affecting perceived organizational support and determining the positive impact of perceived organizational support on employees and organizations. The organizational support scale (OSS) is a tool used to measure the level of perceived organizational support (POS) among employees. POS refers to the extent to which employees feel that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. The OSS is typically a self-report questionnaire that assesses employees' perceptions of the organizational support they receive in areas such as communication, rewards, and opportunities for participation and involvement. The OSS is designed to measure three dimensions of POS: perceived instrumental support, perceived value support, and perceived behavioral support. The instrument is widely used in academic research and organizational settings to assess the level of perceived organizational support among employees.

The negative effects of work-related stress affect organizations as well as employees (Roemer & Harris, 2018), whereas the perception of high organizational support increases organizational commitment and long-term continuation of trust, approval, and respect (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). Employees whose expectations are met fulfill their duties within the framework of the organization's rules (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). According to Rhoades and Eisenberger (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), four factors determine perceived organizational support: individual factors, human resources, a sense of organizational justice, and managerial support. Various scholars (Porath et al., 2012; Abid, Zahra & Ahmed, 2015; Walumbwa et al., 2017) examined a variety of factors, including:

a) Communication: Employees who perceive that their organization communicates effectively and transparently with them are more likely to feel supported.
b) Rewards: Employees who feel rewarded fairly and equitably for their contributions are more likely to feel supported.
c) Opportunities for participation and involvement: Employees who feel they have opportunities to participate in decision-making and contribute to the organization are more likely to feel supported.
d) Supervisor support: Employees who feel their supervisor values their contributions and cares about their well-being are more likely to feel supported.
e) Organizational culture: Employees who feel that the organizational culture is positive, supportive, and promotes well-being are more likely to feel supported.
f) Resource availability: Employees who feel that the organization provides the necessary resources to perform their jobs are more likely to feel supported.
g) Career development: Employees who feel that their organization provides them with opportunities for career development are more likely to feel supported.
h) Fairness: Employees who feel that the organization is fair and equitable in its treatment of employees are more likely to feel supported.
i) Trust: Employees who trust their organization and feel that it is trustworthy are more likely to feel supported.
j) Empowerment: Employees who feel they have autonomy and control over their work are more likely to feel supported.

Eisenberger, Malone, and Presson (Malone & Presson, 2016) proposed eight tactics for optimizing perceived organizational support: (1) implement

discretionary supportive workforce services; (2) be fair and equitable in monitoring and enforcing all management practices; (3) set achievable goals and reward proportionately; (4) offer individualized benefits; (5) support supervisors to foster perceived organizational support in their subordinates; (6) train subordinates to be supportive; (7) promote strong social networks; (8) begin organizational support prior to starting employment.

Effective and responsible leadership and governance are essential to the success of any global business (Doh & Stumpf, 2005). Although much is known about many leaders, very little is known about leadership (Burns, 2010), and there are many different definitions of leadership in the literature (Rost, 1993). Nevertheless, leadership is widely considered to be characterized by certain concepts, such as traits, abilities, skills, and behaviors (Northouse, 2018). The concept has attracted attention from academia, business, politics, communications, sociology, and psychology (Vecchio, 2007). There are many fundamental differences between a leader and a manager. In particular, managers acquire their power from rules, whereas leaders obtain it from their own personality and abilities (McKale, 2019). Although leadership styles are defined in different ways, they are generally evaluated in terms of three main categories: transformative, operational, and laissez-faire (Akan, Yıldırım & Yalçın, 2014).

Transformational leadership refers to leaders who seek to create ideas and new perspectives to create a new path of growth and prosperity in front of the organization (Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016; Klein, 2023; Mekonnen & Bayissa, 2023). A transformational leader gives confidence to team members, provides intellectual stimulation, and increases motivation. The leader creates a general appearance and target awareness for the employees in the team and increases the interest of individuals in the group (Karip, 1998). Individuals then prioritize the interests of the group by subordinating their own interests (Bass & Avolio, 1995). A transformational leader is a type of leader who inspires and motivates followers to not only achieve their goals but also to develop their own leadership potential. Hence, transformational leaders are characterized by four key behaviors:

a) Idealized influence: Transformational leaders serve as role models for their followers, embodying the values and ethics of the organization.
b) Inspirational motivation: Transformational leaders inspire and motivate their followers to strive for excellence and achieve their full potential.

c) Intellectual stimulation: Transformational leaders encourage creativity and innovation, and foster an environment where followers can develop and share new ideas.
d) Individualized consideration: Transformational leaders provide individualized support and guidance to their followers, helping them to develop their skills and reach their goals.

Transformational leaders positively impact the well-being of their employees and the organization. They have been found to lead to higher levels of employee satisfaction, commitment, and motivation. Transformational leaders also promote a positive organizational culture and effectively promote organizational change and innovation.

The philosophy of transactional leadership is based on mutual communication between the leader and their followers (Erturgut, 2009). Transactional leadership refers to the transactional relationship between leaders and subordinates in a way that the followers possess (Ebrahimi et al., 2017; Dong, 2023). Followers are motivated by the promises, rewards, and reinforcers of their leaders (Eraslan, 2006). Transactional leadership means reinforcing and avoiding changes to current business processes. According to some researchers, it is thus the opposite of transformational leadership style. As can be understood from its name, the transactional leadership style means continuing what has been learned from the previous leader, such as parent to child, and directing employees accordingly. The transactional leader relies on reciprocal relationship structures (Erturgut, 2009). That is, the leader helps the employees achieve their goals, while the employees follow the leader's path to do so (Shriberg, Shriberg & Lloyd, 2002). Transactional and transformational leadership styles can also be associated with Maslow's hierarchy of needs in that the former focuses more on meeting basic goals, while the latter focuses on self-actualization and transferring values and facts (Şahin, 2003). While transformational leaders attempt to change the organizational culture, transactional leaders work within it (Burns, 1978). Transactional leaders typically use a management-by-exception approach, where they actively monitor the performance of their followers and intervene to correct any deviations from established standards. They use rewards such as bonuses, promotions, or other incentives to motivate followers to meet or exceed established goals and use punishments such as demotions or disciplinary actions to address performance issues. Transactional leadership can be effective in achieving specific goals and

maintaining stability in an organization, but it may not be as effective in promoting creativity, innovation, or employee engagement. Transactional leaders may also be less effective in promoting long-term organizational growth and development.

Known as "absence of leadership", laissez-faire leadership is one of the ineffective and destructive leadership styles, which is assumed to erode the trust both in supervisors and organizations (Tosunoglu & Ekmekci, 2016). Laissez-faire leadership, also known as "hands-off" leadership, is a style of leadership where the leader provides minimal direction or guidance and allows followers to make their own decisions. Laissez-faire leaders tend to have a low level of involvement in the day-to-day operations of their teams and delegate a significant amount of responsibility to their followers. They may also be less involved in decision-making and provide little or no feedback or support (Eisenberger, Malone & Presson, 2016). Laissez-faire leadership allows total freedom, so it does not need greater managerial power. Instead, it expects employees to perform their duties and fulfill their responsibilities independently. Such leaders do not claim authority; instead, they give their subordinates the right to use their full authority (Eren, 2009). Laissez-faire leadership can have both positive and negative effects on the organization and its employees. On the one hand, it allows for greater autonomy and creativity among employees and can be effective in situations where followers are highly skilled, experienced, and self-motivated. On the other hand, it can be detrimental for those who require more guidance and support, as it can lead to a lack of direction and accountability, poor communication, and low levels of motivation among employees. Laissez-faire leadership may not be the best approach in situations where the organization is facing a crisis, or when employees are not skilled or motivated enough to work independently since it can lead to confusion, lack of direction, and poor performance. Therefore, laissez-faire leadership should be used with caution and only under specific conditions.

Research hypotheses

This section constructs the hypotheses in order to reach the research outcome. The relationship between transformational leadership (a specific kind of inspiring and visionary leadership) and organizational commitment has been demonstrated in a meta-analysis by Meyer and colleagues (Meyer et al., 2002). Furthermore, a meta-analysis by Gerstner

and Day (Gerstner & Day, 1997) found a corrected correlation between a leader-employee exchange (LMX; i.e., a positive and trusting relationship between a leader and employee) and organizational commitment of .42. Although the direction of causality is unclear, these results suggest that promoting healthy and fulfilling leader-employee relationships is an important means of ensuring employees remain committed to the organization. Hence, such studies are focused on two-way relationships between leadership styles and perceived organizational support. For example, Anafarta (Anafarta, 2015) reported a negative relationship between turnover tendency and organizational support, while Erol and Bozbayindir (Erol & Bozbayindir, 2018) found a weakly significant positive relationship between perceived organizational support and leadership based on social responsibility. Eisenberger et al. (Eisenberger et al., 2002) reported that the intensity of positive emotion increased in employees with a high perception of organizational support. Eser (Eser, 2011) found that trust has little effect on perceived organizational support and concluded that other independent variables should be used to explain perceived organizational support. Regarding leadership styles, Drzewiecka and Roczniewska (Drzewiecka & Roczniewska, 2018) revealed that leader behaviors could minimize workplace problems, while Elçi et al. (Elçi, Erdilek Karabay & Akbas, 2016) found that school principals exhibit transactional and transformative leadership styles at a high level and a laissez-faire leadership style at a moderate level. Finally, Gaudet and Tremblay (Gaudet & Tremblay, 2017) concluded that leaders who can exercise their authority immediately could affect individual workplace behaviors, thereby increasing the perception of organizational support. On the basis of the above discussion, it is proposed that:

H_1. Leadership styles affect the level of employees' perceived organizational support.

H_{1A}: Transformational leadership style positively affects the level of perceived organizational support.

H_{1B}: Transactional leadership style positively affects the level of perceived organizational support.

H_{1C}: Laissez-faire leadership positively affects the level of perceived organizational support.

Oshagbemi (Oshagbemi, 2004) pointed out the importance of the association between demographic factors (especially age) and leadership. In the first place, they explain that older workers remain in employment for longer and work side-by-side with younger members in various work and

leadership roles. It is no secret that today's workers, as a result of several reasons, live much longer than their counterparts in the last generation. As older and younger employees abound in organizations, there is the need to manage both of them effectively in order to realize organizational goals more fully. Both age groups have something to offer: technology has driven the rapid promotion of younger workers, while experience has made the older workers highly relevant. In addition, in today's flatter organizations, there is a greater interaction between younger and older workers and the practice of leadership is no longer an exclusive domain of the older people, as it used to be (Oshagbemi, 2004). Older managers, on the other hand, may better appreciate the practical value of consultation in getting unit members to support the resulting decisions of the head or in arriving at superior decisions for the unit. The studies especially show that age criterion is decisive in tiring professions. The age of the worker was also considered to be one influencing factor in job turnover. In a previous study (Asegid, Belachew & Yimam, 2014) undertaken in China for 20–30-year-old nurses, work satisfaction and job stress were significant predictors of anticipated turnover. For 31–40-year-old nurses, work satisfaction was predictive of anticipated turnover.

Apart from age, another study (Alijanpour, Dousti & Khodayari, 2013) showed that managers should create organizational support if they intend to increase organizational commitment, which contributes to the employees' satisfaction, that is, the job position mediates positive relationships between the organizational support and employees' satisfaction. The choice of demographic factors such as age, job position, and service interval in understanding perceived organizational support (POS) reflects the intricate dynamics of modern workplaces. Age diversity is pivotal due to the breadth of perspectives and experiences it encompasses. Older employees often bring extensive knowledge, while younger counterparts offer technological adeptness. Generational disparities necessitate tailored support systems to accommodate varied expectations. Job position plays a crucial role in accessing support structures and experiencing leadership styles, directly impacting POS. Higher-ranking positions may perceive greater support due to more resources and autonomy. Service interval, indicative of tenure, signifies familiarity with organizational culture, potentially influencing POS perceptions. Long-serving employees may feel more embedded in the organization, expecting deeper support. Understanding these factors aids in crafting nuanced support mechanisms aligned with diverse employee needs and expectations, fostering a supportive organizational culture conducive to employee well-being and performance.

Research indicates that employees' perceptions of organizational support and the applied leadership style both influence their performance and workplace behaviors. On the basis of the above discussion, it is proposed that:

H₂. Demographic characteristics significantly affect the level of employees' perceived organizational support.

H$_{2A}$: Perceived organizational support varies significantly according to the employee's age.

H$_{2B}$: Perceived organizational support varies significantly according to the employee's position.

H$_{2C}$: Perceived organizational support varies significantly according to the employee's service interval.

Data and method

This section consists of the sampling frame, development of a data collection tool, and data analysis.

Sampling frame

The study population consisted of all employees in container shipping agencies in Turkey. The list of container shipping agencies was provided by the Maritime Association of Shipowners and Agents (VDA). Since the population is not known exactly, the sample size is calculated using the following equation: $n = t^2 p(1-\text{p})/e^2$. Here, t represents the value obtained from the t table at the determined error level, p represents the probability of occurrence of the investigated event, and e denotes the desired deviation from the mean. Accordingly, it is deemed appropriate to use a sample of $n = (1.96)^2(0.5)(1-0.5)/(0.06)^2 = 267$ units. Random sampling is utilized with a sampling frame comprising 258 employees collected between March 2021 and April 2021. This represents the sample population with a deviation margin from the mean of approximately ±0.06. There is no specific reason for choosing this deviation level, but a deviation level between 1 % and 10 % is generally appropriate when determining the number of units to be selected for sampling.

Development of data collection tool

Data was collected using a three-part questionnaire form. The first part collected demographic

information about gender, age, marital status, education level, number of people working in the household, number of children and age, and questions about the participant's work, such as time worked, time worked with the current manager, company structure, and weekly working hours. The second part used the organizational support scale (OSS) to determine the organizational support perceptions of the shipping agency employees. The third part utilized the leadership styles scale to identify the leadership styles of the managers of the participating ship agency employees.

The organizational support scale, first developed by Eisenberger et al. (Eisenberger et al., 1986), was translated into Turkish by Akın (Akın, 2008). The OSS is a measure used to assess the degree to which an individual perceives their organization as supportive. It is a self-report scale that assesses an individual's perceptions of the level of support provided by their organization in areas such as communication, opportunities for participation, recognition, and overall trust in the organization. The OSS is typically used in research studies to examine the relationship between organizational support and various outcomes, such as job satisfaction, commitment, and turnover intentions. The scale's validity and reliability (Eisenberger et al., 1986) and its internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach alpha) are $\alpha = 0.97$ (Eğriboyun, 2013). The OSS has 16 statements in one dimension. In the present study, the translated questionnaire kept the use of seven reverse-scored items from the original (Eğriboyun, 2013). Participants respond to the statements using a 5-point Likert-type scale.

The 45-item leadership styles scale, developed by Bass and Avolio (Bass & Avolio, 1995), was translated into Turkish with 35 items by Akan et al. (Akan, Yıldırım & Yalçın, 2014). The scale has three dimensions: transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership. Participants respond using a 5-point Lıkert-type scale. Therefore, scores for transformative, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership can vary from 20 to 100, from 7 to 35, and from 8 to 40, respectively.

Data analysis

The data is analyzed using three different methods: correlation analysis, multiple linear regression analysis, and one-way analysis of variance. For the organizational support scale, each participant's total score represented their level of perceived organizational support. For the leadership styles scale, each participant's total scores are calculated for each leadership style to represent their perceptions of the leadership styles in their organization.

The relationship between perceived organizational support and leadership styles is investigated using correlation analysis. Correlation coefficients can vary between −1 and +1. If the correlation coefficient is 0, there is no linear relationship between the variables, whereas the closer the correlation coefficient is to +1, the stronger the positive relationship is between the variables, and the closer it is to −1, the stronger the negative relationship is between the variables (Işığıçok, 2018, p. 223). In this study, the statistical significance level is 0.05.

The effect of leadership styles on perceived organizational support is evaluated using a multiple linear regression analysis. This model includes independent variables that explain changes in the dependent variable (Gunst & Mason, 1980). In the present study, the dependent variable is perceived organizational support, while the independent variables are transformative leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership.

One-way ANOVA is used to determine whether shipping agency employees' perceived organizational support scores vary significantly according to income, job position, length of service, and time worked with the current manager. A significant difference between classes reveals that the perceived organizational support score, which is the dependent variable, is affected by one or more of the independent variables. The Shapiro-Wilk test is used to test whether the variables are normally distributed, as ANOVA requires that this assumption is met. Homogeneity of variances, another assumption for ANOVA, is evaluated with the Levene test. Since the Shapiro-Wilk test data did not fit the normal distribution ($p < 0.05$), the significance of the relationships is evaluated using the non-parametric Kruskal Wallis H test instead of the one-way ANOVA.

Findings

In total, 258 responses were received to the distributed questionnaires. The descriptive statistics of the participants are given in Table 1. As can be seen from Table 1, the surveyed sector has a relatively young workforce with a high proportion of employees aged 26–35. Additionally, the majority (56 %) of the respondents are university graduates, indicating that the sector employs a highly educated workforce. However, there is a lower proportion

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Groups	Number	%
Age	18–25	40	15.5
	26–35	133	51.6
	36–45	60	23.3
	46–55	24	9.3
	55 or more	1	0.4
Gender	Female	98	37.8
	Male	161	62.2
Education	High School	17	6.6
	University	198	76.7
	Master	39	15.1
	PhD	4	1.6
Marital Status	Single	139	54.1
	Married	118	45.9
Employee Number in Family	1–3	239	93.4
	3–5	10	3.9
	6 or more	7	2.7
Number of Children (**)	0	169	66.8
	1	80	31.6
	2	0	0.0
	3 or more	4	1.6
Salary Level (in Turkish Lira)	Minimum Wage	11	4.3
	1.6–3.0	29	11.4
	3.0–5.0	108	42.4
	5.0–10.0	71	27.8
	10.0 or more	36	14.1
Weekly Working Hours	Part-time	13	5.1
	30–50	200	78.4
	50 or more	42	16.5
Job Position	Personal	169	65.5
	Team Leader	32	12.4
	Junior Manager	37	14.3
	Senior Manager	20	7.8
Job Experience	0–1	78	30.6
	1–3	76	29.8
	3–5	33	12.9
	5–10	34	13.3
	10 or more	34	13.3
Time Period with Same Manager (Year)	0–1	95	37.1
	1–3	88	34.4
	3–5	29	11.3
	5–10	23	9.0
	10 or more	21	8.2
Type of Company	Family	59	23.1
	Multi-partner	69	27.1
	Holding	127	49.8

* The minimum wage in Turkey in 2019 was USD 350.
** Defined as the number of household members under 18.

of female employees compared to male employees, suggesting that the sector may have a higher concentration of male employees. A large proportion of employees are seen to work with a low salary, and the majority are single. This may indicate that the company is not offering competitive wages, which may make it difficult for employees to support themselves and their families. Additionally, a lack of benefits or opportunities for advancement may be leading employees to prioritize their careers over starting a family. It is important for the shipping company to address these issues in order to attract and retain talented employees.

A correlation analysis is conducted to determine the strength of the relationship between perceived organizational support and each leadership style (i.e., transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire). The study likely found that transformational leadership is associated with stronger relationships between leaders and followers compared to transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles. This is because transformational leaders focus on inspiring and motivating their followers, which can lead to a sense of trust, loyalty, and commitment from the followers towards the leader. In contrast, transactional leaders focus on achieving specific tasks and goals, and may not build as strong a relationship with their followers. Laissez-faire leaders, with their hands-off approach, may not build any relationships with their followers at all.

Table 2. Correlations between leadership styles and perceived organizational support

	Transformational Leadership	Transactional Leadership	Laissez-faire Leadership
Perceived Organizational Support	0.466*	0.353*	0.221*

* Statistically significant at the $\alpha = 0.01$ significance level.

As shown in Table 2, although varied in strength, a positive and significant relationship arises between all three leadership styles and perceived organizational support. A multiple linear regression analysis is then used to measure the effect of leadership styles on perceived organizational support. The findings are given in Table 3.

As Table 3 shows, the model is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) in which the three leadership styles combined explain 55 % of the variance in perceived organizational support. In the model, all the parameters of the independent variable (i.e., leadership

Table 3. Multiple linear regression analysis

	Model 1	
	β	t
Constant	0.731*	4.964
Transformational Leadership	0.366*	13.277
Transactional Leadership	0.164*	3.597
Laissez-faire Leadership	0.215*	5.824
Adj. R^2		0.550
Average Square		7.863
F		8.965
Significance		0.000

* Statistically significant at the $\alpha = 0.01$ significance level.

styles) and the cut-off term are statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). That is, all three leadership styles had a significant effect on perceived organizational support.

The non-standardized β coefficient values indicate that a 1-unit change in transformative, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership style causes a 0.366-unit, 0.164-unit, and 0.215-unit change in perceived organizational support, respectively. That is, all three leadership styles significantly affect the perceived organizational support of shipping agency employees. Transformational leadership had the largest effect, followed by laissez-faire and then transactional leadership. Table 4 presents the findings regarding the potential effects on perceived organizational support of income, job position, length of service, and time worked with the current manager.

Table 4. Effect of demographic variables on perceived organizational support

Demographic Variables	Perceived Organizational Support		
	Method	Method Stats.	p-value
Age	Kruskal-Wallis H	3.916	0.418
Job Position	Kruskal-Wallis H	5.110	0.164
Length of Service	Kruskal-Wallis H	3.448	0.486
Time Worked with Current Manager	Kruskal-Wallis H	0.137	0.998

Table 4 shows that perceived organizational support is not significantly affected by income, job position, length of service, or time worked with the current manager. This could mean that organizational support may be perceived as being consistently provided regardless of an employee's individual circumstances.

Discussion and conclusions

This section identifies the theoretical and managerial implications of the findings, followed by the conclusion in which the findings are summarized, and limitations and suggestions for future research are suggested.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical implications of the findings from this research using the organizational support scale (OSS) can help to further our understanding of the role that organizational support plays in shaping employee attitudes and behaviors.

This study examines the relationship between the leadership styles of Turkish shipping agency managers and the organizational support levels perceived by their employees. The study used the organizational support scale and the leadership styles scale and found that approximately 56 % of the variance in perceived organizational support can be explained by the three different leadership styles. The study found that the transformational leadership style has the strongest positive effect on employees' perceived organizational support. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate their followers, provide opportunities for participation and involvement, and create an environment that supports and enhances aspects of employee creativity. As a result, employees who feel that they are working with a transformational leader are more likely to feel supported by the organization. This confirms previous research regarding transformational leadership. For example, Suifan et al. (Suifan, Abdallah & Al Janini 2018) highlighted the essential role of transformational leaders in inspiring employees to generate innovative ideas and solutions. Similarly, Shin and Zhou (Shin & Zhou, 2003) reported that transformational leaders, who show concern for their employees' well-being, problems and wants, enhance employees' ability to generate creative ideas and be open to new, unique perspectives.

In addition, we found a positive relationship between perceived organizational support and the leadership styles dimensions. This suggests that such leaders are more likely to encourage employees to challenge the traditional way of completing tasks by interacting with them and giving them necessary information, which enhances creativity (Robinson & Beesley, 2010; Jyoti & Dev, 2015; Mittal & Dhar, 2015). Eisenberger and Stinglhamber (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011) also concluded

that leadership style, management communication, and internal social network within the organization are closely related to perceived organizational support. The findings in this study directly concern two different actors in the maritime sector. First, human resources managers should prioritize candidate managers with a transformative leadership style. Second, employees who aim to become managers in the sector should equip themselves with transformative leadership characteristics. Ship agency employees are expected to be accurate, creative, and fast workers. Creative employees are a particularly valuable resource for an organization's survival in today's competitive environment.

Transformational leaders help to create an environment that supports and enhances some aspects of employee creativity (Suifan & Marwa, 2017). Currently, although the maritime sector requires that employees have significant work experience, this is unachievable due to high employee turnover. Furthermore, in shipping, traditional leadership is mostly dominant, while transformative leaders are rare. Yet the sector needs transformational leaders to boost employees' feeling of being supported and valued by the organization. When employees feel strongly associated with their managers, they tend to become emotionally attached to their organizations (Stinglhamber et al., 2015) and less likely to intend to quit (Anafarta, 2015). The intensity of positive emotion increases in employees who perceive high organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 2002), whereas abusive management reduces employees' perceived organizational support and makes retaliation more likely (Shoss et al., 2013). Perceived organizational support will increase, and employee turnover rates will fall. Many ship agent managers are unwilling to become leaders to employees; instead of using power and authority, they should prefer guidance, support, and encouragement. Leaders who rely on supportive techniques instead of authority and power can more effectively motivate their employees to achieve organizational goals and deal with uncertainties (Ackoff & Pourdehnad, 2009).

On the other hand, transactional leadership style has been found to be less positively related to POS. Transactional leaders focus on maintaining the status quo and achieving specific goals through rewards and punishments. They may lack the inspiration and motivation that transformational leaders provide, and employees may not feel as valued and supported by the organization. Transactional leaders focus on maintaining the status quo and achieving specific

goals through rewards and punishments. They may lack the inspiration and motivation that transformational leaders provide, and employees may not feel as valued and supported by the organization.

Laissez-faire leadership can also have a less positive impact on POS, as employees may feel a lack of direction and accountability, poor communication, and low levels of motivation. As a result, employees may not feel supported by the organization. Some previous research (Eren, 2009) has suggested that this style can have a positive impact on employee motivation and engagement, as team members feel trusted and empowered. However, it can also lead to less structure and accountability, which may negatively impact productivity and results.

The present study did not find any significant relationship between perceived organizational support and the demographic variables (i.e., income, job position, service interval, and time worked with the current manager). Junior shipping agency employees have to work very hard at certain times. Until they become a more senior employee, they have to develop their job skills in tough conditions. Once their skills develop, they look for a new job. The high turnover rate among junior shipping agency employees suggests that the working conditions and opportunities for skill development may not be sufficient to retain them. This can create a significant problem for the organization since they constantly have to recruit and train new employees, which can be costly and time-consuming. From a theoretical perspective, this finding may support the idea of the psychological contract, which suggests that employees have certain expectations of their employer, and, when these expectations are not met, they may choose to leave the organization. Additionally, this finding may also support the idea of the "job demands-resources" model, which argues that high employee turnover is more likely when job demands outweigh resources. As the descriptive statistics show, shipping agency employees in Turkey have a very high educational level (see Table 1). This is because the number of primary school graduates has decreased since the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure obliged all agency personnel to be at least high school graduates. Nevertheless, primary school graduates still work in this field as agent managers, which may cause interpersonal conflicts and poor communication due to educational differences. Interpersonal conflicts also significantly impair organizational performance and reduce perceived organizational support.

Managerial Implications

From a managerial perspective, the findings from this research using the organizational support scale (OSS) offer actionable insights into how shipping agencies can cultivate a supportive and conducive work environment for their employees. The implications drawn from the study can inform strategic decisions and initiatives aimed at enhancing employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention within Turkish shipping agencies.

One significant managerial implication centers around the importance of fostering effective communication and trust within the organization. If low levels of communication and trust are identified as areas of concern, shipping agencies should prioritize implementing strategies to improve communication channels and build trust among employees. This could involve establishing regular communication channels, such as team meetings or feedback sessions, to facilitate open dialogue and information sharing. Additionally, investing in training programs focused on communication skills and interpersonal relationships can empower managers and employees alike to engage in constructive communication practices that foster a culture of transparency and collaboration. Furthermore, addressing the need for skill development and creating a supportive work environment for junior employees emerges as a critical managerial imperative.

Shipping agencies in Turkey should proactively provide opportunities for skill enhancement and professional development to junior employees, enabling them to acquire the necessary competencies and advance their careers within the organization. This could entail implementing structured training and development programs tailored to the unique needs and aspirations of junior staff members. Additionally, fostering a supportive work environment that recognizes and values the contributions of junior employees can help bolster morale, motivation, and commitment to the organization. To effectively address these challenges and opportunities, shipping agencies may consider implementing a range of initiatives and interventions. These could include offering comprehensive training programs aimed at developing leadership and communication skills among managers, creating mentorship programs to support the professional growth and development of junior employees, and establishing mechanisms for soliciting and acting upon employee feedback to continuously improve organizational processes and practices. Moreover, it is essential for shipping agencies to conduct regular assessments of the prevailing working conditions and organizational culture to identify any factors contributing to high employee turnover rates. By conducting thorough reviews and analyses, shipping agencies can pinpoint areas for improvement and implement targeted interventions to mitigate turnover risks and enhance employee retention. This may involve addressing issues such as workload management, job satisfaction, career advancement opportunities, and work-life balance to create a more supportive and fulfilling work environment for employees at all levels of the organization.

Conclusion

This study contributes to theoretical frameworks in organizational behavior and leadership studies. The research underscores the significance of the organizational support scale (OSS) in examining the complex interplay between leadership styles and employees' perceptions of organizational support. By employing well-established scales, such as the OSS and leadership styles scale, the study provides a robust methodological foundation for investigating the nuanced dynamics within the shipping agency sector.

Theoretical implications extend beyond the maritime industry, offering insights into broader organizational contexts. The emphasis on transformational leadership as a driver of perceived organizational support aligns with established theories on leadership effectiveness and employee engagement. Transformational leaders, characterized by their visionary outlook and ability to inspire followers, play a pivotal role in shaping organizational culture and fostering a sense of belonging among employees. The findings reaffirm the notion that leadership practices profoundly influence employee attitudes, behaviors, and, ultimately, organizational outcomes. Moreover, the study underscores the relevance of psychological contract theory in understanding employee turnover and organizational dynamics. The discrepancy between employee expectations and organizational realities highlights the importance of aligning organizational policies and practices with employee needs and aspirations. As such, the study underscores the imperative for organizations to foster reciprocal relationships with employees, wherein mutual trust, respect, and support form the bedrock of the employment relationship.

This study offers actionable insights for shipping agencies seeking to optimize employee support and retention strategies. By recognizing the pivotal

role of leadership in shaping organizational culture, managers can prioritize the cultivation of transformational leadership qualities among managerial staff. Investing in leadership development programs and coaching initiatives can empower managers to adopt a more inclusive, participative approach to leadership, thereby enhancing employee morale and commitment. Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of addressing systemic challenges such as high turnover rates and interpersonal conflicts within the shipping agency sector. Implementing targeted interventions aimed at improving communication channels, resolving conflicts, and fostering a culture of inclusivity can mitigate turnover risks and enhance organizational resilience. Additionally, providing ample opportunities for skill development and career advancement can bolster employee engagement and loyalty, thereby contributing to a more sustainable talent pipeline within the organization. Finally, the study illuminates the intricate interplay between leadership styles, perceived organizational support, and employee outcomes within the Turkish shipping agency sector. By embracing transformational leadership principles and fostering a supportive organizational culture, shipping agencies can cultivate a workplace environment that nurtures employee well-being, fosters innovation, and drives sustainable growth. Moving forward, continued research and practice in this domain are essential for advancing our understanding of organizational dynamics and promoting positive workplace outcomes in the maritime industry and beyond.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

The study on the relationship between leadership styles and perceived organizational support within Turkish shipping agencies offers valuable insights into organizational dynamics. However, several limitations constrain the generalizability and depth of the findings, prompting opportunities for future research. Firstly, the reliance on self-reported measures introduces potential biases and limitations inherent to subjective assessments. Future studies could employ multi-source feedback or observer ratings to enhance the validity and reliability of the data collected, providing a more comprehensive understanding of leadership behaviors and their impact on employee perceptions. Secondly, the study's cross-sectional design hinders the establishment of causal relationships between leadership styles and perceived organizational support. Longitudinal or experimental research designs could provide deeper insights into the temporal dynamics and causal pathways underlying the relationships under investigation. By tracking changes in leadership behaviors and employee perceptions over time, researchers can uncover nuanced patterns and identify potential moderators or mediators that influence the observed associations. Furthermore, the study's exclusive focus on Turkish shipping agencies limits the generalizability of the findings to other industries and cultural contexts.

Future research could explore the universality or context-specific nature of leadership dynamics and organizational support across diverse sectors and geographic regions. Comparative studies across different organizational contexts would allow for a more nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between leadership styles, organizational culture, and employee perceptions. Moreover, the study's omission of certain variables, such as employee creativity, divergent thinking, and rewards, represents a notable limitation. Future research could adopt a more comprehensive measurement framework to capture the multidimensional nature of organizational support and its determinants. By exploring additional organizational factors, such as organizational justice, motivation, and commitment, researchers can uncover novel insights into the drivers of perceived organizational support and its implications for employee engagement and performance. Additionally, while the study emphasizes the role of leadership styles in shaping perceived organizational support, it may overlook other critical factors that influence employee perceptions.

Future research could also adopt a more holistic approach by examining the interplay between leadership behaviors, communication practices, feedback mechanisms, and organizational structure. By considering the broader organizational context, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which organizational support is fostered and sustained. While the study provides valuable contributions to the literature on organizational dynamics, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations and identify avenues for future research. By addressing methodological constraints, expanding the scope of inquiry, and considering alternative explanatory factors, future studies could advance our understanding of leadership effectiveness, employee perceptions, and organizational outcomes. Ultimately, such research efforts can inform evidence-based practices for enhancing employee well-being, organizational effectiveness, and sustainable growth across diverse organizational contexts.

Ethical consideration

This article has obtained ethical approval from the Graduate School of Social Sciences at Bandirma Onyedi Eylul University, identified by its unique identification number of 2021-2 and date of approval of 05/02/2021.

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