Understanding the Impact of ODI on the Interpersonal Skills of the Managers and its Effect on the Subordinates' Role Commitment

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Abstract

Continuous growth and expansion of a business can lead to various repercussions as the organization grows quickly in its size while the ways people interact and communicate remain the same. This paper aims to explore the impact of ODI on the interpersonal skills of managers and its effect on the role commitment of their subordinates within an organization. This study involves 15 managers and 165 subordinates from a seafood processing plant in Thailand. The focus is on identifying and improving the interpersonal skills of the managers in terms of self-awareness, listening, asking and coaching. Both self-evaluation and 360 degrees evaluation are employed in the surveys. The paper also quantitatively reports the changes in the subordinates' role commitment. The post ODI result concludes that there is no statistically significant change in the interpersonal skills of the targeted mid-level managers. However, the outcome is at a developmental stage and initial findings advocate that positive change is in effect. Interview analysis and the descriptive statistics illustrate a trend towards increased utilization of their interpersonal skills in all areas. Correlation analysis demonstrates a moderately strong link between the managers' self-evaluated coaching skills and subordinate's role commitment. The role commitment of subordinates showed a positive change that was statistically significant. Although the research is completed on a tight time frame and is based on a family business, it demonstrates intriguing results applicable to any organization that experiences rapid expansion. Also, it has implications for organizational communication research, particularly with respect to understanding of employee role commitment. ODI studies exploring interpersonal skills of managers and its effects on employees are available but very few in the Asian context, especially Thailand. The paper contributes greatly to the much needed understanding of such theme in the labor intensive seafood processing industries of Asia.

Keywords: *interpersonal skills, self-awareness, listening, asking, coaching, role commitment*

Introduction

Despite of transformational progress of technology that has influenced every aspect of businesses and their environment, no one can argue with the theory that the people are still the heart of all organizations. Legendary leaders like GE's Jack Welch spent much effort drawing out the potential of his people (Hoskisson, 2009). The idea that good leadership requires the management of social relationship (Balkundi, Kilduff, 2006) and alignment of people's strengths (Cooperrider, 2012), has become commonly accepted. This is why interpersonal skills have become an important determinant of success (Schwieterman, 2009).

The organization of study is a family business that grew just from 300 to 2700 people in over a decade. The apparent success did not result in just the swift growth. Beneath the glamor of organizational accomplishments, the number of mistakes and the complaints went up. Mid-level managers would like to have more role commitment from their subordinates and see this as a possible solution to the current challenge. Top management planned to decentralize so that the overgrown structure of the family business can regain the agile small business environment. Interpersonal skill is viewed as the foundation of other characteristics that could contribute to this vision. It also represents an opportunity for the managers to improve their competency hence promoting organic growth from within the organization while maintaining low risk of conflict and improving morale.

Research Objectives

1. To determine the interpersonal skills of managers in terms of:
   1.1. Self-awareness
   1.2. Listening Attentively
   1.3. Asking Questions
   1.4. Coaching

2. To identify the appropriate interventions that will improve the interpersonal skills of managers in the four areas of:
   2.1. Self-awareness
   2.2. Listening Attentively
   2.3. Asking Questions
   2.4. Coaching

3. To determine the initial impact of ODI in the four areas and evaluate the change in the interpersonal skills of managers in these areas.

4. To determine the effects of improved interpersonal skills of managers on directly reporting subordinates' role commitment.

Research Problem

The main focus of study is on understanding the impact of ODI on interpersonal skills of managers in terms of self-awareness, listening attentively, asking questions and coaching and its effect on subordinates' role commitment.

Research Questions

1. What is the proficiency of the managers in terms of:
   1.1. Self-awareness
   1.2. Listening Attentively
   1.3. Asking Questions
   1.4. Coaching
2. What are the appropriate interventions that will improve the interpersonal skills of managers in terms of :
   2.1. Self-awareness
   2.2. Listening Attentively
   2.3. Asking Questions
   2.4. Coaching

3. What is the initial impact of ODI on the four areas and how have the managers' interpersonal skills changed?

4. Does the managers' improved interpersonal skills, effect directly reporting subordinates' role commitment?

Research Hypotheses

Ho 1 There is no initial impact of ODI on the self - awareness of managers.
Ha 1 There is an initial impact of ODI on the self - awareness of managers.

Ho 2 There is no initial impact of ODI on the listening skill of managers.
Ha 2 There is an initial impact of ODI on the listening skill of managers.

Ho 3 There is no initial impact of ODI on the asking skill of managers.
Ha 3 There is an initial impact of ODI on the asking skill of managers.

Ho 4 There is no initial impact of ODI on the coaching skill of managers.
Ha 4 There is an initial impact of ODI on the coaching skill of managers.

Ho 5 There is no significant effect of improved interpersonal skills of managers on subordinates' role commitment.
Ha 5 There is a significant effect of improved interpersonal skills of managers on subordinates' role commitment.

Definition of Terms

Interpersonal Skills: refers to important skills involved in interacting with and connecting to other people in the organization, in this case self-awareness, listening, asking and coaching skills of mid-level managers.

Self-awareness: refers to the ability to perceive, reflect on and accurately assess one's own behaviors and skills with relations to other colleagues as they are practiced in workplace interactions.

Listening attentively: refers to a skill that requires hearing beyond the words. The essence is to discern through the expression of interest, show of patience and responding without judgment, everything there is to be understood about what the other party is really communicating.

Asking questions: refers to the process of inquiring in logical order to seek information that allows the managers to have impartial understanding. The focus is on process inquiry of the "how" rather than yes/no or leading questions, with the goal to objectively assess and identify sets of actions for the betterment of business and people results.

Coaching: refers to the formal and informal processes of transferring of knowledge and practice through guidance and feedback that grow and motivate employees to accomplish their tasks.

Subordinate Role: refers to how the directly reporting subordinates are expected to behave with regard to key requirements of their jobs function, including what others in the organization think the person is responsible for, and how he/she should carry out those responsibilities.

Subordinate Role Commitment: refers to action and willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, which is derived from and is aligned with one's role and acceptance of the values and goals the organization portrays.

Significance of Study

The interventions proposed to contribute to ushering organic growth from within the organization. Success will promote better communication and role-commitment. The improved interpersonal skills of managers contribute to success in both their business and private lives. They communicate with their subordinates better and therefore help them succeed more. Subordinates would have better-quality working experience and an environment that includes more understanding and appreciation for their inputs, more freedom and opportunity to perform and more responsibility.

Scope

The study was based on the mid-level managers/ supervisors of the company, Sea Chef Ltd. It is focused on the interpersonal skills of the above group of participants and only looked at the four variables of self-awareness, listening, asking and coaching. The study also covered the improvement of interpersonal skills of the managers and the effect on the subordinates' role commitment, within the time frame of 4 months.

Review of Literature

Interpersonal skills

How do the great leaders in their respective fields think about leadership? General Electric's Jack Welch for example mentioned communication with and polling employees as a great way to run an organization (Torrance, 2004). Management guru, Peter Drucker outlined that "the task of leadership is to create an alignment of strengths in ways that make a system's weaknesses irrelevant" (Cooperrider, 2012) which implies that a leader must have the ability to not only draw out but also gather and align his/her followers' strengths. There is no surer way to do this except through creating interpersonal relationships that foster such potential.

Leadership in principal, is the association that is taking place between those that lead and those who follow (Locke, 2003) by the use of guidance to encourage involvement in realizing agreed mutual goals (Yukl, 2009). Following the perspective above, it is vital that the connection between leadership and the necessity to influence through creation and utilization of social networks be well established (Balkundi, Kilduff,.2006). This network is regarded as social capital where skills with this orientation are receiving increased attention as the constituents of a leader's skill set (McCallum, 2009). They are referred to as interpersonal skills and include handling conflicts, running meetings, team building to negotiating expectations, persuading, empowering, and providing feedback (Bambacas, Patrickson, 2008). Among them are critical elements such as self-awareness (Short, 2012) and listening (Sears, 2007) and asking questions, which are skills that most people assume they can utilize effectively since they are used throughout life but their behavior suggests otherwise (McConnell CR, 2004)

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is the ability to reflect on and accurately assess one's own behaviors and skills as they are manifested in workplace interactions (Church, 1997). An individual who is self-aware has a deep understanding of his/her emotions, strengths, weaknesses and drives (Goleman, 1998). It is an essential skill for managers because the self-awareness theory proposes that individuals who are more capable of synthesizing information from others into their self-assessments and eventually into their behavior are more conscious of how they are perceived by others (McCarthy, Garavan, 1999, Ashford, 1989)This will formulate the basis of how leaders interact with other members of the organization and consequently their ability to cultivate positive relationships among all the members of their team. From these associations, it is reasonable to say that people who are self-aware are thought to be more effective managers and leaders than individuals who are less self-aware (Atwater, Yammariino, 1997). Other studies also highlighted that people who attained heightened states of self-awareness tend to be superior performers because awareness of oneself often brings about a deeper understanding of others (Janasz, Dowd and Schneider, 2011). It also allows the person to make good judgments via a truthful evaluation of self and others' requirements. In contrast, a manager's overestimation in his/her self-assessment is deleterious to

subordinates' performance (Moshavi, Brown, Dodd, 2003). That is why every manager in an organization should possess a good command of this aspect of interpersonal skill.

The notion that the awareness of oneself is the key to interpersonal transactions, is backed up by the theory of self-concept, how an individual sees oneself (Cohen, Fink, Gadon, Willits, 2002).

Communication

Communication is subjected to misrepresentation especially when the conversation is more complex and emotionally charged. When strong emotions are involved it further increases the difficulty to "listen" to the other person because both parties are subject to perceptual distortion. Self-awareness increases the capability of people to select their responses instead of reacting automatically to a given situation (Allen, 1995).

Listening

Leaders and managers need to influence employees in order to help them achieve their goals. Influencing employees requires listening to them (Hesselbein, Shrader., 2008). Listening to others leaders and managers can gather the information needed to capitalize on their interpersonal communication. The effectiveness of listening is directly linked to emotional level of the listener in a reversed linear relationship (Allen, 1995). In other words, the more emotional one becomes, the less he/she is able to listen effectively. Very few people however, would admit they are unskilled in listening (Donoghue, Siegel, 2005). Not many realize that listening is process that involves the interrelation of the use of sight, voice, and feelings rather than just hearing the words (Scarnati, 1998). In essence, to get through to people, the critical factor lies in not what a manager tells his subordinate but what he enables the subordinate to tell him (Goulston, 2009)

Asking Questions

In the previous section, compelling theories underscore that attentive listening have the capacity to decipher more than just the words. Used together with the "right" questions, the combination forms a powerful process that enables managers to capture what their subordinates are trying to convey in its entirety. Questioning skills can be categorized into five types (Wilkins, Carolin, 2012): sequence, binary, leading, content and process. By realizing importance of knowing what to ask and selecting the right questions, the managers can elevate their interpersonal skill.

Inquiry to oneself and others help develop and refine mental models. The key concept is to balance advocacy with inquiry because most managers are trained as advocates (Senge, 1990). As one rise up in an organization, the nature of the issues encountered is less clearly defined and simple answers are not enough. So rather than forceful advocacy, collaborative inquiries will yield more objective outcomes.

Inquiry is a process and dialog is the tool for it. Effective questions needed for a good dialog can be taught but at the same time "A state of tentativeness, a state of willingness to look deeply, to be open to surprise, to nurture those who are tentative" must also be present (Stack, 2006). The "Aspects of Scientific Inquiry" model consists of eight sub variables associated to inquiry and is aimed at guiding learners through the different stand points for a holistic approach during the inquiry process. For managers to objectively understand how he/she can objectively assess and identify actions for the betterment of business and people results, it is apparent that they must be proficient in the interpersonal skill of asking questions; that is to say inquiries aimed at both themselves and others in the organization.

Coaching

Coaching involves all three previously discussed skills of self-awareness, listening attentively and asking questions. They complement each other in helping managers develop their subordinates. The process also includes a crucial step of giving feedback. Feedback is the element of coaching that illustrates the coach's idea of the gap between the performance of the persons coached and what an improved version would be like (Wilson, 2004). It is a reflection that provides a source of information that helps the coaches assess their current and desired performance. It hugely draws on other interpersonal skills of the coach, predominantly in cases with critical information, because feedback must be given so that the dignity of the person coached is maintained.

Appreciativeness in coaching used in conjunction with the 4 D process of AI can help generate powerful questions to guide the coached persons and reframe their perspectives on the current situation and their abilities.

Coaching is a means to knowledge and practice transfer for managers that encourage the self-development of subordinates. Subordinates who feel their manager care about their development are more willing to perform and commit to their roles; in general these subordinates are said to be engaged.

Employee Engagement

The theme of employee engagement was largely explored by Kahn, William (1990), who outlined that employee engagement is about connecting of organization members' selves to their work roles. Therefore when employees are engaged, they dedicate and express themselves physically, intellectually, and emotionally during the course of their role performances.

Truly engaged employees are drawn to, and inspired by, their work (Rutledge, 2005). Hence they are committed to their roles. This type of employee attitudes and performance is linked to the leader's self-awareness (Moshavi, Brown, Dodd, 2003). The importance of interpersonal skills in terms of cultivating engagement is evident in a comparison of task-oriented and support-oriented leader behavior to their respective follower engagement. Findings suggest that relationship-based (support oriented)

construct was the strongest unique predictor of employee engagement (Xu, 2011). It confirms the practical implication that a relationship-oriented leader behavior should be prioritized for improved employee commitment.

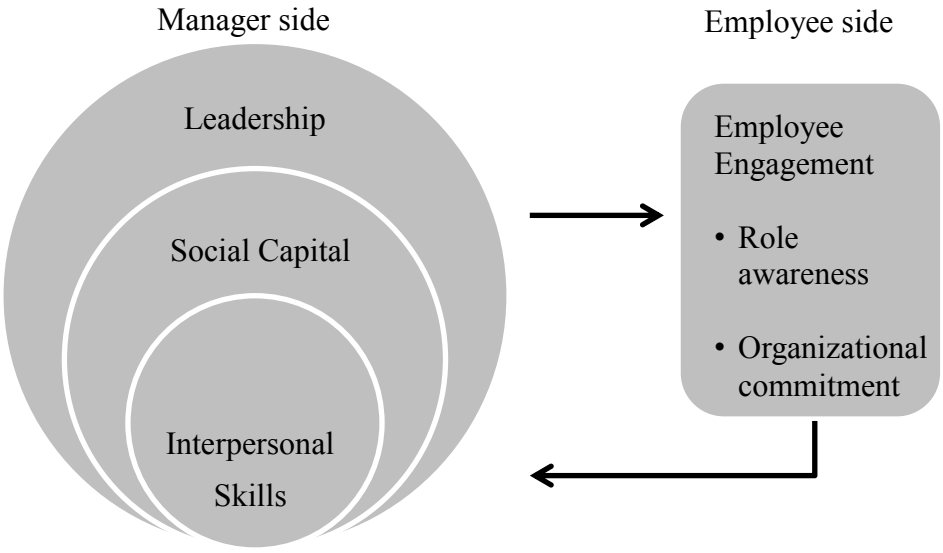

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

The central factor that defines a good leader is the ability to create good social relationships. In order to cultivate and expand social relationships, one needs to have good interpersonal skills. Leaders who have good relationships with their subordinates tend to have better employee engagement. Committed employees are more mindful of their purpose and function in an organization. This can result in higher organizational commitment which can be observed as the behavior and attitude resulting from the willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization. Their performances in turn contribute to the achievement of their managers which act as the feedback that completes the cyclic relationship in the system. (Figure 1)

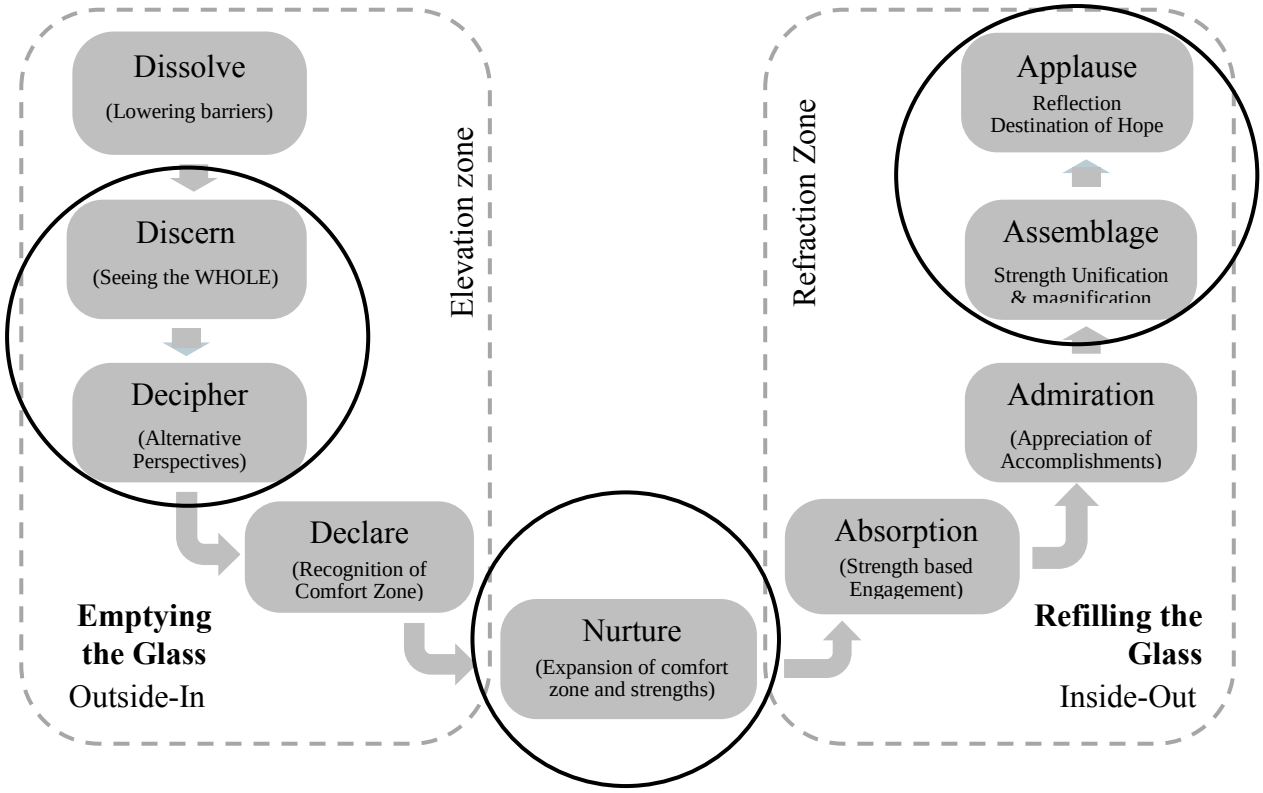

Figure 2. Strength in U model: Theoretical Framework 2

Source: Luesukprasert, 2012, MM 6815 ODT Interface Appreciative Coaching

The model in Figure 2 is called "Strength in U". The idea behind it is to bring realization/ willingness to change and share dreams together, design a mutually agreed path and cherish the change journey. The model has been developed by the researcher in an attempt to customize the OD initiative so that change will be more bite size thus increasing the possibility of success for those less familiar with OD processes. The framework consists of nine steps which are Dissolve, Discern, Decipher, Declare, Nurture, Absorption, Admiration, Assemblage and finally Applause. These four Ds, one N and four As, (DNA), are the processes that flow from one to the next with seamless transfers from understanding self, system, strengths to magnifying those strengths and then appreciating and refracting it to the environment and surrounding people.

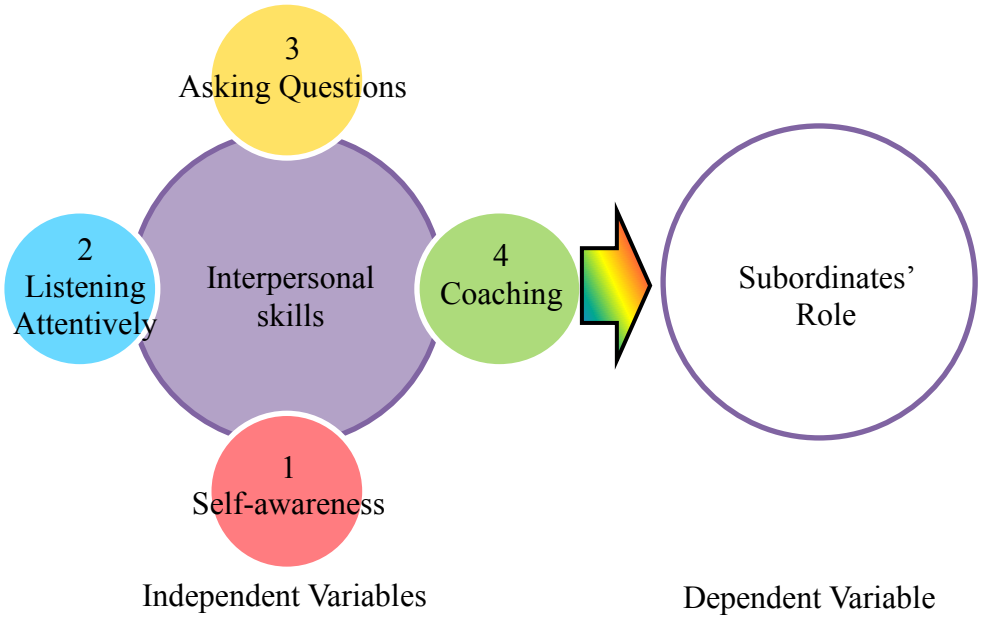

Figure 3. Conceptual framework

The researcher has the following five basic assumptions of OD that will underline the processes of this research.

1. Noticeable concrete change alone cannot create long lasting effects.
2. Change process should be considered with wholeness as the essence.
3. Every element in a human social system is connected with one another.
4. Change process can be applied simultaneously with respect to a holistic outcome.
5. OD is about improving and strengthening, not fixing problems.

There are four main underlying theories that articulate the five foundations of thought in this research. These are: Organizational Transformation, Whole Brain Literacy, Systems Thinking and Positive Organization Development.

Action Research Framework

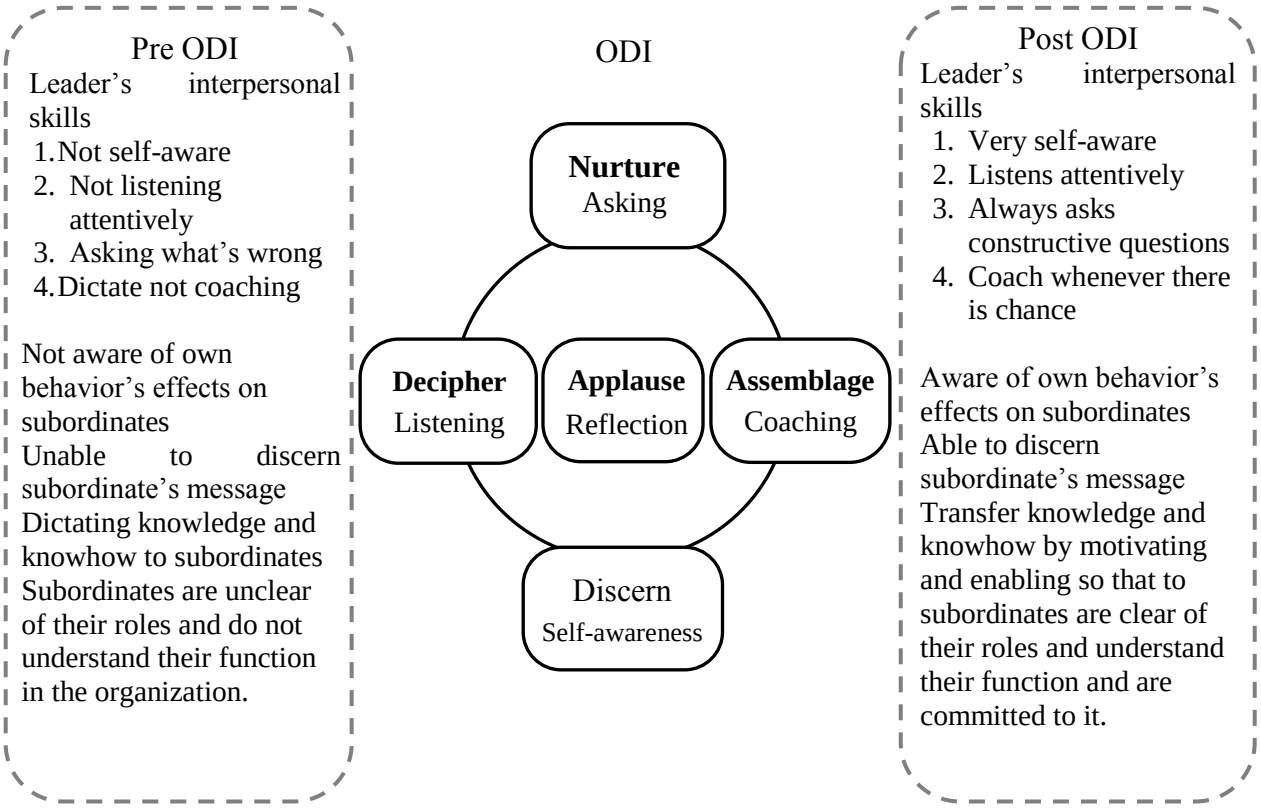

Figure 4. Action research framework

There are three stages in this action research as shown in Figure 4. The Pre ODI shows the current state of the managers' interpersonal skills in the four areas. These were subjected to OD Interventions as shown in the center, where each of the four aspects of interpersonal skills is connected to the corresponding OD process. The outcome is then depicted on the opposite side as post ODI desired state.

The Action Research Design as shown in Figure 5 further elaborates the process undertaken by the researcher in the implementation of the OD interventions.

Research Methodology

Research Design

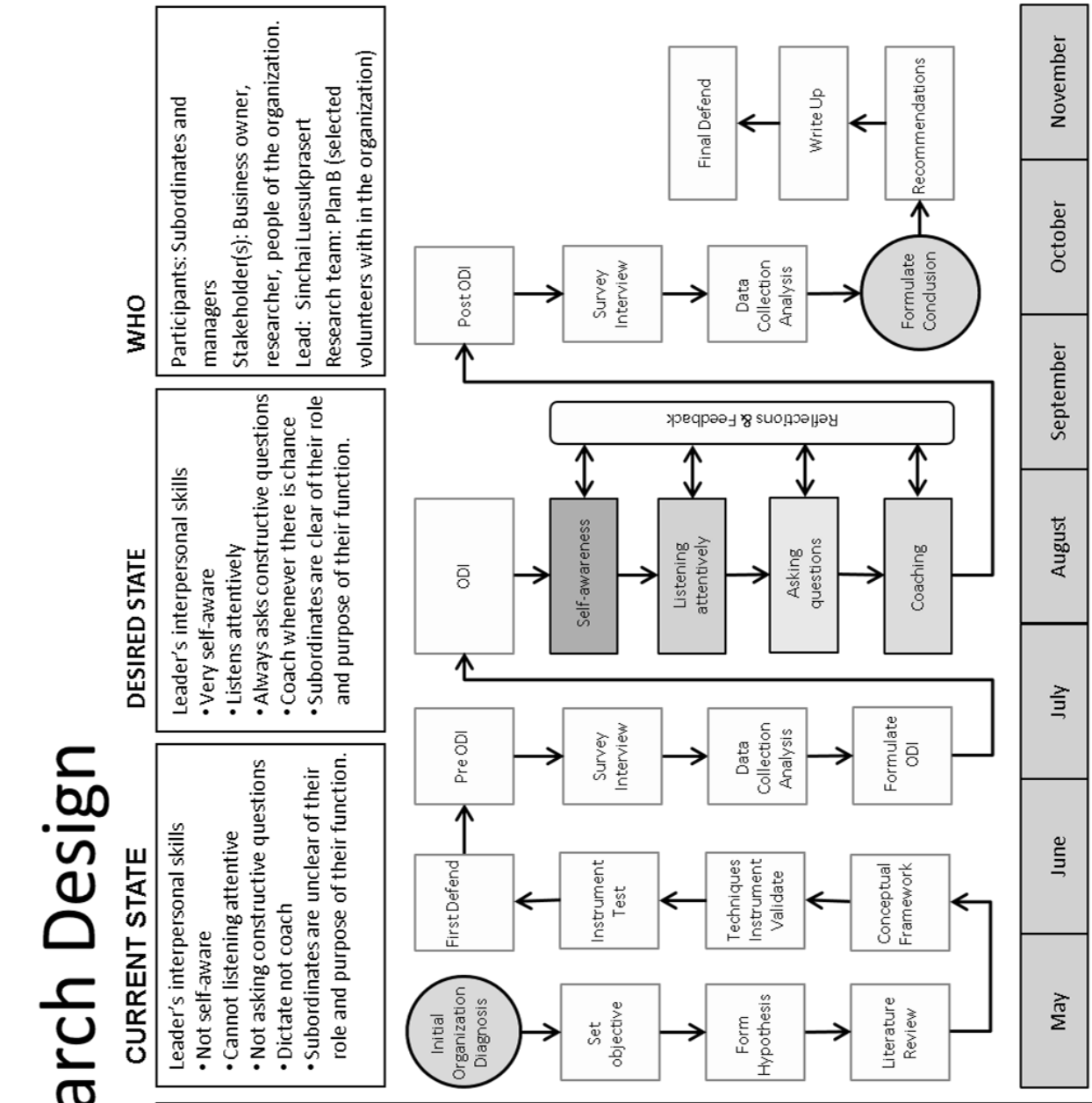

Figure 5. Action Research workflow

Instrumentation

The instruments that were be used in this study were questionnaires and interviews which were developed by the researcher.

Table 1 shows the design concept of the questionnaire based on questions for each of the four sub variables. The questions were intended to cover the key aspects mentioned in the definition of terms. In addition, the researcher aligned these key factors with WBL concept to further make classification of the data and make sure that the questionnaire was holistic. One questionnaire was intended for the managers' self-assessment, one for the subordinate to assess the manager (360 degrees feedback) , and another one to evaluate the subordinates' role commitment. All three were based on the rating scale of 6 with no middle ground to avoid indecisiveness found in the Asian culture where respondents are choose the middle value in order to play safe.

Interviews: Designed similarly to the questionnaires, the interviews (Table 1) were conducted using an interview guide and a table of analysis that helped the interviewer evaluate and categorize results. Each interview was limited to 30 minutes only.

Table 1. Sub-variable vs. interview questions

Sub-variable	Questions
Self-awareness	1. Describe the types of people you get along with best and why. 2. When you are dealing with subordinates, what really tries your patience and how do you deal with that?
Listening Attentively	3. Describe a situation when you were able to strengthen a relationship by communicating effectively 4. What made your communication effective?
Asking Questions	5. Tell me about a time when you had to assign work to a subordinate whom you disliked or with whom you had trouble working. What did you do to make the relationship work so the outcome is success for your company? 6. If you could change one thing about yourself that would make relating to people easier, what would that be and why?
Coaching	7. Describe how you changed the opinion of someone who seemed to have a very negative opinion of you. 8. In the past week what have you done in the past to build rapport and relationships with you subordinates?

Observations were not used for analysis in this research. The researcher was a part of the management team in the organization of study so it was probable that participants would not fully be able to express themselves in the presence of the researcher.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Numerical values were defined for the variables on a scale of 6: Never, Rarely, Once in a while, Sometimes, Often, and Always. (Table 2) The results were mathematically summarized using statistical techniques such as mean and mode. T-tests were applied to test statistical significance of the intervention on the participants' interpersonal skills and subordinates' role commitment. The correlation between the managers' interpersonal skills and subordinates' role commitment was also tested.

For the negatively constructed questions (no. 10 and 11) in the interpersonal skill questionnaires, the values of the answers were reversed. The scores were converted as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Table for score conversion

Descriptive answer	Never	Rarely	Once in a while	Sometimes	Often	Always
Actual Score	1	2	3	4	5	6
Arbitrary Score	1.00-1.83	1.84-2.67	2.68-3.50	3.51-4.33	4.34-5.16	5.17-6.00
Converted Score	6	5	4	3	2	1

The other 14 questions were worded so that 1 represented the least desired level and 6 represented the most desirable level of interpersonal skills in the four areas. Since questions 10 and 11 were worded negatively, 1 was the most desired and 6 was the least. The conversion process would make it easier to consider the results of these two questions in conjunction with the other 14 questions.

Qualitative Analysis

Interviews were subjected to content analysis by using the table of analysis (Table 3). Responses were classified according to Whole Brain Literacy (WBL) . From what the interviewee described, the interviewer identified that response with the keywords in the analysis table. These words were not regarded as absolute so words that have similar meanings were counted as well. The data from all interviewees were consolidated and plotted into bar charts with WBL color coding to help see the connections of the brain function to the quantitative survey result. Furthermore, data was quantified for comparison of the changes in brain functioning between pre and post ODI. This provided insight to the research as the researcher looked for any changes in the patterns or numbers that agreed and/ or disagreed with the quantitative findings.

Table 3.Table of analysis

Sub-variable	WBL oriented keywords			
	Posterior Right	Anterior Left	Posterior left	Anterior Right
Self-awareness	1. Relationship 2. Team	1. Work associated issues 2.Suppression	1. Want, need 2. Thought of action	1. Multiple 2. Diversity
Listening attentively	1. Appreciation 2. Understanding	1. Facts, figures 2. Judgment	1. Result 2. Goal	1. Ideas 2. Different approach
Asking question	1. Seeing whole 2. Compromise	1. Clarity, scope 2. Responsibility	1. Efficiency 2. The best way	1. New, different 2. Experiment
		1. Past experience 2. "Truth"	1. Practical 2. Behavior	1. Sharing 2. Reframing

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Research Question 1. What is the proficiency of the managers' interpersonal skill in the four areas?

The radar chart (Figure 6) shows the combined summary of the managers' interpersonal skill profile. The focus of the intervention in each of the four areas is marked in transparent color. Purple [ ] are the areas where managers ranked themselves the lowest. Grey [ ] are where subordinates' evaluation indicated their managers need most improvement.

The content of activities in the intervention processes were customized for emphasis in these areas. Some consideration were given to interview results and merged into the programs as well. The final ODI came from the consolidation of these findings and the theoretical and conceptual framework to make it as holistic and effective as possible.

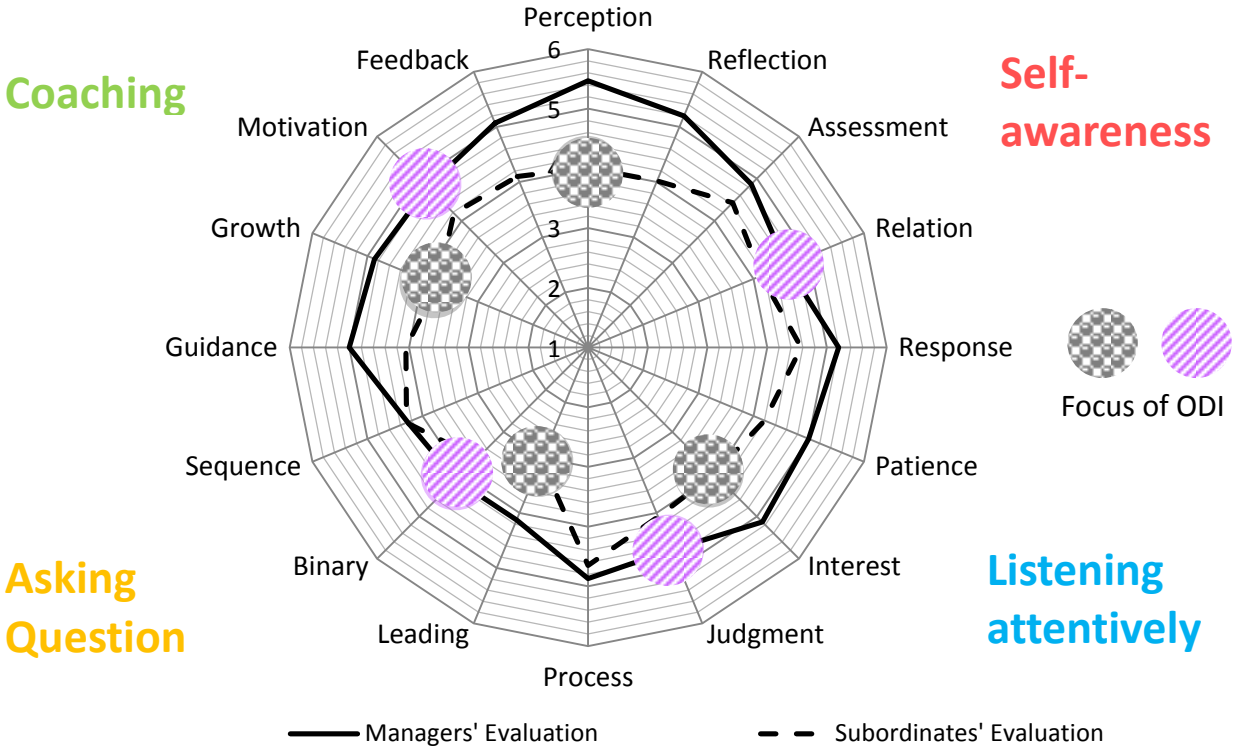

Figure 5. Graphic illustration of the managers' interpersonal skill profile (self and subordinate evaluation) and the focus area for OD intervention

Research Question 2: What are the appropriate interventions that will improve the interpersonal skills of managers in?

Ten (10) sessions of interventions were designed and implemented during the ODI period. The sessions were limited to 2 to 4 hours in duration to accommodate the working schedule of participants. The following data presentation only illustrates the intervention activities geared especially towards the focus areas identified in the analysis of pre-ODI data. It does not represent the whole intervention program.

Self- awareness

Reflection -19th July 2013 onwards- Name: Debriefing Diary & Magic Mirror

Getting participants to constantly practice their self-awareness by writing one self-reflection per day was the outcome expected from this activity. The diary and mirror were physical reminders for participants to keep at their side. Some participants wrote detailed feelings and showed a high level of awareness while others logged their activities mechanically which was aside from the original purpose. More than half the participants failed to write everyday but everyone had more than two entries per week.

Listening Attentively
Interest -5th August 2013- Name: Attentive Listening Skills

To emphasize useful skills that show interest to the speaker and help him speak more easily, participants learnt five listening skills, namely: minimal encouragements, paraphrasing, emotion labeling, mirroring (reflecting), asking for clarification. Many participants were very surprised that listening involved other forms of actions such as paraphrasing or giving encouragement like a simple nod or sounds that signified agreement.

By using different scenarios and switching roles from speaker, listener and observer, the participants were able to practice the skills towards another.

Asking Questions
Types of questions-23rd August 2013- Name: Advocacy and Inquiry

Managers learnt the difference between advocacy and inquiry. Participants were asked to save cost by terminating the jobs of their subordinates. They were tasked with having to use inquiry while refraining from advocacy to decide whose subordinate would have to leave the organization. This was the most serious of all interventions and the atmosphere was very solemn throughout.

Coaching
Growth -30th August 2013- Name: Appreciative Coaching

This intervention aimed to give the managers the appreciative hearts and eyes. The realization and the need to trust and believe in their subordinates were emphasized. Participants learnt how powerful questions can help both themselves and their subordinates to focus on their dreams. All the managers were very attentive and showed high level of interest.

Managers also shared many personal experiences and asked specific questions such as how to deal with demotivated employees who did not seem to "dream"? From the obvious attention and enthusiasm of the managers the researcher expected a good level of implementation in the real work environment.

Research Question 3: What is the initial impact of ODI on the four areas and how have the managers' interpersonal skills changed?

The null hypothesis "There is no initial impact of ODI on the self - awareness of managers" is accepted. Tables 4 and 5 illustrate the analysis of the results of the both managers' and subordinates' evaluation of the managers' interpersonal skill pre and post ODI.

Table 4. t-Test: Paired Two Sample for managers' evaluation of self-awareness (combined)

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means	α = 0.05	
	pre	post
Mean	5.054	5.107
Variance	0.117	0.257
Observations	14	14
Pearson Correlation	0.325	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	13	
t Stat	-0.392	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.701	Accept
T Critical Two-tail	2.160	

Table 5. t-Test: Two Sample Assuming Equal Variances for subordinates' evaluation of managers' self-awareness(combined)

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances	α = 0.05	
Unequal Sample Sizes	pre	post
Mean	4.148	4.118
Variance	1.643	1.598
Observations	165	148
Pooled Variance	1.622	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	311	
t Stat	0.210	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.834	Accept
T Critical Two-tail	1.968	

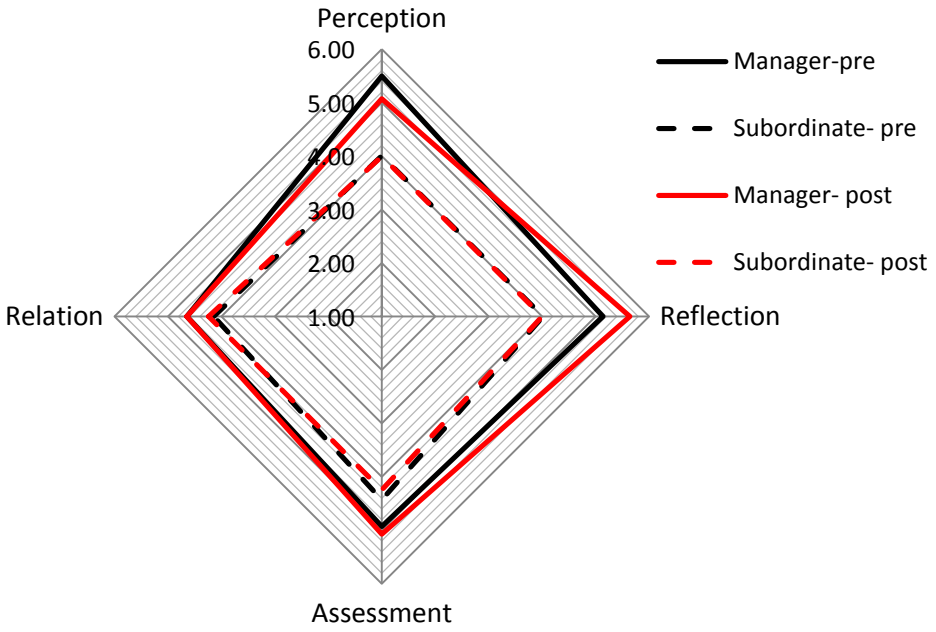

Figure 7. Self-awareness, Pre and Post ODI evaluation of managers and subordinates

The managers' self-evaluation show noticeably lower perception score than before. In fact the difference of 0.4 points is the second biggest difference of the four areas. It is possible to say that they were more self-aware than before the ODI judging from the smaller gap between their scores and their subordinates' evaluation. "Reflection" one of the focus of the intervention showed a substantial increase of 0.44 (Figure 7).

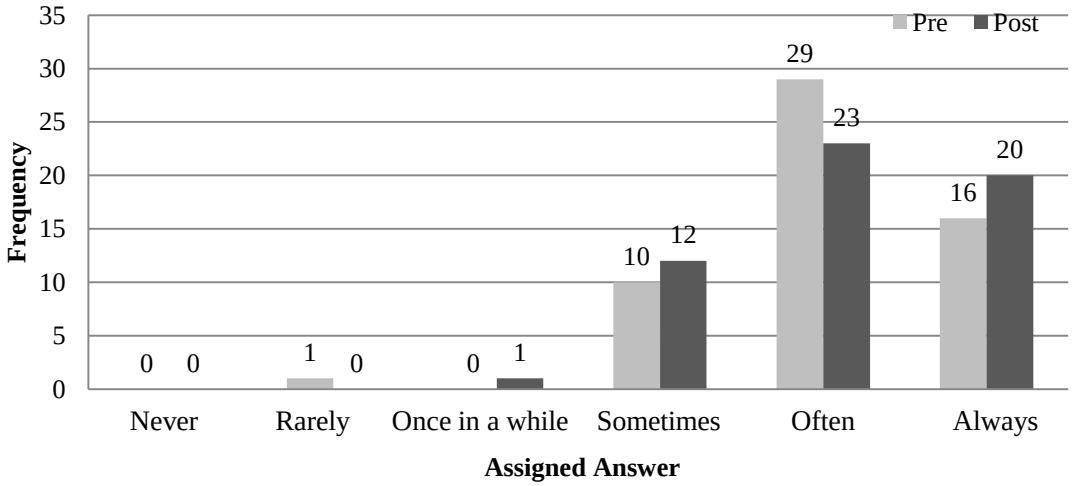

Figure 8. Frequency distribution of managers' selected answers for questions related to self- awareness in pre and post ODI surveys.

The N value for both pre and post ODI was 56, (14 participants x 4 questions). The bar chart above depicts quite clearly the tendency for managers to assign higher scores in the post ODI. After the ODI, the participants selected the choice for "Always"

score more frequently. The minimum score shifted from "rarely" to "once in a while" (Figure 8).

The null hypothesis "There is no initial impact of ODI on the listening skill of managers" is accepted.

Table 5. t-Test: Paired Two Sample for managers' evaluation of listening skill (combined)

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means	$\alpha = 0.05$	
	pre	post
Mean	5.036	5.179
Variance	0.143	0.254
Observations	14	14
Pearson Correlation	0.443	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	13	
t Stat	-1.119	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.283	Accept
T Critical Two-tail	2.160	

Table 6. T-Test: Two Sample Assuming Equal Variances for subordinates' evaluation of managers' listening skill (combined)

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances	$\alpha = 0.05$	
Unequal Sample Sizes	pre	post
Mean	4.209	4.206
Variance	0.961	1.027
Observations	165	148
Pooled Variance	0.992	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	311	
t Stat	0.027	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.979	Accept
T Critical Two-tail	1.968	

Tables 5 and 6 show that both subordinates' and managers' perspective supported the null hypothesis with a value of $P>0.05$.

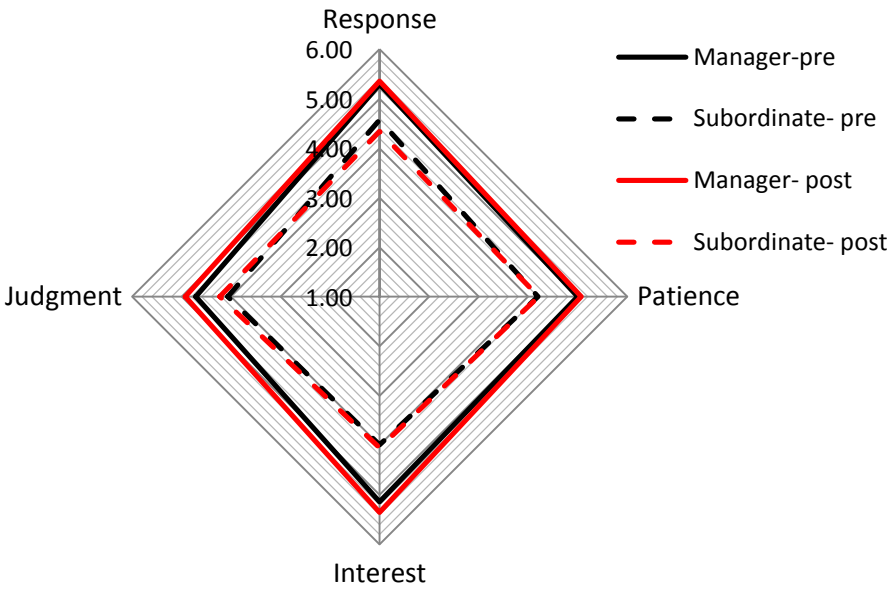

Figure 9. Listening, Pre and Post ODI evaluation of managers and subordinates

The radar chart (Figure 9) shows that from the managers' perspective, "judgment" and "interest" showed the biggest gains. Subordinates' evaluation was almost the same for pre and post ODI. The one month period for ODI implemented was a factor and was considered as not substantial in changing the subordinates' opinion about their managers.

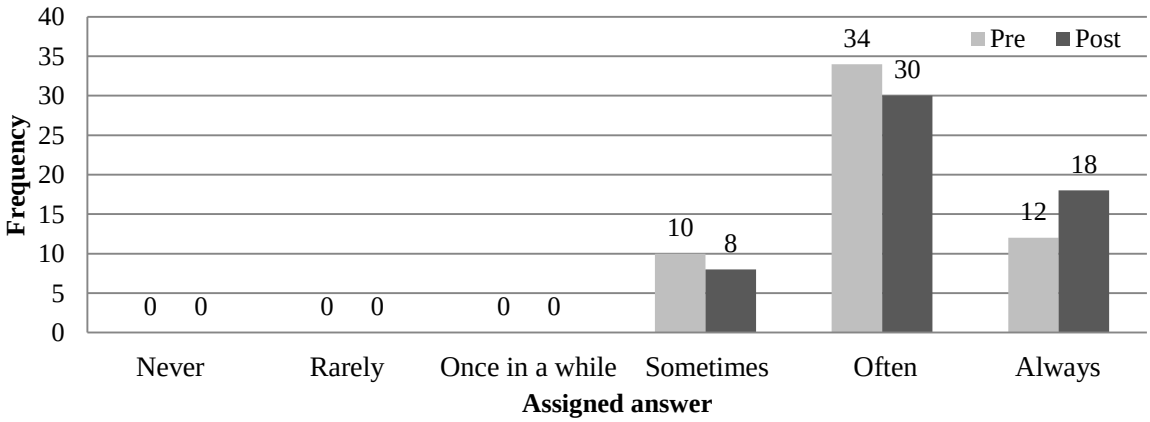

Figure 10. Frequency distribution of managers' selected answers for questions related to listening skill in pre and post ODI surveys.

Figure 10 shows the movement towards the right which is good indication that managers are consciously making the choice to use their listening skills more frequently. The most drastic change occurred with the highest choice "Always" which jumped 6 points .

The null hypothesis that states " There is initial impact of ODI on the asking skill of managers" is accepted. The P values were all more than α concluding in the acceptance of null hypothesis. It should be noted that question 9 representing the aspect of "sequence" (P=0.07) had the most improvement. (Tables 7 and 8)

Table 7. t-Test: Paired Two Sample for managers' evaluation of asking skill (combined)

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means	α = 0.05	
	pre	post
Mean	4.339	4.500
Variance	0.237	0.231
Observations	14	14
Pearson Correlation	-0.123	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	13	
t Stat	-0.830	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.422	Accept
T Critical Two-tail	2.160	

Table 8. t-Test: Two Sample Assuming Equal Variances for subordinates' evaluation of managers' asking skill (combined)

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances	α = 0.05	
Unequal Sample Sizes	pre	post
Mean	3.905	3.868
Variance	0.823	0.695
Observations	165	148
Pooled Variance	0.762	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	311	
t Stat	0.367	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.714	Accept
T Critical Two-tail	1.968	

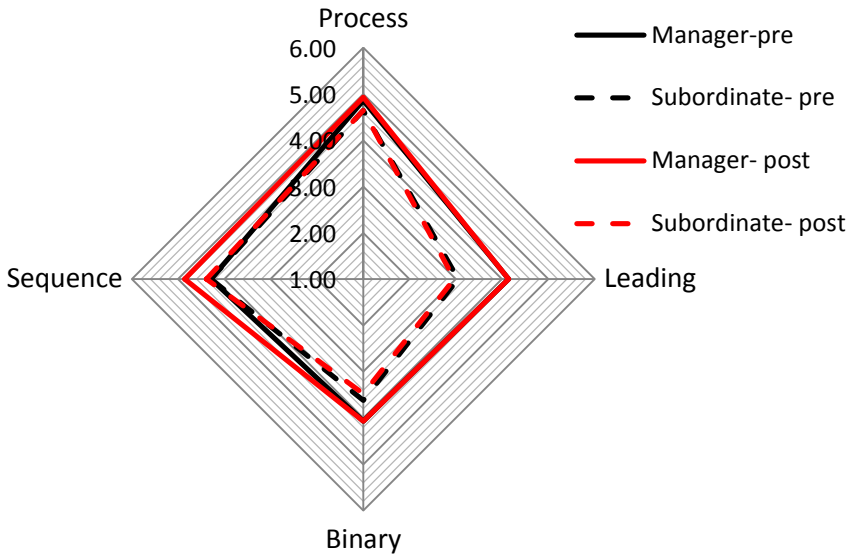

Figure 11. Asking, Pre and Post ODI evaluation of managers and subordinates

An increase of 0.59 points in the aspect of "sequence" shows the biggest improvement. Despite the emphasis on objectivity and using the idea of advocacy and inquiry during the intervention, the participants mean scores showed no change in their self-evaluations .

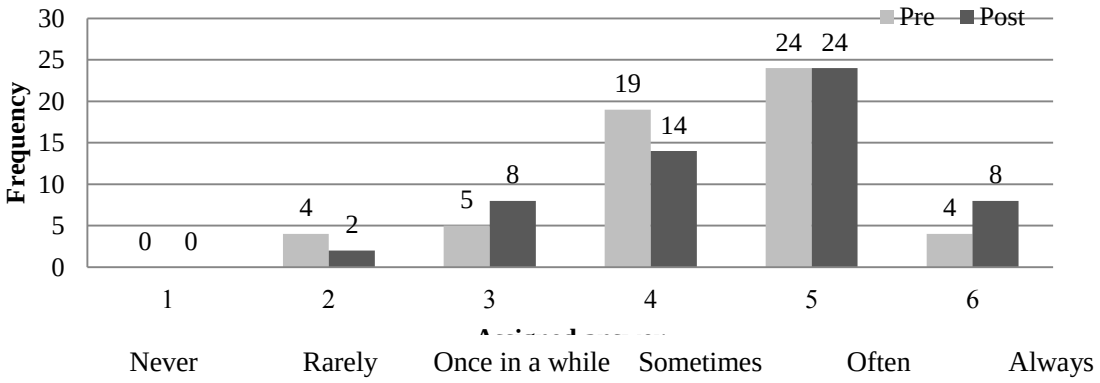

Figure 12. Frequency of managers' selected answers for questions related to asking in pre and post ODI surveys.

The descriptive statistics trend visible here is replicating that of listening. Although in earlier analysis, the data presented does not show vast differences, the improvement is undeniable from the chart above. The shift towards a more frequent use of their asking skills in a way defined by this study is indicated by the sharp increase in the number of answers indicated by "always". The spread of this effect to the subordinate is questionable as there was limited time between the end of the intervention program and the post ODI survey (Figure 12) .

The null hypothesis 4 that states "There is no initial impact of ODI on the coaching skill of managers", is accepted.

Table 9. t-Test: Paired Two Sample for managers' evaluation of coaching skill (combined)

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means	α = 0.05	
	pre	post
Mean	4.929	5.286
Variance	0.235	0.181
Observations	14	14
Pearson Correlation	-0.359	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	13	
t Stat	-1.778	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.099	Accept
T Critical Two-tail	2.160	

Table 10. t-Test: Two Sample Assuming Equal Variances for subordinates' evaluation of managers' coaching skill (combined)

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances	α = 0.05	
Unequal Sample Sizes	pre	post
Mean	3.953	4.093
Variance	1.608	1.497
Observations	165	148
Pooled Variance	1.555	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	311	
t Stat	-0.991	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.323	Accept
T Critical Two-tail	1.968	

The value obtained (P>0.05) supports the null **hypothesis**. However, for manager's combined coaching P= 0.10, which was closest to the alpha of all sub variables. Subordinates' outcome also showed the same trend. The intervention here focused on "Motivation" and "Growth" represented by questions 15 and 16 respectively.(Tables 9 and 10)

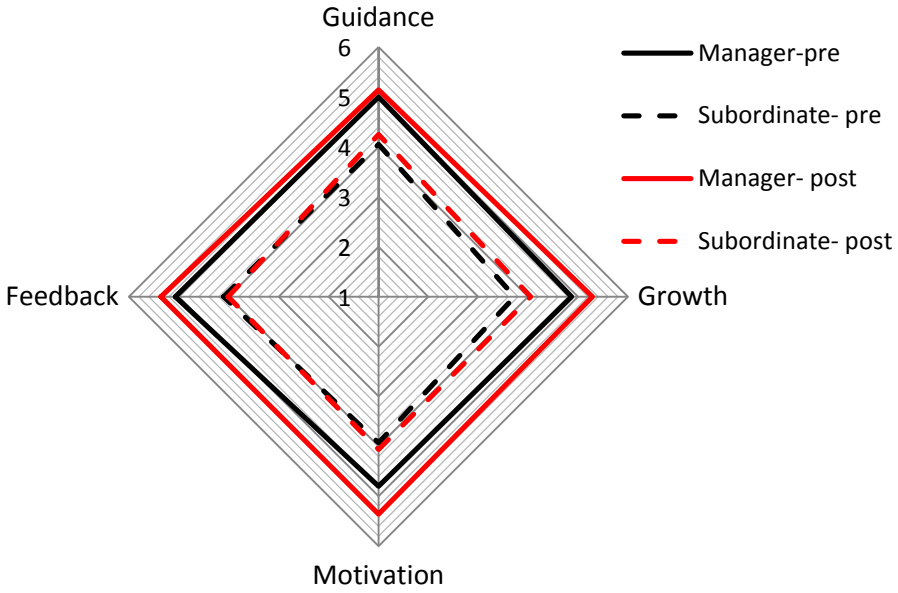

Figure 13. Coaching, Pre and Post ODI evaluation of managers and subordinates

The subordinates also showed the highest response for this sub variable, especially with their perception that their managers care more about them as a person. This was a very good indication that subordinates are feeling better about how they were regarded by the managers. They also felt that they were getting better guidance from their managers as shown with a score increase of 0.20.

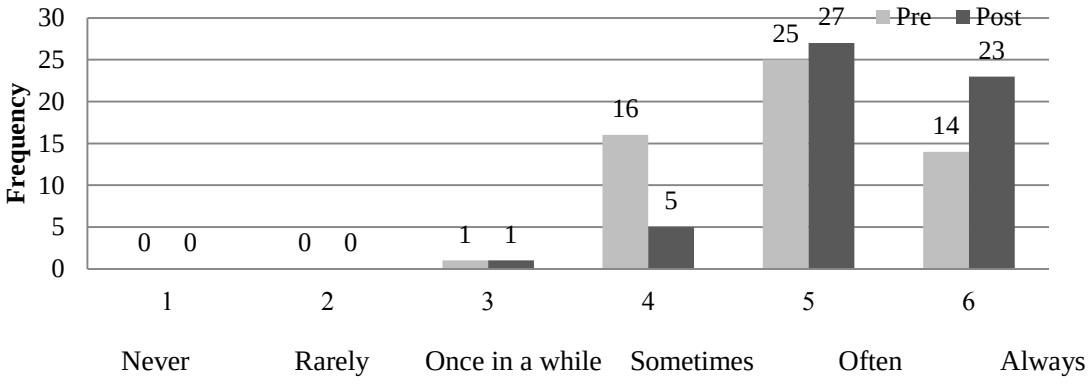

Figure 14. Frequency of managers' selected answers for questions related to coaching in pre and post ODI surveys.

Figure 14 is perhaps the most definitive of all four sub variables in this study. The frequency comparison chart weighed heavily towards the right side supporting the radar graph (Figure 13) that managers' are using their coaching related "guidance, growth, motivation and feedback" more frequently than before. This is substantial evidence that there is visible effect of the ODI on the managers' coaching especially where the frequency of attempts was concerned. The effect has not spread enough to create statistical significance at this point but given time, there is good reason to believe that positive change will happen according to the evidence shown above.

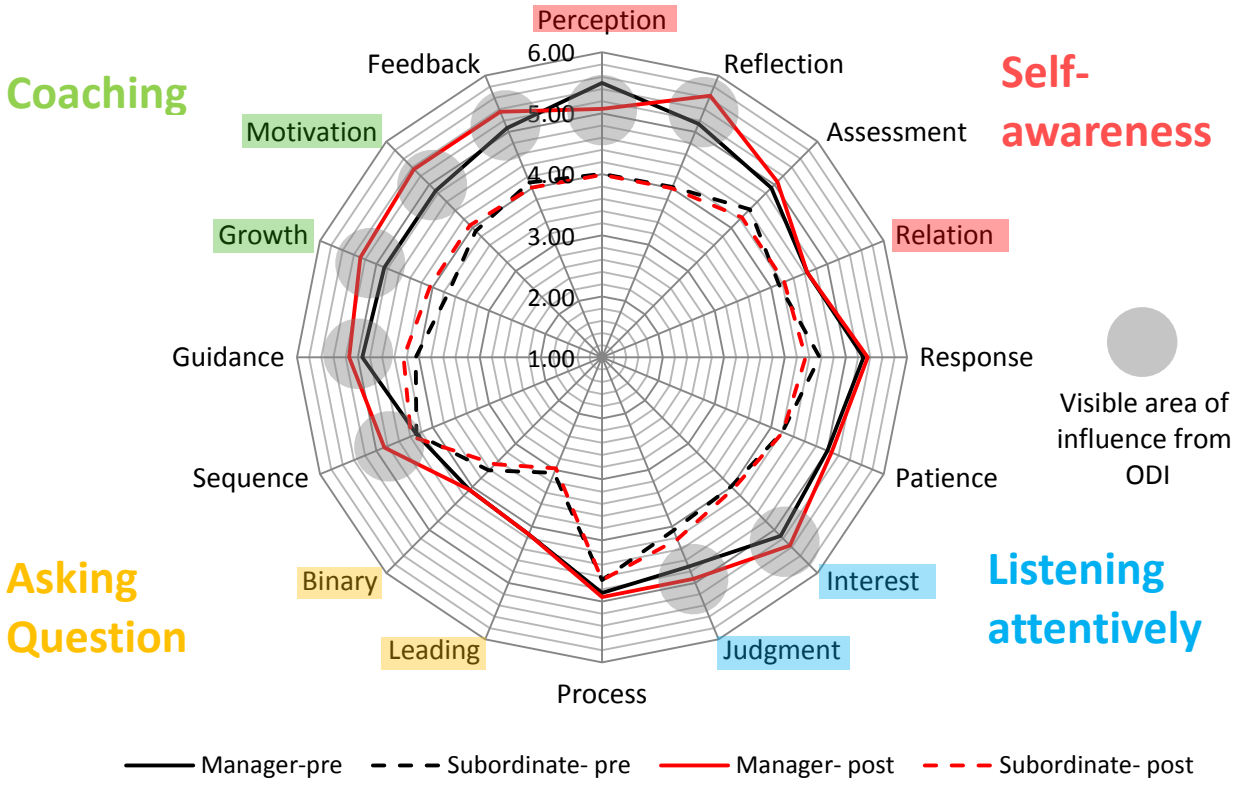

Figure 15. Pre and Post ODI managers' interpersonal skill profile and the possible effect area of OD intervention.

The above radar chart (Figure 15) shows the combined summary of the managers' interpersonal skill profile before and after intervention. The areas marked in clear grey circles show a visible difference in the skill profile after the program. The program included all 16 aspects of the 4 sub variables but placed importance on the 8 highlighted areas in the chart by their WBL coded colors. The result depicted alignment of the focus and the visible area of influence for 5 out of 8 interventions. Out of the 4 sub variables, "Asking" was the skill where the program did not produce any noticeable outcome. It may be too early to judge the outcome of the intervention program as the participants only had one month to fully implement what they learnt in their working environment.

Post ODI Interview Results

Studies have suggested that the psychometric approach to this type of validation may be insufficient on its own (Ashman, 2007) and qualitative approach could create a more full-bodied interpretation. Thus, the interview analysis is considered in conjunction for a wider and more holistic understanding. Interviews have been analyzed using analysis table for keywords spoken by participants.

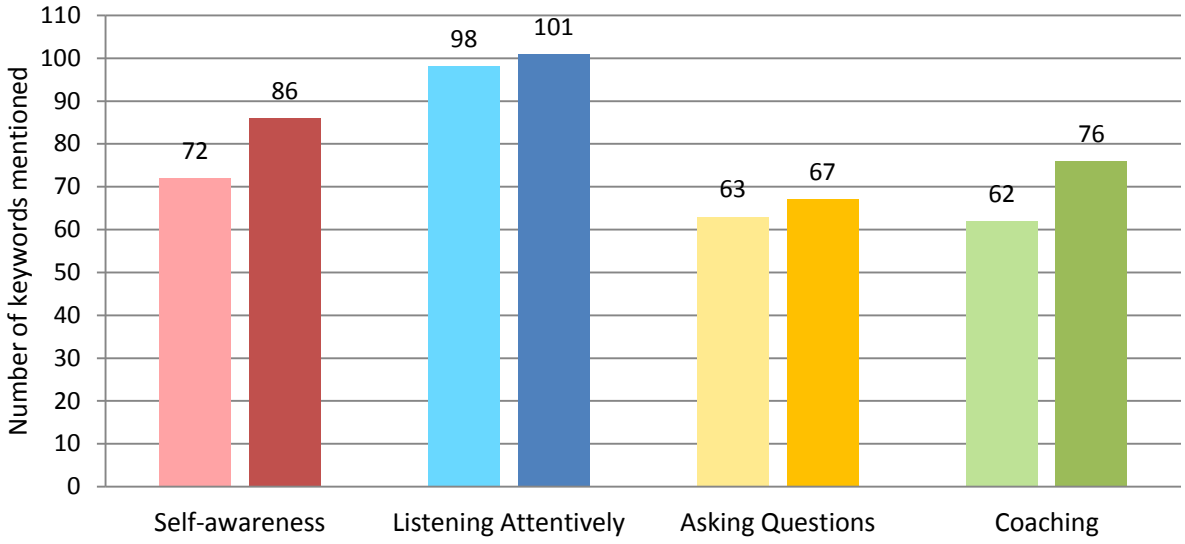

Figure 16 . Pre and post ODI overall keyword profile based on interview analysis

Lighter color bars represent pre ODI and darker color bars show the post ODI data. From Figure 16, it is easy to see that in all sub variables, participants have mentioned keyword more times during post ODI than they had previously done. This was consistent with the findings and interpretation of the changes in the participants profile discussed in earlier section. The small developments in listening and asking are mirroring that of the radar chart (Figure 18) . Though overall there was a small increase, the individual data for the sub variable "listening" illustrated that keywords associated with the posterior right brain which is linked to emotions reduced from 46 points to 26 points. This suggested a more balanced profile for listening which implied the participants were less emotional than before when they listened to subordinates. The bigger influence was visible in self-awareness which actually is more prominent in this interview result than in the questionnaire analysis. The answers to questions related to self-awareness showed an increase in the number of keywords in three of four categories especially in the posterior right brain where the number was doubled. The following chart shows the changes in word count by sub variable and their WBL associated keywords for pre and post ODI (Figure 17)

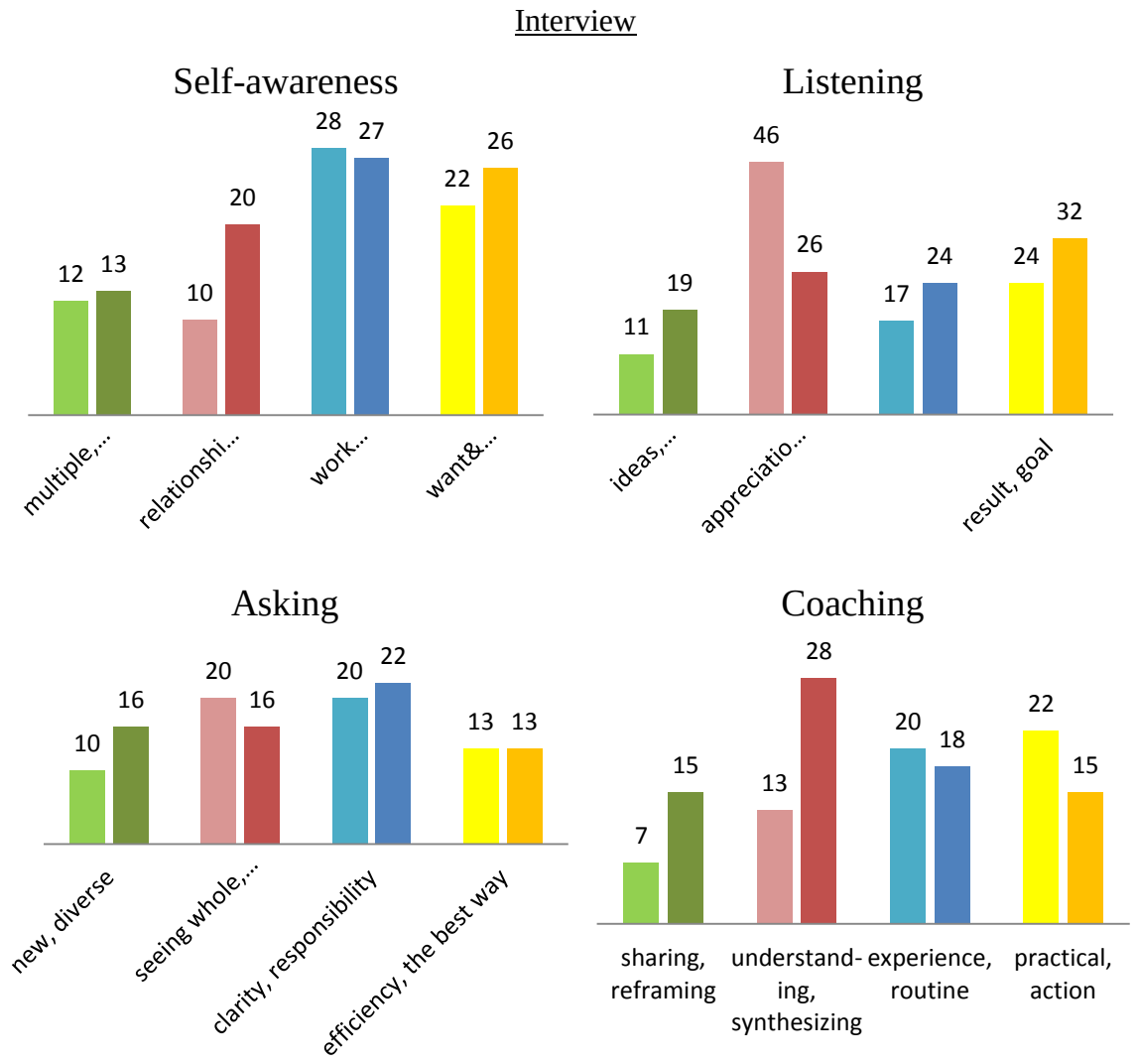

Figure 17. Bar chart to show pre and post ODI skill profile changes by sub-variable

Research Question 4: Do the managers' improved interpersonal skills, directly affect the reporting subordinates' role commitment?

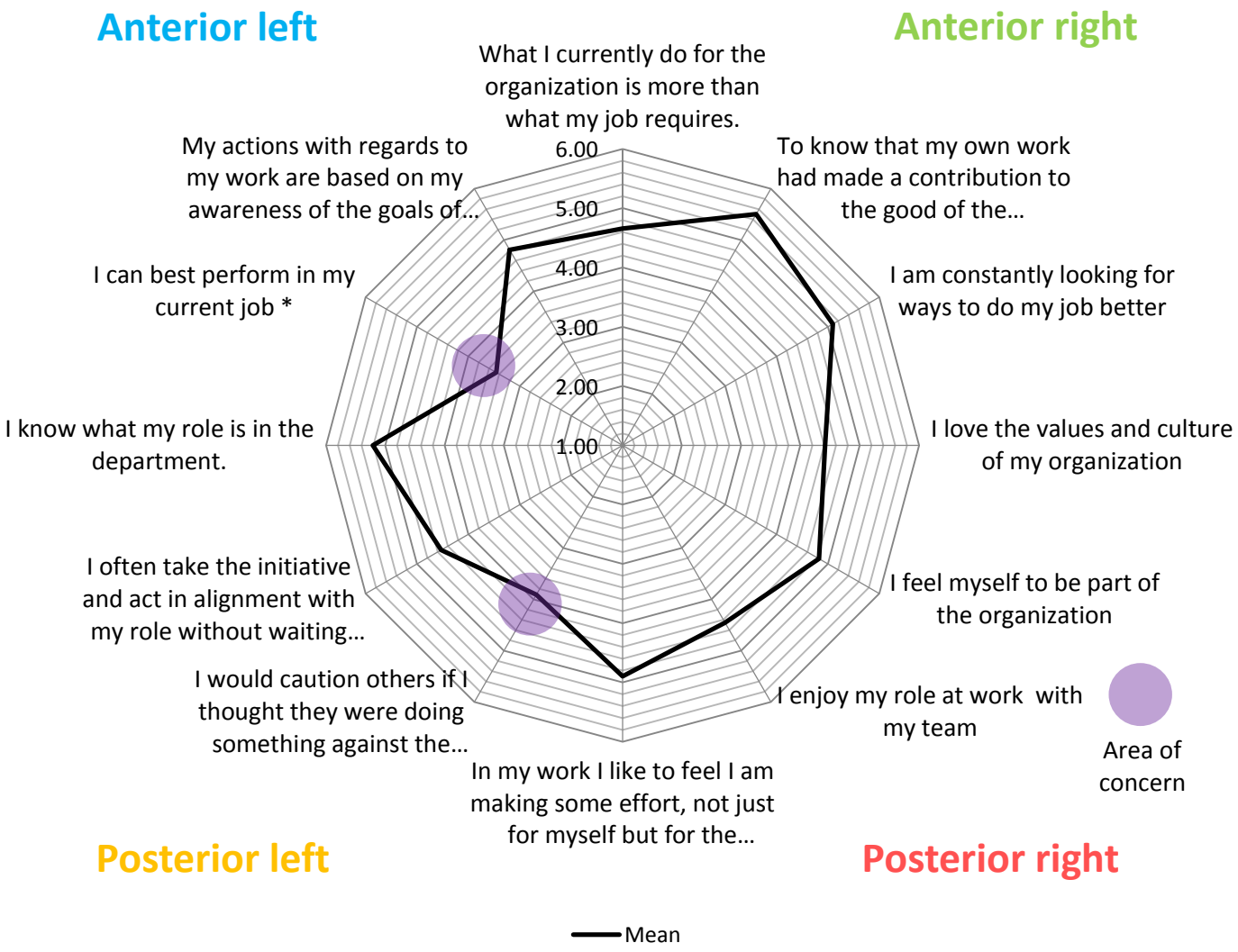

Figure 18. Subordinates' role commitment profile grouped by WBL

Though the scope of this study does not cover the interventions with subordinates directly, the profile above helps to articulate the current nature of the subordinates' role commitment. Specific areas marked by clear purple circles are the points of concern that hopefully will see some improvement in a later

The alternative hypothesis that states "There is significant effect of improved interpersonal skills of managers on subordinates' role commitment" is accepted.

Although statistical analysis accepted the null hypotheses for all four sub variables, descriptive statistics analysis and charts including interview analysis suggested some significant changes in the managers' interpersonal skills. For the purpose of exploring the

fourth research question and finding the answer to the fifth hypothesis, the results of subordinates' role commitment has been compared to the post ODI data of both the mangers' and the subordinates' evaluation of the managers' interpersonal skill. Assuming the impact of ODI on the managers' interpersonal skills, the relationship with subordinates' role commitment is shown in Table 11

Table 13. Correlation analysis of managers' interpersonal skills and subordinates' role commitment

Sub variable	Managers' evaluation	P value	Subordinates' evaluation	P value
Self-awareness	-0.038	0.645	0.207	0.012
Listening	-0.064	0.439	0.285	<0.001
Asking	0.080	0.336	0.196	0.017
Coaching	0.581	<0.001	0.229	0.005

At the time of the post ODI survey, data from the analysis above (Table 13) suggested that there was no correlation between manager's self-awareness and subordinates' role commitment. The same is true for both managers' self-perceived listening and asking skills. On the contrary, coaching resulted in the correlation coefficient *r* at 0.58; its positive relationship with subordinates' role commitment was substantial with $P<0.001$.

The subordinates' perception showed some weak link between all the sub variables. This indicated a positive relationship between the subordinates' observed level of their managers' interpersonal skill and their role commitment. Among the four sub variables, listening stood out very prominently and it was the sub variable that showed a highly significant relationship of subordinates' role commitment and their opinion of their managers' listening skills. Although the relationship is still only little moderate, where *r* is 0.285, the P value is <0.001 which underlines their definite connection. This can be interpreted as the subordinates' preference for managers' listening skill when it comes to increasing their commitment. In other words, the subordinates were more committed to their role when they perceived that their managers were good listeners. This finding is very interesting indeed and is a very logical rediscovery.

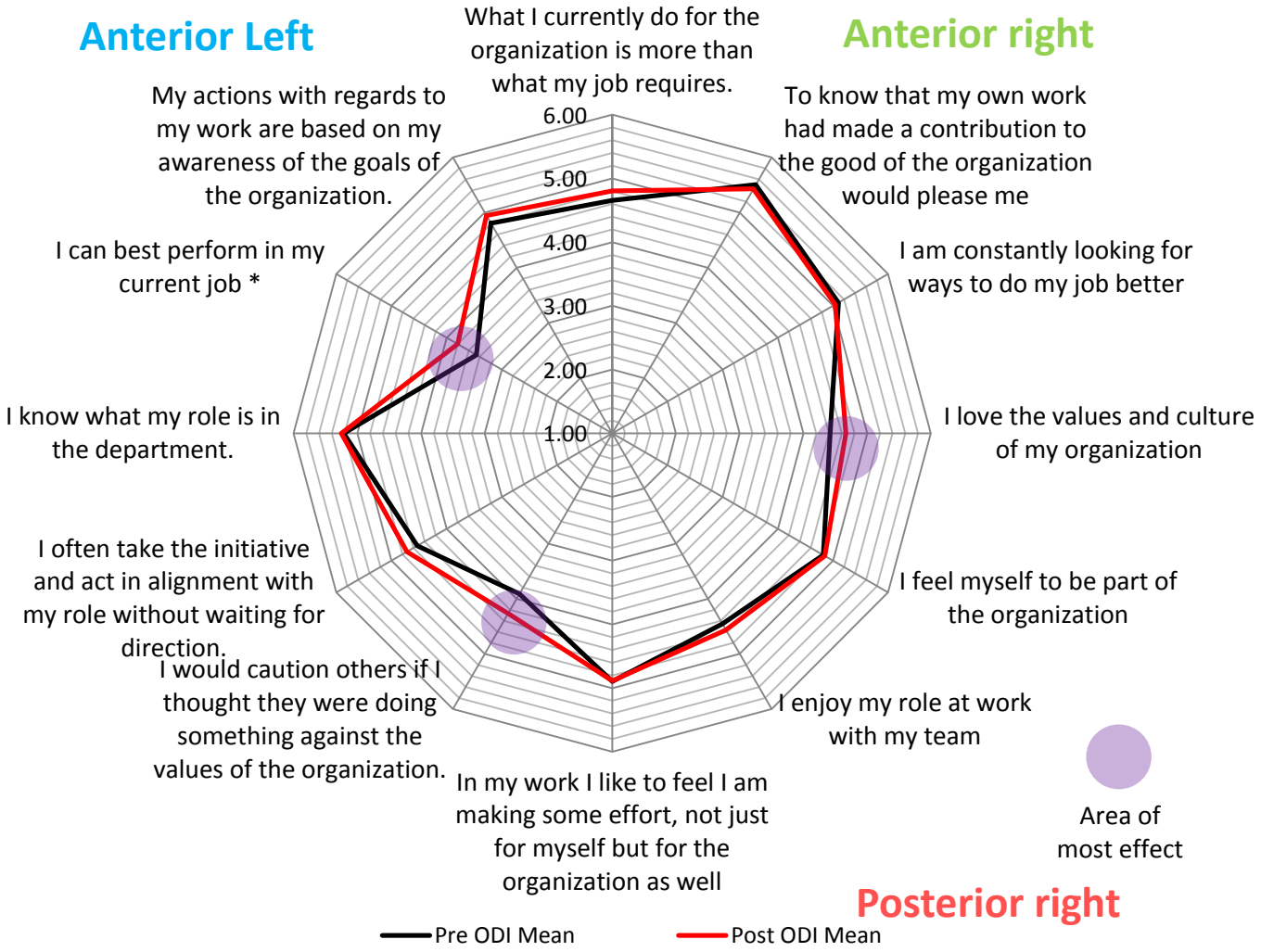

Figure 19. Pre and Post ODI profile of subordinates' role commitment profile by WBL grouping

The areas marked in transparent colored areas are specific areas of concern identified during the pre ODI assessment (Figure 18) . They were the only two questions that scored less than four. Question no.7 is an important indicator for role commitment as it required respondents to take "action" in accordance with their roles, specifically against another member of the organization. The improvement shown for this area has a value of 0.36, the biggest of all. It is very promising that the subordinates' have demonstrated vast improvement in this area. The second area of concern marked by the other colored circle also depicted a considerable progress with an increase of 0.34 points. It was the second most developed area. The difference was clearly visible in the chart when we compare pre and post ODI profiles.

Table 12. t-Test analysis of changes in role commitment of subordinates

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances	α = 0.050	
Unequal Sample Sizes	pre ODI	post ODI
Mean	55.770	57.209
Variance	27.056	32.711
Observations	165	148
Pooled Variance	29.729	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	311.000	
t Stat	-2.332	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.020	Reject Null Hypothesis
T Critical Two-tail	1.968	

The results as shown on Table 12 indicated that the alternative hypothesis "There is a significant effect of improved interpersonal skills of managers on subordinates' role commitment is accepted. This is also an affirmative answer to Research Question no. 4 that managers' improved interpersonal skills directly affect the reporting subordinates' role commitment.

Conclusions

The study set out to identify the proficiency of the interpersonal skills of the managers by both self-evaluation and 360 degrees evaluation in order to obtain better-balanced results. The interpersonal skills of the managers at Sea Chef Ltd, was found to be well above average. Even before the implementation of ODI program, the lowest mean score was 4 on a full scale of 6. The feedback evaluations from their subordinates were generally lower but their mean remained above 3.

The intervention was aimed at four sub variables, namely: self-awareness, listening, asking and coaching. Post ODI results concluded that there was no significant change in the interpersonal skills of the targeted mid-level managers. The change may be at a developmental stage and that initial findings did advocate that positive change was in effect. The supporting evidence can be seen in the interview analysis and the descriptive statistics that illustrated a trend towards increased utilization of their interpersonal skills in all areas defined by the sub variables. Furthermore, correlation analysis demonstrated a moderately strong link between the self-evaluated coaching skills of the managers to their subordinate's role commitment at prominently high significance level. More interestingly the subordinates' perception of their manager's interpersonal skills in all four sub variables showed a high significance in their relationship on role commitment, especially with listening. This is a strong evidence that linked interpersonal skills of superiors to the role commitment of their subordinates. The magnitude of the relationship was found to be

weak but since this study was restricted significantly by the time period between the end of intervention program and the post ODI survey, it is hard to conclude that this initial finding represented the full potential of the true magnitude.

The role commitment of subordinates showed a positive change that was statistically significant. This outcome underlines the findings that although statistical analysis accepted the null hypotheses for impact on all four sub variables, the intervention on the managers has holistically had significant positive effects on the subordinates' overall commitment to their roles

Implications

The implications of the fact that improved interpersonal skills can enhance role commitment are vast. Since organizations are composed of people; interpersonal skills that facilitate interactions between people must be regarded as much more than just the methods of communication. As this study has illustrated, the improvement of interpersonal skills has a positive impact on role commitment. The two most important factors were coaching and listening , both of which suggest no direct authoritarian approach but a more appreciative and understanding stance. They were the strongest predictors of role commitment in this study. People who feel appreciated and listened to are more likely to put more effort as they are more committed. The repercussion of this is that traditional concepts of leadership like one that suggests leaders are born thus become less relevant. The outcome highlighted by this study is that it contributed to the notion that leaders are bred. Thus, it can be suggested that the similar intervention programs which help improve interpersonal skills can be cascaded down the organization. The effects can be expanded to cover more than just the directly reporting subordinates. This will create a system that is more dynamic where people in all the levels of the organization understand the importance of and have the interpersonal skills to influence and enhance commitment of others. In effect, anyone in the organization can potentially become leaders whenever the need arises. This study has been conducted on an organization that is a family business, but there is no reason why results could not be replicated in other types of organizations.

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