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Pygmalion in Management

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Abstract: *Pygmalion effect is a phenomenon which works on the principle that higher expectation is directly proportional to higher performance thereby playing a crucial role in increasing the productivity of an organization. It has long been recognized that productivity has a close nexus with the treatment of employees in an organization by their superiors. Functioning as a self-fulfilling prophecy, Pygmalion effect has the ability to increase employee efficiency considerably and help an organization grow. It can very well form the core of management.*

The purpose of the present paper is to review the existing literature, and through an empirical study findthe answers as to how the Pygmalion effect would work in small scale establishments. The research will presents conclusions as well as recommendations that will better help to implement the concept of Pygmalion in businesses.

The sources of data include primary and secondary sources, Primary sources includes field study collected from corporate establishments and shops from the city of Pune, India. Secondary sources include journals and books.

Expectation and motivation play a major role in the growth of an industry, it is important that an organization effectively implement the concept of Pygmalion to make it more sustainable and productive.

Key words: *Pygmalion, Management, Performance*

I. Introduction

Expectations play a major role in determining the leadership effectiveness and the performance of an industry or an organization. It's been said that, A manager's expectations is the key to a subordinate's performance and development. Pygmalion effect has also found its support in the field of arts. George Bernard Shaw in his Poem, titled "Pygmalion" has explicitly stated that the way a person is treated holds the highest importance, higher the expectation better the performance. The reverse of this theory namely the golem effect, where lower expectation leads to lower performance could also very well be true.

The derivation of the name – The Pygmalion effect is from a story in Greek mythology.It is said a famous sculptor in Cyprus made the sculpture of a woman which he fell in love with. He would pray continuously to Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love to bring her to life and granting his wish the statue came to life thus fulfilling the prophecy. The sculpture that came to life was named Galatea and the sculptor himself was Pygmalion.

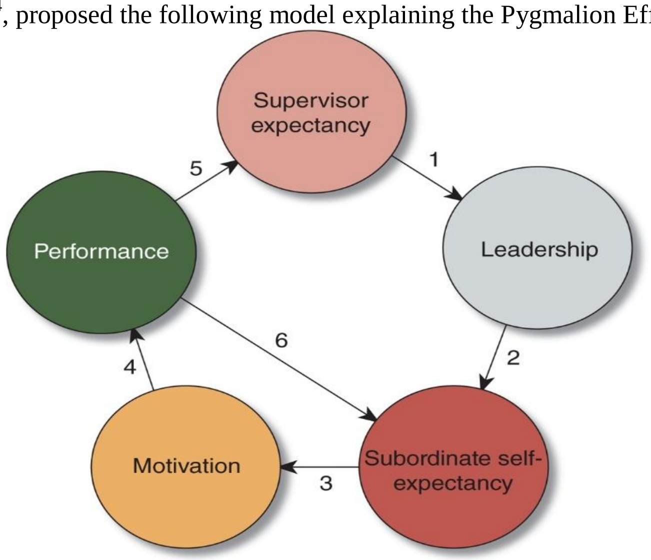
To understand the concept of Pygmalion, the authors have defined and analyzed it. Pygmalion effect is a type of self-fulfilling prophecy where a raising expectation leads to higher achievement. It was first understood in the classroom environment and thereupon applied to the Management and to the Military.

II. Review Of Literature

J. Sterling Livingston (1971)[1] in his paper, stated the following "The way managers treat their subordinates is subtly influenced by what they expect of them" This paper, which was the first paper to be presented on the presence of Pygmalion Effect in Management he speaks about the unique characteristic of superior managers to build high expectations which the subordinates thereafter live up to as well as how subordinates more often than not do what they believe they are expected to do. Livingston talked of the power of expectations "Managers cannot avoid the depressing cycle of events that flow from low expectations merely by hiding their feelings from subordinates. If managers believe subordinates will perform poorly, it is virtually

[1]Livingston J. Sterling, (1971)Pygmalion in Management ,*Harvard Business Review*

impossible for them to mask their expectations because the message usually is communicated unintentionally, without conscious action on their part." He also spoke of the relationship between motivation and expectancy and put it in the following words "The degree of motivation and effort rises until the expectancy of success reaches 50%, then begins to fall even though the expectancy of success continues to increase. No motivation or response is aroused when the goal is perceived as being either virtually certain or virtually impossible to attain."
Don Eden (1992)[2] in his paper, talks about how the Pygmalion Effect works in different management set ups that work on McGregor's Theory X and Y, he says "A manager acting on Theory X assumptions mistrusts workers, refrains from delegating authority to them, and supervises them closely. This leads to fulfillment of the manger's prophecy, as workers so treated react by exerting less effort on the job. In contrast, belief in Theory Y leads the manager to trust people and to seek ways of achieving greater integration between individual and organizational goals. McGregor held that workers live up to the trust placed in them and respond responsibly to the challenge by redoubling their commitment and motivation. Thus, McGregor considered managers' expectations to be a determinant of productivity via an SFP process."
Kohei Daido and HideshiItoh(2005)[3], in their paper, summarized the effect as follows "Amanager'shighexpectation influencesherattitude toward her subordinates and such attitude has positive effects on subordinates' self-expectancy. The subordinate's enhanced self-expectancy then improves their performance. In this process, the part that a person's enhanced self-expectation improves his own performance is often called the Galatea effect."
Dov Eden's (1984) paper[4], proposed the following model explaining the Pygmalion Effect.



Explaining the model he said, "The model includes five variables that form a closed causal chain. In the classical Pygmalion paradigm the first link in the chain is the supervisor's expectancy. It clearly is first, because it is experimentally manipulated and everything else is initially neutralized by random assignment. Eden and Ravid (1982) have shown that, by means of differential treatment, supervisors instill higher self-expectations in those subordinates of whom they expect more (arrow 2). The combination of these expectancy and equity processes aroused by high expectations produces a rise in overall motivation (arrow 3), and the enhanced motivation causes subordinates to invest greater effort, boosting performance (arrow 4). The chain is completed and the loop is closed by positing causal effects of performance on the super- visor's expectancy (arrow 5)" Arrow 6 shows that the Galatea effect intervenes and leads to similar performance efforts. We utilize this model later in the research paper to answer the objective.

[2]Eden, D. (1992). Leadership and expectations: pygmalion effects and other self-fulfilling prophecies in organisations. *Leadership Quarterly*, 3(4) , 271-305.
[3]Daido K. and Itoh H.(2005), The Pygmalion Effect: An agency model with reference dependant preferences, *Social Science Research Network*, Working Series No. 1444
[4]Eden, D. (1992). Leadership and expectations: pygmalion effects and other self-fulfilling prophecies in organisations. *Leadership Quarterly*, 3(4) , 271-305.

III. Research Methadology:

Primary Source includes Field Study and the Secondary Sources includes Journal and books.

IV. Objectives:

a. To determine if Figure 1 – A model of self-fulfilling prophecy at work operates between superiors and subordinates.
b. To determine if Pygmalion operates in a democratic set up and helps an organization performs well.
c. To provide appropriate recommendations so as to help better utilize the Pygmalion effect in management

V. Research Method:

The research is based on primary data consisting of 7 corporate establishments collected from a sample of 22 people which includes 15 subordinates and 7 superiors from the city of Pune. Data was collected through a questionnaire and in depth interviews of the sample. Secondary data in the form of Articles published in books and journals, research papers and reports was also referred. Statistical tools applied are pie charts and a 5 point Likert scale using the following parameters: Strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree and strongly disagree.

VI. Findings And Discussion:

6.1 Findings And Piecharts:

The following pie charts were made after our field study and the findings were as follows:

SUPERIORS

Your expectations from your subordinates are high

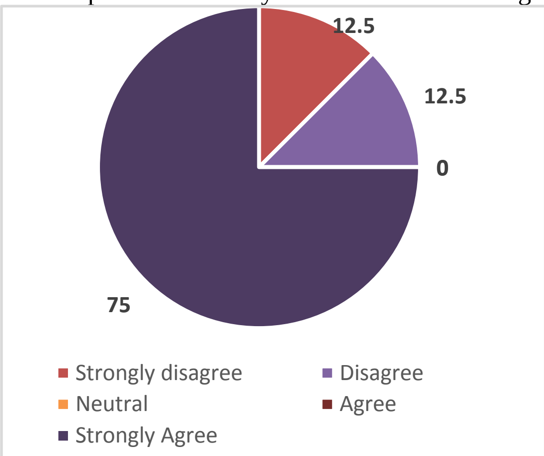


Figure 1

You praise your subordinates often

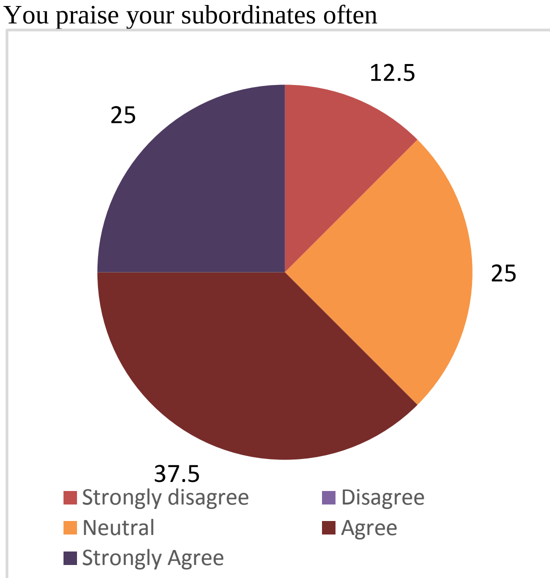


Figure 3

SUBORDINATES

Your boss has high expectations from you

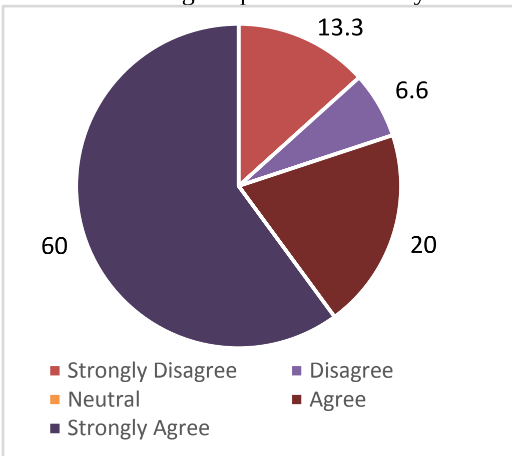


Figure 2

Your manager often tells you that you perform well

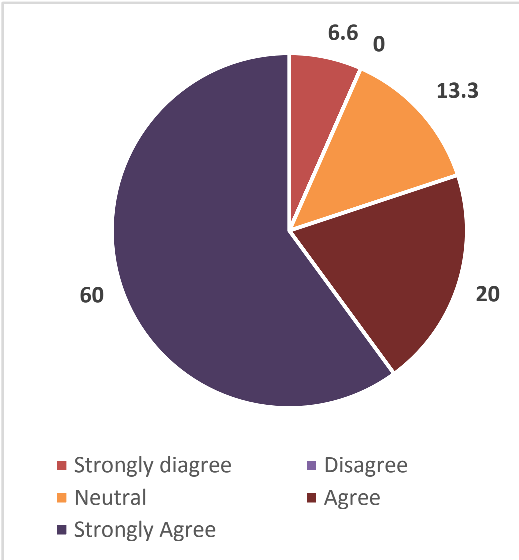


Figure 4

Your subordinates perform well

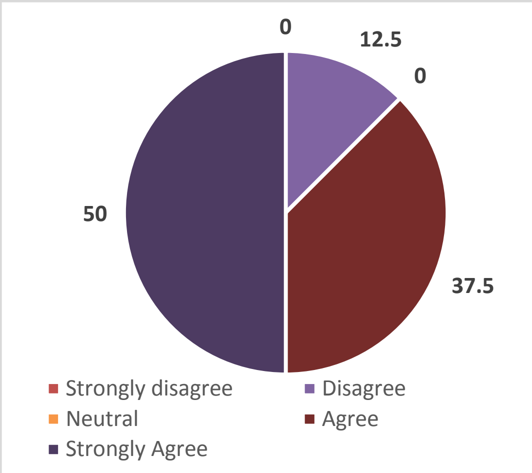


Figure 5

Your subordinates will perform excellent in the future

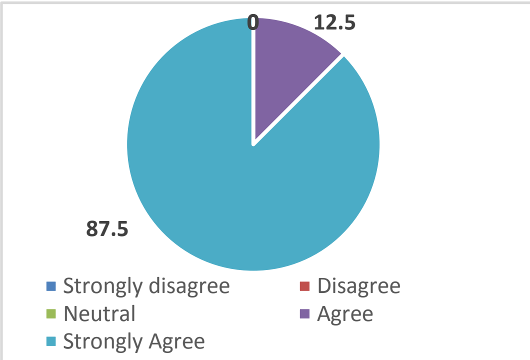


Figure 7

Your employees live up to your expectations

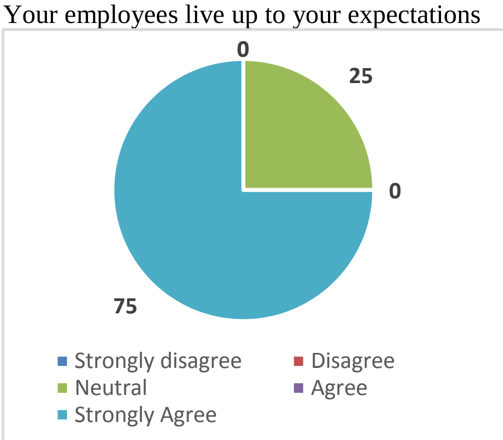


Figure 9

Your relation with your subordinates is

Your team mates perform excellent

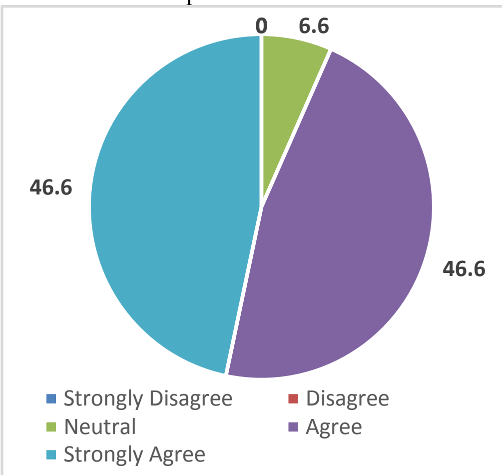


Figure 6

You often live up to your superiors expectations

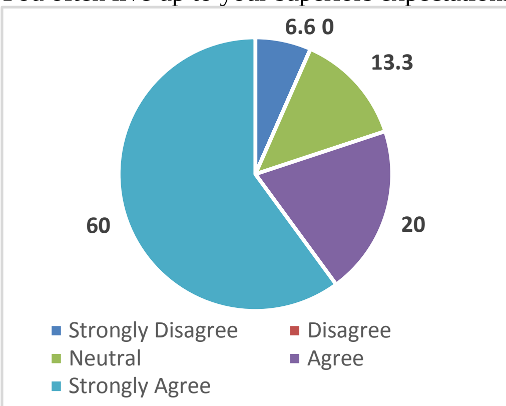


Figure 8

Your expectations from yourself are high

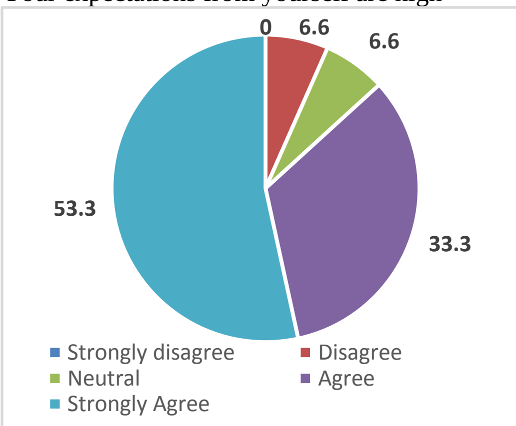


Figure 10

You often live up to your expectations

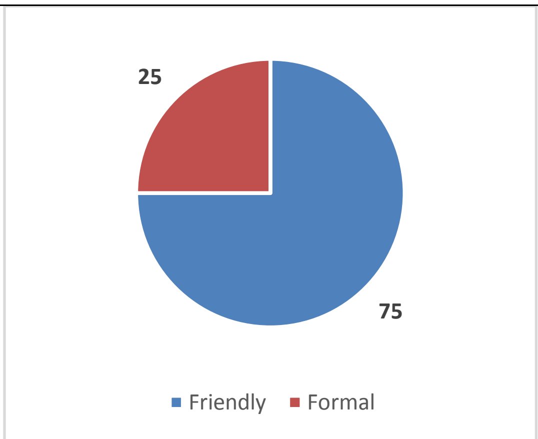


Figure 11
You often take suggestions from your employees

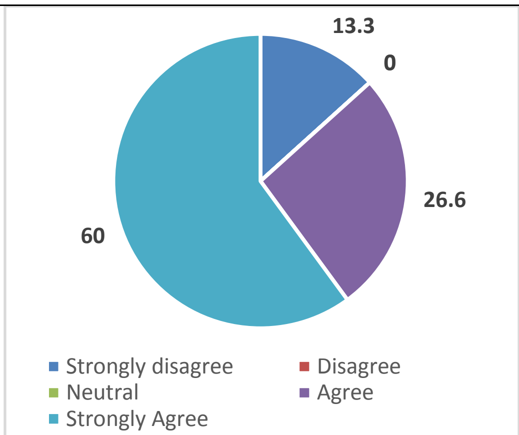


Figure 12
Your business perform well

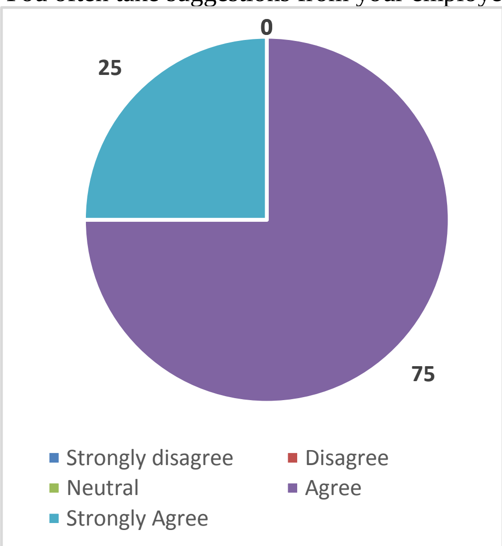


Figure-13

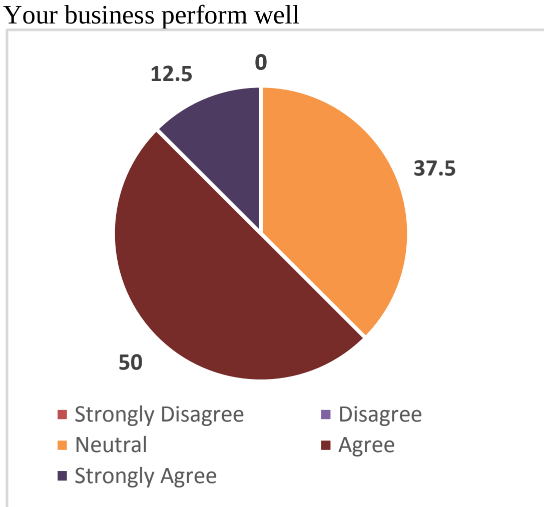


Figure 14

Succesful Conveyance Of Superior Expecatncy

Figure 1 and Figure 3 represent the Questions posed to the Superiors which state "Your expectations from your subordinates are high" and "You praise your subordinates often" respectively. Figure 1 shows that 75% strongly agree that they have high expectations from their subordinates and 37.5% agree and 25% strongly agree that they praise their employees often. The corresponding subordinate questions are represented by Figure 2 and Figure 4 and ask if "Your boss has high expectations from you" and "Your manager often tells you that you perform well" respectively. The pie charts show that 60% strongly agree and 20% agree that their bosses have high expectations from them and again 60% strongly agree and 20% agree that their manager often tells them that they perform well. Hence, we see that superiors are able to successfully convey high expectations to employees and this completes the improved leadership due to high superior expectancy variable.

Future Expecations

Figure 5 and Figure 7 asks the Superior if "Your subordinates perform well" and if "Your subordinates will perform excellent in the future" respectively to which the pie chart showed the following answers: 50% superiors strongly agreeand 37.5% agree that their subordinates perform well. Regarding future expectations, 87.5% strongly agree that their subordinates will perform excellent in the future. The corresponding subordinate question is represented by Figure 6 and asks if their team mates perform well to which 46.6% strongly agreed and 46.6% agreed that they do. The subordinates perform well which is observed by the superiors and since they

perform well at the present time the superiors have high future expectations from them as well. This forms a circle which represents the existence and repeating of self-fulfilling prophecies.
Figure 9 asked the following question to the superior: "Your subordinates live up to your expectations". To which, 75% strongly agreed and 25% neither agreed nor disagreed. The corresponding question to the subordinates was if they often live up to their superiors' expectations (Figure 8) to which, 60% strongly agreed and 20% agreed.

EMERGENCE OF GALATEA

The next 2 questions were posed exclusively to the subordinates and have no corresponding superior questions. Figure 10 asks "Your expectations from yourself are high" and Figure 12 shows the question "You often live up to your expectations". Pie chart for Figure 10 shows 53.3% strongly agree and 33.3% agree that they have high expectations from themselves. Pie chart for Figure 12 shows that 60% strongly agree and 26.6% agree that they often live up to their own expectations. These figures show the operation of Galatea effect. Subordinates have high expectation from themselves and they live up to these expectations thus becoming self-fulfilling prophecies. This fulfills arrows 3, 4 and 5 as shown in the diagram.

DEMOCRATIC SET UP

The next questions were asked to the superiors to determine what kind of set up them operate under. For this purpose the following questions were asked "Your relations with your employees is-"(Figure 11) and "You often take suggestions from your employees" (Figure 13). The following statistics emerged: 75% said that they have friendly relations with their subordinates and 75% agreed and 25% strongly agreed that they take suggestion from their subordinates. Hence, we see that they operate in a democratic set up and employ McGregor's Theory Y.

The last question asked was to the superior and enquired whether His business performs well. (Figure 14).To this, 50% agreed, 12.5% strongly agreed and 37.5% neither agreed nor disagreed that their business performs well

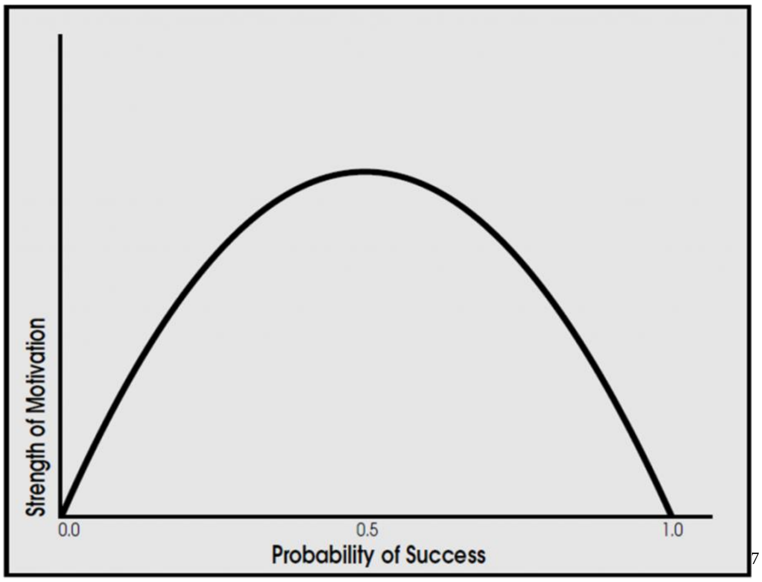
Hence, we see that initial high expectancy of the superior leads to high performance by the subordinates and in consequence higher future expectancy by superiors. This coupled with the interference of the Galatea Effect helps a business perform well.

6.2 THE RIGHT LEVEL OF EXPECTATION

Scientific research by David McClelland at Harvard University and John Atkinson at University of Michigan[5] demonstrated that the relationship of motivation to expectations varies in the form of a bell shaped curve.

It is interesting to note that, after reading various articles on Pygmalion we have come to find that 'subordinates will not be motivated to reach high levels of productivity unless they consider the boss's high expectations realistic and achievable. If they are encouraged to strive for unattainable goals, they eventually give up trying and settle for results that are lower than they are capable of achieving[6] .The key is not having extremely high expectation from your subordinates because this way they themselves will not believe in them then. The following diagram represents the bell curve:

[5] John W. Atkinson, (year) "Motivational Determinants of Risk-Taking Behavior,"*Psychological Review,* vol. 64, no. 6, 1957, p. 365.
[6]Livingston J. Sterling, (1971)Pygmalion in Management ,*Harvard Business Review*



[7]

The degree of motivation and effort rises until the probability of success reaches 50% and then begins to fall even though the probability of success continues to increase**.**

The graph states that if the subordinate thinks that there's no chance of achieving the goal, he/she might feel overwhelmed and lose motivation .On the other hand, if a subordinate thinks he can achieve the desired goal he/she will be motivated to work even harder.

VII. Conclusion

Industries have been growing at a rapid speed these days, with the growing needs comes first line fast managers who can speed up the performance of the company. As a consequence of this many companies have been under developing their most valuable resource-Talented young men and women, for the top executives of the firm the path forward is clear- it is to get good managers who help themselves to help their subordinates in performing a good job.

There is no doubt that expectation and motivation play a part in influencing subordinates. The phenomenon of this self-fulfilling prophecy has had a tremendous effect in a work place by both superiors and subordinates. Through our field study we have worked out that the Pygmalion effect operates in a democratic set up and that both the Pygmalion and Galatea effect combine to help the business perform well. We also have come to the conclusion that the superior successfully conveyed high expectations to the subordinates which led to good performances on the part of the employees. Since subordinates performed well, the superiors had high future expectations as well. As a result it lifts productivity throughout the organization. More often then not one realizes, the manager is Pygmalion[8]

VIII. Recommendations

Managers, Directors and Organizational Leaders understandably have an influence on the success of employees, and can play a part in that success or failure, at times, without even realizing it. Positive expectations are important to ensure a positive outcome, as the belief itself can affect the giver and the receiver.
Managers not only shape the expectations and the performance of the subordinates but also influence their attitude towards their jobs and themselves, if managers are unskilled it leaves a scar on the employees and the overall unit performance of the company decreases and their reputations as coaches is harmed, on the other hand if the managers can induce confidence and make the subordinates believe in themselves, their capabilities will grow and the growth of the firm happens. After conducting a thorough research, it is recommended that:

- Each and every manager or employer should be made aware of the concept of the Pygmalion effect

[7]Rosenthal and Jacobson, commentary on the Pygmalion effect study<https://www.worklife.com/use-the-pygmalion-effect-to-create-a-high-performing-team/> (2nd August 2015)
[8]Livingston J. Sterling, (1971)Pygmalion in Management ,*Harvard Business Review*

- In companies, rarely the new set of employees work with a seasoned manger or an experience manager, they are handed over to the first line managers who themselves aren't experienced enough to handle the subordinates, this leads to a negative feeling towards their job which in turn leads to them feeling negative towards their careers and their employers.
- Ethical values must be upheld by all managers and subordinates so as to get the best outcome through the Pygmalion effect.
- To get the best out of everybody and the increasing pressure to perform well, the managers sometimes unwittingly alienate a part of the employees who aren't performing well, this in turn results to the golem effect, which hinders the development of the organization
- Equality amongst teammates should be present to get the best possible outcome of the Pygmalion effect.

IX. Limitations

1. Limitation posed due to sample size:
   A major drawback posed to us was the lack of definite sample size. The corporate establishments which were our main source of data, refused to part information to us.
2. Prevalence of dishonesty
3. Time constraint
   As our sample size were fixed or corporate and small scale businesses, those who were asked to fill out the questionnaire did not have the time to meet and fill the questionnaire.

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[9]. Stephen P. Robbins, Timothy A, Judge, Seema Sanghi, Organizational Behaviour (13th Edition), Pearson Education
Endnotes
[10]. SFP – Self Fulfilling Prophecy
[11]. Performance- The accomplishment of a given task measured against preset known standards of accuracy, completeness, cost, and speed.
[12]. Subordinates-a person under the authority or control of another within an organization.