

Does Perceived Social Support Mediate the Relationship of Perceived Organizational Support & Job Satisfaction? A Structural Equation Modeling Approach

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Abstract:

Drawing from organizational support theory (OST), this study tested a causal model of interrelationships among perceived organizational support (POS), perceived social support (PSS) and job satisfaction (JS) via structural equation modeling. More specifically, this study examined the direct and indirect effects of perceived organizational support on job satisfaction. Data for this was collected from academic staff of all public sector universities in Balochistan, Pakistan. A convenient sample of 217 respondents was drawn in a cross sectional survey. A self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. Results indicate that: i) POS positively effects job satisfaction and that ii) PSS serves as a mechanism through which perceived organizational support effects job satisfaction. Later finding is important as it has not been examined previously. Hence, this study significantly contributes to the existing scholarship on POS and JS by introducing and testing the effects of an intermediary, that is, PSS.

Keywords: Perceived organizational support, Perceived social support and job satisfaction.

Introduction:

According to the integrative framework of organizational support theory-OST (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011), employees develop perceptions regarding the extent to which the organization they work for values their contributions and cares for their general well-being. These perceptions are known as perceived organizational support (POS). POS activities & programs are commonplace today. Organizations are now investing their valuable resources in POS related programs. ‘Google’, for instance, offer its employees: educational leave, free meals, medical & health care facilities

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and several other recreational activities. Such initiatives are becoming popular because through such programs organizations can engender favorable employee attitudes and behaviors which are important precursors of several beneficial outcomes.

In order to understand why POS programs produce favorable outcomes, it is necessary to understand theoretical underpinnings of POS. POS triggers social exchange processes within the organizations. That is, when employees perceive that they are treated favorably, they exhibit favorable attitudes and behaviors and start contributing more enthusiastically toward the attainment of organizational goals and objectives. In addition to social exchange processes, POS also fulfills certain socio-emotional needs of employees which results in increased organizational identification, commitment and well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Kurtessis et al., 2015).

Organizational support theory has drawn considerable attentions of researchers and practitioners across the globe as it offers a sound 'viewpoint' of examining and predicting the 'employee-organization' relationships. Building upon OST, Rhoades & Eisenberger (2002) conducted a meta-analytic review to ascertain the antecedents and outcomes of POS. They found POS to be correlated with several antecedents (supervisory support, HR practices & fairness) and attitudinal outcomes (organizational commitment, job satisfaction and job performance). Riggle, Admonson & Hansen (2009) confirmed these findings. They found POS positively correlated with organizational commitment, job satisfaction and job performance, and negatively related with intentions to leave. A substantial body of literature is available on POS and attitudinal outcomes, especially on the relationship between POS & job satisfaction (Ahmed & Yekta, 2010; Bradley & Cartwright, 2002; Colakoglu, Culha & Atay, 2010; Cullen, Edwards, Casper & Gue, 2014; Eisenberger, Cummings, Aemeli & Lynch, 1997; Yang, 2010). However, a major limitation of this body of literature is their focus and scope. These studies have mostly examined the direct links of POS on job satisfaction across a variety of populations. But, the research on 'how' POS effects job satisfaction is still scanty. We could only find a few scholarships (Biswas & Bhatnager, 2013; Peterson, 2015) which answer this 'how' question. Therefore, there exists a dire need to explore the underlying processes through which POS effects job satisfaction. This could be done by revisiting the relationship of said construct by taking into account some process or intermediary variables.

One variable which may act as an intermediary between POS and job satisfaction is 'social support-PSS'. PSS may be defined as the degree of support one receives from his/her social networks, especially from the

family, friends and others (Demaray&Malecki, 2002; Zimet et al., 1988). It is a general observation that without the support of family and friends, certain desired attitudinal outcomes cannot be determined. Another fact which justifies the intermediary role of PSS is its nature. PSS, as a construct captures those aspects of support which POS does not address. That is, the support of family and friends which POS does not address. Researchers view PSS as a key resource which must be taken into account while predicting job satisfaction (Brough & Pear, 2004; Zhang, Lin & Wan, 2015). Given this, the major objective of this study is to determine the effects of POS on job satisfaction through perceived social support.

Literature Review: Definition of Terms& Hypotheses Development

Definition of terms:

Perceived Organizational Support

The concept of perceived organizational support-POS stemmed from Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986). According to this theory, POS is an employee's belief that his organization values the efforts he exerts and is concerned about his well-being. Such beliefs represent the commitment level of an organization towards the well-being of its employees (Eisenberger et al., 1986, p. 501).

Perceived Social Support

The construct of perceived social support is multidimensional. It was first coined and conceptualized by Zimet et al., in 1988. According to Zimet & colleagues, perceived social support captures a wide variety of support available to individuals from a large array of social networks including: family, friends and any other whom individuals consider significant (Zimet et al., 1988). It is worth mentioning that these social support networks may be formal or informal. Formal social support networks represent the relationship between individuals and their supervisors and peers, whereas, informal social networks connote the ties between individuals and their family and friends (Etzinon, 1984).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction, perhaps, is the most researched construct in management literature. Many scholars have defined it in different ways. Generally, job satisfaction is defined as an affective reaction or feeling of an employee regarding his/her job (Field, 2002). According to Spector (1997), job satisfaction is an attitudinal variable which captures how individuals feel about their jobs. Whereas, for Robbins & Judge (2009); job satisfaction is a positive feeling about the job or aspects of job. In this study, we use the definition of Spector (1997).

Hypotheses Development

Perceived Organizational Support and Job Satisfaction

According to OST (Eisenberger et al., 1986), POS is a global belief held by individuals concerning the value and care they receive from their organization. This belief is also called the ‘exchange’ between employees and organizations. POS also invokes norms of reciprocity. That is, high levels of POS provoke a feeling of ‘obligation’ within employees. In other words, the perceptions of employees that their contributions are being valued and their well-being is cared about generate favorable attitudes (e.g: job commitment and job satisfaction) which thereby get translated into favorable behaviors and actions (e.g: high levels of in-role & extra- role performance). Building on this, several studies have examined the relationship of POS and job satisfaction (Ahmed &Yekta, 2010; Bradley & Cartwright, 2002; Colakoglu, Culha&Atay, 2010; Cullen, Edwards, Casper &Gue, 2014; Eisenberger, Cummings, Aemeli& Lynch, 1997; Riggle et al., 2009; Rhoades &Eisenberger, 2002; Yang, 2010). These studies concluded that POS and job satisfaction are positively associated. Therefore, we also assume;

H₁: POS and job satisfaction would be positively associated.

Perceived Organizational Support & Perceived Social Support

Is has already been discussed in the preceding paragraph that POS represents employees’ beliefs concerning the extent of care and support they receive from their organizations (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Whereas, the latter has also been defined as individual’s perceptions regarding the level of support from their respective social networks such as family friends and significant others (Zimet et al., 1988). Perceived organizational support and perceived social support are two distinct but inter-related constructs. But, surprisingly, we could not find any empirical study which has estimated the nature and magnitude of the relationship between POS & PSS. Therefore, we would first try to develop the rationale regarding how these construct relate to each other. Organizational support theory holds that POS depends upon perceived supervisory support. As the supervisor represents an organization, therefore, his/her supportiveness will be perceived by his/her employees as support of the organization. Hence, supervisory support significantly contributes to POS (Eisenberger et al., 1986, 2002). On the other hand, the significant others (supervisors & coworkers) dimension of perceived social support also captures the same idea as of ‘supervisory support’ in OST. That is, the support which one receives from his/her supervisors and coworkers. This commonality between the underlying dimensions of POS and PSS paves our way to assume that both constructs are

interrelated. Supervisory support and support from significant others are both formal in nature and are directly proportional to POS and PSS respectively. Therefore, we assume;

H2: Perceived organizational support and perceived social support would be positively associated.

Perceived Social Support and Job Satisfaction

The sources of social support can be (supervisors and peers) and informal (family and friends). Individuals receive a vast variety of expressions from these sources. For Instance: emotional empathy, encouragement, assistance, information and appraisal (Etzinon, 1984). Researchers have also emphasized to evaluate the impact of social support in workplaces (Brough& Frame, 2004). Need fulfillment theorists have also identified ‘social support’ as an important determinant of job satisfaction (Stamps, 1997). According to Ferguson et al., (2012), social support networks within the organizations are pivot factors of improving employees’ job satisfaction., Similarly, many scholars report perceived social support as a positive predictor of job satisfaction (Brough& Pears, 2004; Harris et al., 2001; Zhang et al., 2015). It is due to the fact that social support encompasses a variety of interpersonal behaviors which are either helpful or intend to be helpful and improve psychological functioning of individuals (Deelstra et al., 2003). Hence we also propose;

H3: Perceived organizational support and job satisfaction would be positively associated.

Perceived Social Support as a mediator

Previous research has shown that perceived organizational support has positive effects on job satisfaction. However, little is known about how POS effects job satisfaction. Only a few researchers have explained how POS effects job satisfaction. For instance, the scholarships by Peterson (2015) and Biswas &Bhatnagr (2013) explain that the positive effect that POS has on job satisfaction is through work/employee engagement. No other studies, to the best of our knowledge, have yet identified any other intermediaries through which POS effects job satisfaction. In this study, we assume that perceived social support would mediate the positive relationship between POS and job satisfaction. We build this notion because perceived social support cultivates positive affect (happiness, confidence etc.) which fortifies employees’ perceptions of support received from the organization. Hence, we posit;

H4: Perceived social support would significantly mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and job satisfaction.

Methods and Procedures

Design and Procedure

This study is causal in nature as it attempts to determine the impacts of perceived organizational support on job satisfaction with mediating role of perceived social support. This study was delimited to academicians of all public sector universities in Balochistan province of Pakistan. Due to cost, time and access constraints, we could not formulate an exhaustive sample frame; therefore, respondents were approached conveniently. A trained team of graduate students collected data from academicians. Data collection team approached respondents in their respective institutions and distributed the survey instrument amongst them. At the time of data collection, each respondent was thoroughly briefed about the purpose of this research and that his/her participation in this survey was purely voluntary. Appropriate time was given to all respondents to record their perceptions on given instrument. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed out of which 217 dully filled and workable instruments were received which indicates a response rate of 43.3%. Following is the demographic profile of respondents;

Table 1: Demographic Details

Variable	Categories	n	%	Graph
Age	Below 30	82	37.8	<p>A horizontal bar chart for the 'Age' variable. The x-axis represents the count of respondents, ranging from 0 to 150. The y-axis lists categories: '41-50 years' (count 28), 'Below 30' (count 82), and 'Total' (count 110). The bars are blue.</p>
	31-40 years	103	47.5	
	41-50 years	28	12.9	
	51 and above	04	1.8	
	Total	217	100	
Gender	Male	102	47.1	<p>A horizontal bar chart for the 'Gender' variable. The x-axis represents the count of respondents, ranging from 90 to 120. The y-axis lists categories: 'Male' (count 102) and 'Female' (count 115). The bars are blue.</p>
	Female	115	52.9	
	Total	217	100	
Experience	Less than an year	50	23.0	<p>A horizontal bar chart for the 'Experience' variable. The x-axis represents the count of respondents, ranging from 0 to 150. The y-axis lists categories: '11-20 years' (count 25) and 'Less than an...' (count 50). The bars are blue.</p>
	1-10 years	34	61.8	
	11-20 years	25	11.5	
	21 years and above	08	03.7	
	Total	217	100	
Family System	Joint	118	54.4	<p>A horizontal bar chart for the 'Family System' variable. The x-axis represents the count of respondents, ranging from 80 to 120. The y-axis lists categories: 'Joint' (count 118) and 'Nuclear' (count 99). The bars are blue.</p>
	Nuclear	99	45.6	
	Total	217	100	

Marital Status	Single	60	27.7
	Married	157	72.3
	Total	217	100

In order to determine whether and to what extent major variables of study differ on the basis of demographics, we run independent samples t-test and ANOVA. Results showed that: perceived organizational support-POS ($t = -1.862, p > 0.05$) and perceived social support-PSS ($t = 1.414, p > 0.05$) of male and female do not differ whereas, the level of job satisfaction of male and female were significantly different ($t = -2.357, p < 0.05$). Similarly, the perceptions of respondents living in joint and nuclear family system were also indifferent regarding the levels of POS ($t = 1.135, p > 0.05$) & PSS ($t = 1.705, p > 0.05$). However, their levels of job satisfaction were significantly different ($t = 2.497, p < 0.05$). While the perceptions of married and unmarried respondents regarding levels of POS ($t = .125, p > 0.05$), PSS ($t = .122, p > 0.05$) and JS ($t = 1.139, p > 0.05$) were indifferent. Likewise, results of ANOVA revealed that the levels of POS ($F = .532, p > 0.01$), PSS ($F = 1.618, p > 0.01$) and JS ($F = 1.271, p > 0.01$) were same across all age groups. However, the POS ($F = 5.277, p < 0.01$) & JS ($F = 5.692, p < 0.01$) levels vary with experience. But the PSS level do not vary with regards to experience ($F = 2.541, p > 0.01$).

Measurement of Variables

Researchers adopted three sections (perceived organizational support, perceived social support and job satisfaction) from a survey developed by Swarnalatha (2013). The scale of perceived organizational support was comprised of 13 statements; job satisfaction had 14 statements and perceived social support had 21 statements. Five point likert scale ranging from strongly agree =5 to strongly disagree =1 was used to record perceptions of respondents. Reliability statistics of these scales are summarized in table 2;

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Scale	Items	CR “α”
Perceived Organizational Support	13	.95
Perceived Social Support	21	.90
Job Satisfaction	14	.94

Note: CR = Composite reliability

Results

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Zero-Order Correlations			
Variables	1	2	3
Perceived Organizational Support-POS	1	.562**	.803**
Perceived Social Support-PSS		1	.572**
Job Satisfaction-JS			1

Descriptive Statistics			
	POS	PSS	JS
<i>Mean</i>	2.70	2.51	2.60
<i>SD</i>	.963	.656	.854
<i>Skewness</i>	.371	.347	.351
<i>Kurtosis</i>	-.400	-.280	-.486

** = $p < 0.01$ (two tailed), $N = 217$

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics (*composite mean, SD, skewness & kurtosis*) and zero-order correlations of study variables. Reported values of distribution parameters (skewness & kurtosis) lie within the acceptable range of ± 2 which indicate that all variables have normal distributions. Zero-order correlations indicate significant positive associations among all variables. Specifically, perceived organizational support has significant positive associations with job satisfaction ($r = .803, p < 0.01$) and perceived social support ($r = .562, p < 0.01$). Likewise, perceived social support is also positively associated with job satisfaction ($r = .572, p < 0.01$). These results provide enough evidences to accept H_1, H_2 and H_3 . H_4 was tested by running structural equation modeling technique. Its results are summarized in table 4 and 5;

Table 4: Model fit indices

Fit Indices	Reported Values
CMIN/DF	2.183
GFI	0.990
AGFI	0.950
RMSEA	0.074
CFI	0.976

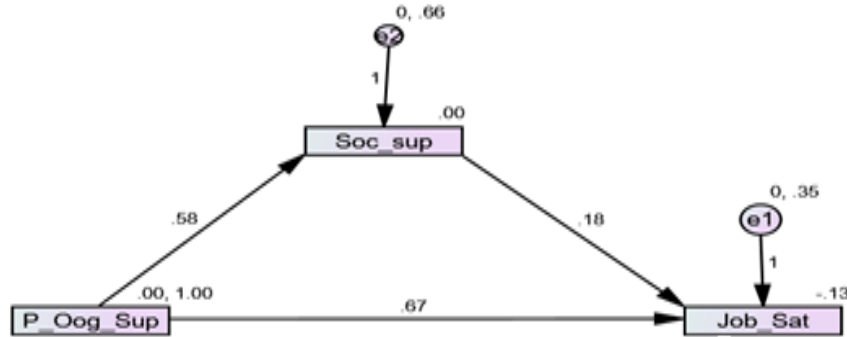


Figure 1: SEM Model

Model fit indices (table 4) reveal an excellent model (Fig. 1). The CMIN/DF being 2.183 (CMIN=4.367, DF=2) is in the stipulated range of 2 to 5 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007; Wheaton et al, 1977) and its probability is insignificant ($p=0.113$) showing an excellent model fit (Hooper, Coughlan & Mullen, 2008). Moreover, as an alternative to chi-square, Goodness-of-fit statistics (GFI=0.99) and the adjusted goodness-of-fit indices (AGFI=0.95) are also excellent being greater than 0.95 (Hooper et al., 2008). Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA= 0.074) is good being around .07. Comparative Fit Index (CFI= 0.976) is above the threshold of $CFI \geq 0.95$ (Hu and Bentler, 1999). All of these model fit indices are excellent.

Table 5: Mediation Analysis and Regression Weights

Paths	R ²	S.E.	C.R.	Sig
POS → PSS	0.584	0.055	10.534	***
PSS → JS	0.182	0.05	3.67	***
POS → JS	0.672	0.05	13.538	***

Note: *** significant at 0.001

The statistics of the mediation analysis are given in table 5. The overall mediation analysis shows a positive and significant mediation by perceived social support on the relationship between perceived organizational support and job satisfaction; whereas, the relationship between perceived organizational support and job satisfaction was itself significant. The overall indirect effect was $(.58) \times (.18) = 0.1044$. The analysis was bootstrapped at 1000 samples to establish the significance of the indirect effect at 95% confidence interval. The regression weight for experience was insignificant indicating that it was fairly controlled in the model. Based on these results, we conclude that perceived social support significantly mediates the relationship of perceived organizational support and job satisfaction.

Discussion and Conclusions

The aim of this study was to explore the direct and indirect effect of perceived organizational support on job satisfaction. We conceptualized that perceived social support would mediate the relationship between POS and Job satisfaction. In order to find the answers of major research questions, we articulated four major hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 asserted that POS and job satisfaction would be positively associated. In line with the findings of previous researchers (Ahmed & Yekta, 2010; Bradley & Cartwright, 2002; Colakoglu, Culha & Atay, 2010; Cullen, Edwards, Casper & Gue, 2014; Eisenberger, Cummings, Aemeli & Lynch, 1997; Riggles et al., 2009; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Yang, 2010), POS and JS were found positively associated. This finding affirms that the perceptions of being cared about generate positive attitudinal outcomes. We, in Hypothesis 2 stated that POS and PSS would have a positive relationship. Results provided enough support to accept this notion. The rationale behind this finding is the fact that when individuals perceive their supervisors as supportive, they perceive it the support of their respective organizations. Because supervisors represent an organization so their support is attributed as organizational support.

In hypothesis 3, we stated that perceived social support and job satisfaction would be positively related. Results proved this assumption. Perceived social support is a multidimensional construct encompassing different facets of support including the support from significant others (e.g: supervisors and colleagues). It is a universal fact that when employees perceive their coworkers and high-ups as supportive and encouraging, they feel more contented. In other words, perceived social support consists of those helpful interpersonal behaviors which carry beneficial outcomes (Deelstra et al., 2003). This is why a positive relationship was found between POS and job satisfaction.

Finally, in hypothesis 4, we articulated that perceived social support would mediate the relationship of POS and JS. Structural equation modeling proved this notion. As stated, perceived social support encompasses variety of interpersonal behaviors which are either helpful or intend to help others. Such positive behaviors cultivate a positive state of mind under which organizational initiatives are perceived more strongly. Hence, we conclude that organizations, especially the academia, should ensure a supportive environment which would ultimately yield positive attitudinal consequences. We also recommend the authorities of HEIs to launch such initiatives which can cultivate a 'positive affect'. This positive affect would reciprocate in the form of more satisfied, committed and loyal employees. We also recommend the

policy makers at HEIs to make some serious amendments in division of labor between, teaching, research and administrative chores. So that the pressure on employees may be lessened and the employees may make less personal sacrifices in fulfilling the conflicting demands of work and family. However, the findings of present study must be interpreted by keeping in mind its certain limitations. This research was limited to only one sector and region. Therefore, the results may not be generalized. Future studies should consider other sectors and regions to increase the generalizability of its findings.

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