

PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT MEDIATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED STRESS AND JOB SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to examine the mediating effect of perceived social support between perceived stress and job satisfaction among employees. A conveniently selected sample of 280 employees provided the information on Perceived Social Support Scale, Perceived Stress Scale, and Job Satisfaction Survey. Employing Regression analyses, findings revealed the significant negative effect of perceived stress and positive effect of perceived social support on job satisfaction. Perceived stress was found non-significant in predicting perceived social support. However, perceived social support partially mediated the relationship between perceived stress and job satisfaction.

Keywords: Perceived Social Support, Perceived Stress, Job Satisfaction, Employees.

INTRODUCTION

Perceived social support is an important interpersonal aid which is systematically discovered to be correlated with psychological well being particularly in any phase of stress (Norris & Kaniasty, 1996), and is regarded as a safety component for those who have experienced any tragedy (Norris, Friedman, Watson, Byrne, Diaz, & Kaniasty, 2002). People who remain supportive in their social relationships are more resilient to face any life-threatening circumstances (Shalev, Tuval, Frenkiel - Fishman, Hadar, & Eth, 2006; Norris & Kaniasty, 1996).

Social support refers to various types of aid and succor provided by members of one's social networks (Weiten & Lloyd, 2003). Cutrona (1986) defined social support as helping behavior which included the acts of listening, offering advice, expressed view points, positive feedback, and expressed caring or concern. Social relations have shown to buffer the effects of stress on a person's mental health (Bolger & Eckenrode, 1991). Perceived social support can be defined as a potent predictive variable for an individual's behavior towards acquiring any interpersonal assistance. Individuals experiencing stress would easily handle it when they think that social support is present to them, therefore it results in positive psychological effects. People having non

supportive interpersonal relationships experience more stress and have problems in later days with over coming stress (Miville & Constantine, 2006).

Perceived or received social support, both types help in maintaining mental health, the former may be defined as how much assistance is available in any need while the latter may be defined as the actual or real assistance got. Both types are helpful and protective for the individuals in the stressful situations and it also increase their faith that certain assets are presents for them. Social support determines stress related appraisal and coping strategies (Lahey & Cohen, 2000). Several studies have indicated that social support levels are negatively correlated with anxiety and depression (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988).

Recent studies have showed that sources of social support at work-place are generally supervisors or colleagues (Brough & Frame 2004; Pears 2004). Schirmer and Lopez (2001) have found that supervisor's support leads to less strain and stress in a study of 250 USA university-employees. Consequently, Bliese and Castro (2000) reported supervisor's support is negatively correlated with stress as found in a study of 1,538 American Army soldiers.

Secondly, social support has been found as a casual

factor for the betterment in student's achievement. Thus friends and family are the first source of a person. It has been found that, their support has been found to be a significant determinant of academic or educational achievement (Cutrona, Cole, Colangelo, Assouline, & Russel, 1994; Steinberg & Darling, 1994). When the students receive social support, this would be helpful to lessen their behavioral problems and they believe that someone is always there to support them, therefore it would be useful in their educational achievement. This type of knowledge would be helpful to enhance the support received if we know that how social support would prepare students to be excellent in their studies and handle their psychological difficulties.

Perceived stress refers to as the degree to which an event is found very hard to handle or difficult to manage by someone who faces any stressful situation (Cohen, & Wills, 1985). Steber (1998) describes that documented researches for work-place stress has revealed that stressors can come from multiple ways. Some are named as daily life work-stress or those intrinsic to the job, some other stressors are associated with employee role-identity stress, inter-personal stress, career development, and environmental stress at work, climate and organizational work-place.

Psychological stress of an increased level at workplace has been found in different studies. Job stress often leads to high job demands according to a worker's abilities. Stressful events or stressors on job like low social support, quantitative over load, qualitative under load, and low control would be dangerous for one's life, health and well being (Melin & Lundberg, 1997; Karasek & Theorell, 1990). Social support system also provides a better adjustment level to the individual and reduces stress and depression level. This perception that social support is available, also predicts an overall better adjustment (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1996).

Sources of occupational stress or stressors are those elements that cause certain responses. Behavioural psychology studies indicate that stress would be useful or perceived as a threat for the person depending upon the intensity of perceived stress. These occupational stressors

are: long work hours, organizational aspects, lack of institutional support and institutional change (Davey, Obst & Sheehan, 2001).

Satisfaction on the job is an employee's attitude towards his work or job experience (Berry, 1997), an emotional or psychological feeling or susceptibility towards any particular job that anyone performs (Landy & Conte, 2004) how good a person feels about his job (Spector, 1997) and his work environments (Wood, Wood & Boyd, 2007). Spector (1997) refers job satisfaction as how a person feels about his job and other related features of his job. According to him, it may also be defined as the degree from which a person likes (satisfy) or dislikes (dissatisfy) his job. Perceived job satisfaction can be considered as a feeling of gratification, spirit of self-realization, involvement, ambition and interest (Smither, 1994).

Occupational stress would have an unpleasant effect on an individual's psychological well being that may result in a break down in military operations type of performance (Pflanz & Sonneks, 2002) and would be harmful for physical health (Pflanz & Ogle, 2006; Pawar & Rathod, 2007). Any organization of course would be demanding high in the level of its personnel's psychological health and physical fitness. Thus, each employee would have to preserve his physical health and fitness at a high level in order to perform their assignments (Sanchez, Bray, Vincus, & Bann, 2004).

Objectives

The objectives of the present investigation were to see the impact of perceived stress on job satisfaction and perceived social support to check the effect of perceived social support on job satisfaction and to explore the mediated effect of perceived social support on relationship between perceived job stress and job satisfaction among employees. It was hypothesized that (1) perceived stress will be negatively related with job satisfaction, (2) perceived stress will be negatively related with perceived social support, (3) perceived social support will be positively correlated with job satisfaction, and (4) perceived social support will mediate the

relationship between perceived stress and job satisfaction.

Methodology

Participants

A conveniently selected sample of 280 employees aged 23–45 years (mean=33.14, SD = 9.78) working in different organizations in Multan-Pakistan participated in this research. The participants were carefully matched on demographic variables, residential area (urban), education (graduation), marital status (double) and socio-economic status (middle class).

Instruments

Following instruments culturally adapted were used to achieve the objectives of the present study.

Perceived Stress Scale

It is a 10-item scale (Cohen & Williamson, 1988) measuring persons' evaluation of stressfulness of the situations in the past month of their lives. Reverse scoring is used for items (4, 5, 7 and 8) describing negative experience or responses. Total possible score range from 0 to 56, with higher score representing higher levels of perceived stress. The internal consistency reliability is 0.78.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988) is a 12-item scale, rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) very strongly disagree to (7) very strongly agree. It measures social support from three sources: family, friends, and a special person, measured on three subscales: fa (family), fr (friends), and so (significant other), each with four items. The total social support is the sum of the scores from 12 items. The higher the sum of the twelve items, the higher the levels of perceived social support. The internal consistency reliability is 0.85.

Job Satisfaction Survey

It is a 36-items with nine facets scale (Spector, 1985) examining nine facets namely pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating procedures, co-workers, nature of work, and communication with four items each to measure the

degree of employee attitudes about the job and aspects of the job. All the responses were obtained on a summated rating scale format of "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Total score ranges from 36 to 216 with higher values indicating higher job satisfaction. The higher scores indicated a higher degree of job satisfaction. Internal consistency reliability is 0.91.

Procedure

Participants completed the perceived stress scale, multi-dimensional scale of perceived social support, and job satisfaction survey. Researcher approached each person individually and data was collected according to willingness of each participant. Participants were given instructions prior to the filling of questionnaire booklet. They were also given the assurance about the information confidentiality. Results were analyzed through 'SPSS-17'.

Results

The data set was analyzed and hypotheses were tested by using SPSS Statistics version 17. All the hypotheses were tested using Hierarchical multiple Regression Analysis and Path Analysis.

Table 1, indicates the findings for the prediction efficacy of perceived social support and perceived stress for job satisfaction. Results suggest that job satisfaction is significantly predicted by perceived social support (.182*, *p<0.01) and perceived stress (.160*, *p<0.01).

The results in Table 2 show that perceived social support has non-significant impact on job satisfaction. It implies that job satisfaction is not predicted by perceived social support (.057, p = non-significant).

Figure 1 shows the hypothesized model and Figure 2 depicts the values of beta coefficients for the hypothesized paths in the model. Findings show the

	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	p
	B	Beta		
(Constant)	104.669		23.119	.000*
Perceived Social Support	.237	.182*	3.131	.002*
Perceived Stress	.413	.160*	-2.740	.007*

R² = 0.062, Adjusted R² = 0.055, (F (2, 277) = 9.174, p<0.05), *p<0.01

Table 1. Regression Analysis for Impact of Perceived Social Support and Perceived Stress on Job Satisfaction

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized t Coefficients		p
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	14869	1.563	9.511		.000
Perceived Social Support	2.862-E02	.030	.057	-.954	.341

R2 = 0.003, Adjusted R2 = 0.000, (F (1, 278) = 0.911, p > = 0.05), p = non significant

Table 2. Regression Analysis for Impact of Perceived Social Support on Perceived Stress

HYPOTHESIZED MODEL

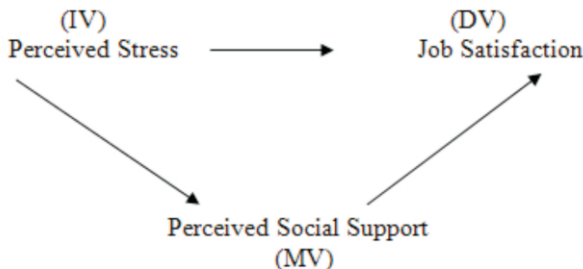


Figure 1. Hypothesized Paths Showing the Relationship among Variables

significant paths analyses for the effect of perceived stress on job satisfaction, and for the effect of perceived social support on job satisfaction. However, effect of perceived stress has been found non-significant on perceived social support.

Mediation Effect of Perceived Social Support

Huang, Thornhill, Shah, and Shok, (2002) use path analysis procedures to calculate direct effect, indirect effect and total effect of the exogenous variable. In the Figure 2, direct effect from perceived stress to job satisfaction is a coefficient 0.160. Therefore, the strength of indirect effect is 0.01, by multiplying 0.057 x 0.182. The total effect of perceived stress is the sum of direct effect 0.160 and indirect effect via perceived social support (which is 0.057 x 0.182 = 0.01). The total effect of perceived stress on job satisfaction is calculated by adding the direct and indirect effects, so total effect in this case is 0.160 + 0.01 = 0.170. What authors found here is that the total effect of

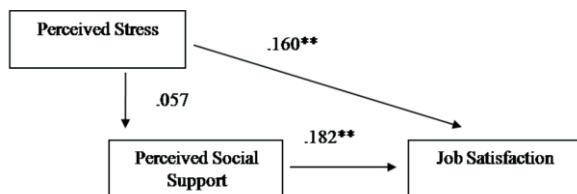


Figure 2. Path diagram showing linear regression coefficients (Model 1)

perceived stress is stronger than it appear in the path model where the effect of perceived social support on job satisfaction seemed the strongest. The results in Figure 2 illustrates that perceived social support has a partial mediation effect on perceived stress and job satisfaction.

The present study was focused on exploring the mediating role of the perceived social support between perceived stress and job satisfaction among employees. To achieve this objective, the first hypothesis was stated that perceived stress will be negatively correlated with job satisfaction. Findings showed significant negative relationship between perceived stress and job satisfaction. Result implied that when employees perceived more stress at their working place, they became less satisfied with their jobs. These findings are in consistent with the work of Pflanz & Sonneks, 2002 who presented that occupational stress have an unpleasant effect on an individual's psychological well being that may result in a break down in employees performance at workplace that could result in less job satisfaction.

To test the hypothesized model, the second assumption was furnished in a way that perceived stress will be negatively correlated with perceived social support among employees. Results indicated non-significant relationship between perceived stress and perceived social support. These results didn't support the hypothesis and suggested that when employees reported higher perception of stress situations in their organizations, they didn't perceive their co-workers and supervisors as support provider. This finding is not in accord with the previous study investigated on association between perceived stress and perceived social support. For instance the studies by Shalev, et al., (2006) and Norris and Kaniasty (1996) have clearly established a significant connection between both variables and debated that under the stressful circumstances when a employee gets social support from people always feel resilience. Bliese and Castro (2000) also reported that supervisor's support is negatively correlated with stress.

According to the third hypothesis, a positive relationship was assumed between perceived social support and job satisfaction. This assumption was supported by the

present findings and clearly demonstrated that employees reporting high level of perceived social support from their partners and supervisor experienced high job satisfaction. It implied that perceived social support caused the satisfaction with job and work assignments. These significant findings are also supported by Stroebe and Stroebe (1996). They argued that social support system also provides a better adjustment level and satisfaction to the individual and reduces stress and depression level. They added that this perception that social support is available, also predict an overall better adjustment at workplace and develops job satisfaction among employees (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1996).

The main objective of the current study postulated in the hypothesis that perceived social support will play a mediating role between the relationship of perceived social support and job satisfaction. When the mediating effect of perceived social support was calculated, a significant direct effect of perceived social support on job satisfaction was found ($\beta = 0.160$, $p < 0.05$) as indicated in Table 2. It was similar to the one found between perceived stress on job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.182$, $p < 0.05$). It was found that perceived social support both positively and significantly mediated the relationship between perceived stress and job satisfaction. Therefore, the main construct of the study was approved. However, the results indicated that perceived social support mediates partially the relationship between perceived stress and job satisfaction.

Discussion

Since the direct influence of the perceived stress on job satisfaction was both positive and significant, the mediating effect of perceived social support was investigated. Baron and Kenny (1986) described a four step procedure to establish mediation. These steps are described here. First, in this example, the relationship between perceived social support and job satisfaction was established. As discussed above, this relationship was found to be significant (Table 1 and Figure 2). Second, the relationship between perceived social support and perceived stress was calculated (Table 2). Third, the relationship between perceived stress and job

satisfaction was established (Table 2) and was found significant. Fourth, complete mediation would occur if perceived stress would have no direct effect on job satisfaction when perceived social support would be added to the model as a mediator. Partial mediation would occur if the affiliation between perceived stress and job satisfaction is reduced (but not absent) when perceived social support is entered in the equation.

Conclusion

Study has offered the significant contributions in understanding the role of perceived social support in the relationship of perceived stress and job satisfaction among employees. The overall results lead to conclude that perceived social support is a mediator between perceived stress and job satisfaction. However, results indicated a partial mediation of perceived social support between perceived stress and job satisfaction. It does mean that perceived social support is not fully independent to control the relationship between perceived stress and job satisfaction of employees.

Limitations and Recommendations

Despite the necessary accuracy and deliberation, there are some limitations to this research. First limitation of this research is the cross sectional research design because of short time duration. The responses may be different if it would be longitudinal. Second limitation is the English-language of the scales. The pilot study did not indicate any major difficulties with the scales used in this research and those were thus not translated. Moreover, the probability would remain the same that employees might be mistaken to understand the scales' language since English is not their native language. In future research, this factor must be regarded to develop a better understanding of the scales by translating them. Third limitation is that all the hypotheses are tested with the help of hierarchical regression analysis and path analysis, that is modern advanced statistics but Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) can be used for the same purpose. By using hierarchical regression analysis and path analysis, in this study all hypothesized relationships are tested separately. However, SEM technique permits a researcher

for testing the whole research model at once. Thus for future research, use of SEM would be more interesting.

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