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The influence of supervisory support on work motivation: a moderating role of organizational support

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Abstract

This study investigates the effect and interaction of various factors on the motivation of the post-graduate trainees in the hospitals to work. It also aims to highlight the importance of certain factors that could influence the motivation of the post-graduate trainees to work better. This cross-sectional study tested relationships between the supervisor support, organisational support, job value and motivation to work. It further explored the interaction between organisational support and supervisor support. Data were collected from 335 doctors enrolled in post-graduate training in five teaching hospitals in the public sector in Lahore at that time. Pearson correlation and regression analysis along with the macro PROCESS were used to analyse the data. It was found that supervisor support and job value positively affects the motivation to work, while organizational support interacts with supervisor support to enhance motivation to work among doctors. The results of this study can help the supervisors and the dean of the hospitals to get a better understanding of the factors that play a role in affecting the motivation level of the relatively young doctors of the public sector hospitals to work effectively and efficiently.

Keywords: Motivation to work, supervisor support, organizational support, job value.

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1. Introduction

The health care industry is an essential part of the community, and the focus of this sector should be on the quality of the service delivery. But the maintenance of the standard of the service being provided to the people seems to be a challenging task. The human factor involved in the health sector poses continuous issues for the managers or the supervisors because the elements of fatigue, burnout and over work make it difficult for the doctors and nurses to keep their motivation level elevated and maintain their quality of work while on the job. Job satisfaction and good outcomes are directly related to the quality of work environment that is provided to the employees in this sector. Where the private sector has known to be proactive in nature and efficiency driven, the public sector has widely been recognised as inefficient. The primary concern in public sector is the need to get ‘more for less’. Furthermore, the apprehension towards the efficiency of government has also highlighted the responsibility of managers that includes the motivation of employees as well. This study builds on the existing literature and aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the factors that motivate the doctors to work in the public sector. This may help in designing formal rules and human resource practices intended to increase the productivity, efficiency and motivation of the doctors in public hospitals.

2. Literature review

Motivation is the translation of a person’s energies into efforts. This means that the degree or extent to which an employee performs behavioural actions rooted in the intentions of the employee to deliver is the level of his or her motivation. According to Perry and Porter (1982), what is important is not only the force of the effort that is being made by the employee but also the quality and the direction of that effort. This means that motivation must not only get translated to a substantial amount of effort from the employee but must be productive towards the organisation.

According to Pinder (1998), work motivation is defined as the combination of forces that influence the behaviour of an individual related to the work. Various internal and external forces affect the work-related behaviour. Environmental factors and inherent needs and motives drive the motivation to work (Pinder, 1998). However, another research proved that negative environmental factors are a cause of dissatisfaction within the employees but the good environmental factors, known as ‘hygienes’ by Herzberg, hardly help in establishing satisfaction among them. On the contrary, people are more satisfied by the intrinsics of what they do, alternatively known as ‘motivators’ by Herzberg (Mausner & Snyderman, 1993).

According to Porter and Miles (1974), the motivation of employees can be predicted by four variables: individual characteristics, job characteristics, work environment and external environment characteristics. Because work motivation is important in the settings of public sector hospitals and serves as an important factor towards performance and deliverance of the employees in this sector, it is important to analyse the importance of job characteristics, content of work, working conditions and the conditions of employment when it comes to affect the motivation of employees to work.

2.1. Supervisor support and motivation to work

The general views of employees regarding the degree to which their supervisor is able to value their contributions and care towards the well-being of the employees are considered appropriate measures of the perceived supervisor support of employees. As studied by Perry and Porter (1982), the supervisor and the peer groups are amongst the most essential parts of the environment of an employee. They facilitate in dealing with the strains of the work and reducing the negative effects of the job (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Support from superiors and colleagues makes the environment pleasant healthy and amicable. And the perceived availability of support increases the level of intrinsic motivation (Vallerand, 1997). Social support has also been proved as one of the strong predictors of intrinsic motivation (Tummers, Landeweerd & van Merode, 2002). Van Yperen also confirmed that

intrinsic motivation can be increased by enhancing the social support at work (Van Yperen & Hagedoorn, 2003).

2.2. Organisational support and motivation to work

Three classifications have been made by Perry and Porter (1982), who believe that establishing the reward system, providing individuals with due rewards and creating a congenial climate in the organisation affect the motivations of employees.

Gillet, Huart, Colombat and Fouquereau (2013) studied that employees tend to feel motivated in return of their perception about their organisation's support with them. They have found that the employees who are supported by their organisations tend to feel obliged and engage more in their work that leads to them feeling motivated. The perception of the organisation's support can vary based on the nature of the industry under the question based on the job characteristics of employees. The employees working in the organisations with extensive public dealing ought to feel discomforted in their job positions, and in order to retain these employees on their positions, the organisational support perception of these employees plays a vital role (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

2.3. Job value and motivation to work

The nature of the job or what the person does at work can play a major role in affecting the motivation to work. Intrinsic motivation is primarily driven by those features of the work that make the job more worthwhile and challenging, such as opportunities to learn and grow, flexibility and autonomy (Janssen, De Jonge & Bakkar, 1999). The sense of achievement and happiness which they acquire from doing a meaningful work, keeps them motivated and encourages them to perform well (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). It has also been shown that having a sense of meaning in what one does supplies the necessary motivation to take care of the patients (Ozturk, Bahcecik & Baumann, 2006; Reutter & Northcott, 1993).

So, on the basis of the above literature, the following hypotheses have been derived:

H1: Supervisor support is positively associated with the motivation to work.

H2: Organisational support is positively associated with the motivation to work.

H3: Job value is positively associated with the motivation to work.

Furthermore, it has also been observed that the organisational support and supervisor support go hand in hand. If the organisational policies are not supportive or in favour of the employees, then supervisor support will be limited and it cannot do wonders. Supervisor support has been considered as an antecedent of perceived organisational support as well as the outcome of it. The causal link between the two has been proved by Eisenbeger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski & Rhoades (2002). On the other hand, Yoon and Thye (2002) has also suggested that if the perceived organisational support is more, perceptions about the supervisor support will be enhanced as well. So, it is the perceived organisational support that drives the supervisor support. The supervisors with high perceived organisational support would have more resources to exchange with their subordinates (Erdogan, & Enders, 2007). On the other hand, if supportive rules and regulations are there, then the successful implementation and effective use of those requires the support of supervisors. So, in this study, the interaction of organisational support with supervisor support has also been explored. This means that the organisational support coupled with the support from the supervisor increases the motivation of employees to work. This can be elaborated that the extent to which a supervisor is supportive towards the employees decides as to what extent does the support of the organisational support is fruitful. The absence of organisational support leaves the support of supervisor rather futile.

H4: The association of supervisor support and motivation to work is moderated by organisational support.

2.4. Demographic factors influencing work motivation

Individual factors like age, gender, marital status, spouse employment status, having children or not and the number of children have also been added as control variables in this study to hold the variations caused by them constant. In the previous researches, age has been shown to affect the motivation level among nurses (Koivula, Paunonen & Laippala, 1998). In the study of Kivimäki, Voutilainen and Koskinen (1995), it was proved that age is not significantly associated with motivation. Other variables have not been explored that much in the previous researches but still they might hold some effect. So, they have been added as control variables.

3. Conceptual framework

For hypotheses 1, 2 and 3, model 1(a) is followed to explore the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable, and for hypothesis 4, model 1(b) will be adopted to explore the interaction effects of organisational support and supervisor support.

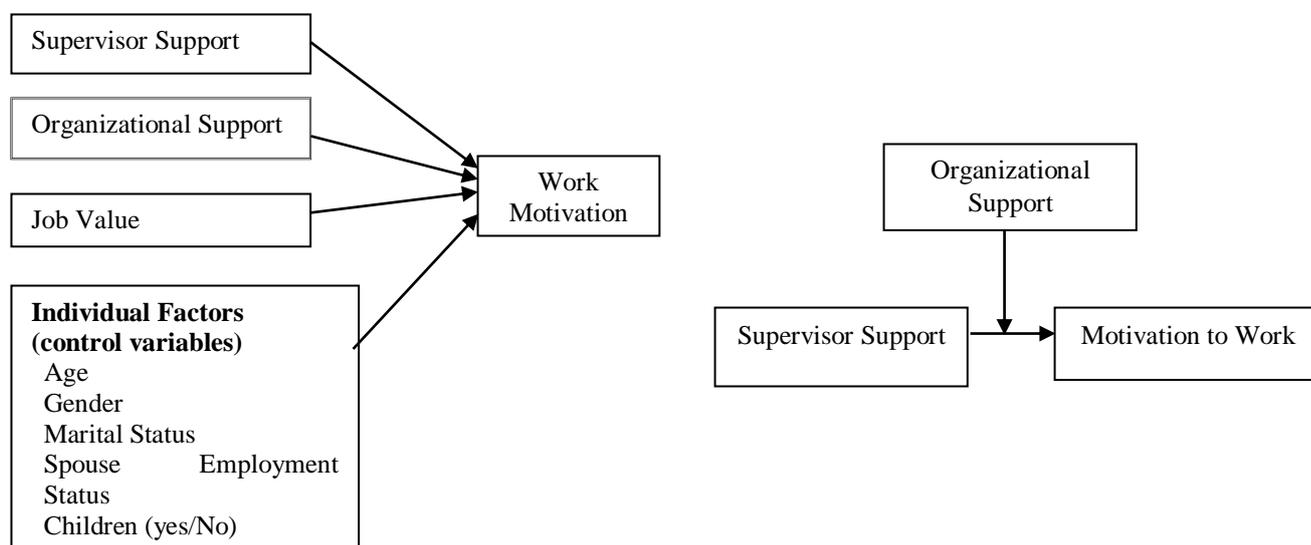


Figure 1. (a) Conceptual Framework. (b) Interactional effect of organisational support

4. Methodology

A positivist and deductive approach was adopted to conduct this study. This study was cross-sectional in nature and used the survey design method where data were collected through self-administered questionnaires. The participants of the study were the doctors of the government hospitals of Lahore who were enrolled in the post-graduate training programme at that moment. At the first stage, five hospitals were randomly selected out of the total 15 public hospitals of Lahore. Then, a total of 355 responses were gathered through random sampling from the five randomly selected hospitals. But out of these, 335 responses were usable. The respondents included both male and female doctors. The majority of them were between the age group of 25–30.

5. Results and discussions

5.1. Correlations

Table 1 shows the correlation matrix obtained as a result of Pearson product-moment correlation. The correlations are generally consistent with our hypothesis. The diagonal in the correlation matrix displayed in Table 1 shows all the measures that had acceptable level of reliability.

Table 1. Internal consistency reliabilities and intercorrelations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Motivation	3.296	0.591	0.737			
2. Sup support	3.169	0.729	0.156**	0.864		
			0.004			
3. Org support	2.687	0.699	0.215**	0.131*	0.805	
			0.000	0.016		
4. Job value	3.590	0.638	0.525**	0.178**	0.120	0.771
			0.000	0.001	0.028	

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Moreover, it can be seen from Table 2 that the correlation coefficient between superior support and motivation to work is 0.156 with $p = 0.004$. Therefore, the supervisor support has positive, weak and statistically significant association with motivation to work. Organisational support and motivation to work are correlated as $r = 0.215$ and $p = 0.000$, and the job value has a value of correlation coefficient as 0.525 with $p = 0.000$. These values show that the organisational support has moderate positive association with motivation to work, but the job value has strong association with motivation to work. Out of all the variables, the relationship between supervisor support and motivation to work is the weakest, and the association between job value and motivation to work has come out to be the strongest (Field, 2014).

5.2. Interaction effect of organisational support and supervisor support

Then, the interaction effect of organisational support and supervisor support was explored through PROCESS macro by Hayes (2012). From Table 3, we can see that the moderation has been shown by the significant interaction effect, $B = 0.096$, 95% CI [0.007, 0.184], $t = 2.128$, $p = 0.034$, i.e., $p < 0.05$, indicating that the relationship between the organisational support and the motivation to work is moderated by supervisor support.

Table 2. Linear model of predictors of motivation to work

	B	SE B	t	P
Constant	3.008	0.11	27.05	$p = 0.000$
	[2.79, 3.23]	1		
Gender	0.060	0.06	0.944	$p = 0.346$
	[-0.065, 0.186]	4		
Age	0.096	0.05	1.859	$p = 0.064$
	[-0.006, 0.198]	2		
Marital status	-0.179	0.09	-1.861	$p = 0.064$
	[-0.369, 0.010]	6		
Spouse employment status	0.064	0.09	0.689	$p = 0.492$
	[-0.118, 0.245]	2		
Have children?	-0.051	0.11	-0.449	$p = 0.654$
	[-0.274, 0.172]	4		
Number of children	0.022	0.06	0.333	$p = 0.739$
	[-0.108, 0.152]	6		
Organisational support (centred)	0.174	0.04	3.539	$p = 0.0005$
	[0.077, 0.270]	9		
Supervisor support (centred)	0.110	0.03	2.843	$p = 0.005$
	[0.034, 0.186]	9		
Supervisor support x Organisational support	0.096	0.04	2.128	$p = 0.0341$
	[0.0072, 0.1839]	5		

Note: $R^2 = 0.1746$

The regression equation for this model would be:

$$\text{Motivation to work} = (B_0 + B_1 * \text{supervisor support} + B_2 * \text{org. support} + B_3 * \text{Interaction}) + \epsilon$$

$$\text{Motivation to work} = B_0 + 0.174 * \text{org. support} + 0.110 * \text{supervisor support} + 0.096 * \text{Interaction} + \epsilon$$

The interaction effects can be shown by a slopes graph as well. The graph shown in Figure 2 shows the simple slopes equation of the regression of motivation to work on organisational support at three different levels of supervisor support.

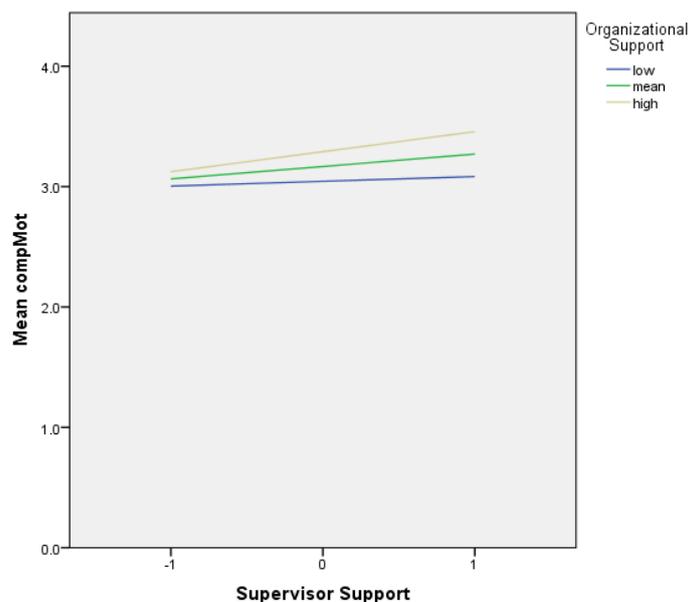


Figure 2. Simple slopes equation of the regression of motivation to work

The graph also shows that when supervisor support is low, there is weak positive association between organisational support and work motivation. At the mean value of supervisor support, the relationship gets stronger and this relationship gets even stronger at high levels of supervisor support.

6. Results and discussions

The influencing mechanism of factors like superior support, organisational support and job value on motivation to work has been clarified in this research, which further enriches the literature. In this study, job value came out to be the strongest predictor of motivation to work and had the strongest association. The job of a doctor is meaningful and identifiable in itself and the doctor really feels sense of achievement and pride when he sees that he can affect change in others' lives. This pride and sense of fulfillment is what keeps them going (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Despite the low salaries (or in some cases zero salaries, honorary trainees) and poor working conditions in public hospitals, this sense of achievement and happiness motivates them intrinsically to do more. In the study of Linder (1998), the interesting nature of the work came out the primary motivating factor. In the case of doctors as well, the job value seems to be the major motivator, which is a self-actualising factor.

The organisational support is also significantly associated with the motivation to work. They have found that the employees who are supported by their organisations tend to feel obliged and engage more in their work that leads to them feeling motivated (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001).

Although the impact is not as great as the job value, but it is an important factor that can help in keeping the motivation level of doctors high. When the employees enjoy various benefits and services

offered like job social security, childcare arrangement and job schedule flexibility, they do not really focus towards the strains and negative aspects of the job, rather they feel more motivated towards their work (Vallerand, 1997).

The association of supervisor support with the motivation to work came out to be the weaker as compared to other variables. Tummers, Landeweerd and van Merode (2002) and Van Yperen and Hagedoorn (2003) have predicted social or superior support as one of the important predictors of motivation to work. This supports the idea that the factors that motivate an employee differs from profession to the context and working environment (Linder, 1998).

Also the organisational support is found to interact with the supervisor support to create an impact on motivation to work. Since the supervisor support is practically ineffective if the organisational support is not available (Erdogan & Enders, 2007). Therefore, the supervisor support works together with the organisational support to affect the motivation of the doctors to work.

7. Limitations and future research

The intention of this study was to explore the relationship and role of supervisor support, organisational support, job value and motivation to work among the doctors of public hospitals. But this study was limited to a certain geographical area, so the findings cannot be generalised to a larger scale. So at a later stage, public hospitals of other cities could also be included to incorporate the diverse groups.

This study was a one-time snapshot of the experience and behaviour of the doctors. Therefore, a longitudinal study could be done as well to gain an insight into the behaviour and experience of the doctors over a period of time as they become senior or they adjust to the environment.

Moreover, triangulation could be done by gathering qualitative data through interviews. The themes that emerge through that data could help in understanding the phenomenon and providing an in-depth understanding of how different factors interact in motivating the doctors of public sector.

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