

# Analysis of Employees' Perception of Workplace Support and Level of Motivation in Public Sector Healthcare Organization

Zia Ullah<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Zeb Khan<sup>2</sup>, Muhammad Siddique<sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

*This study investigates workplace support and employees' work motivation and their mutual relationships in a healthcare setting. It attempts to partly test Eisenberger's theory of perceived organizational support in the given context. A total of 400 questionnaires were collected from a large public-sector healthcare organization. Chi-square, cross tabulation and correlation statistics was applied to analyze the data. Results showed an association between the variables and high degree of consistency with that of previous studies. The study also confirmed "flexible hours" as a viable dimension of workplace support which was not delineated by earlier studies.*

**Keywords:** *Workplace support, employee motivation, healthcare organization.*

## 1. Introduction

Employees acquire economic gains, status, personal relationship and social benefits through work (Cropanzano, Kacmar & Bozeman, 1995, Halbesleben,

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<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, UCP Business School, University of Central Punjab Email: dr.ziaullah@ucp.edu.pk

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Sarhad University of Science & IT, Peshawar Email: zebkhan.ba@suit.edu.pk

<sup>3</sup> Assistant Professor, Institute of Management Sciences, Peshawar Email: muhammad.siddique@imsciences.edu.pk

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2011). Workers provide their talents and energies and expect something in return. However, these rewards are not limited to economic rewards only (pay and monetary benefits) rather they encompass a wide array of social benefits as well. If employees perceive that they are not being given appropriate monetary and non-monetary reward, it would create a sense of de-motivation among them. Further, employees certainly expect organizational support in what they do on daily basis. If the organization provides support to them, it will enhance the motivation level of employees which in turn would lead to better individual and organizational performance in terms of profitability and growth (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982; Zhong, Wayne, & Liden, 2016). Employees are actually engaged in a social exchange with the organizations they work in where they put in more efforts with the expectation of high rewards in return of this exchange process. For many years, organizational researchers have described the employment contract in the context of social exchange theory which states that employees' efforts and loyalty to the organization is contingent on the provision of socio-economic benefits (March & Simon, 1958; Etzioni, 1961; Levinson, 1965; Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974). This characterization of the employee–organization relationship stresses the fact that organizations' attainment of desirable outcomes could be possible through the favorable treatment of employees. According to Meyer and Allen (1997), employees who receive proper and fair treatment from their organizations are more likely to demonstrate more commitment and work beyond the call of explicitly prescribed duties. They also respond with greater flexibility to the problems an organization confronts in uncertain situations (George & Brief, 1992). The notion of organizational commitment and employees' motivation has attracted considerable attention of both researchers and practitioners as an attempt to understand the stability and intensity of employees' devotion to their duties in modern organizations. Workplace Support (WS) is one of the key areas which affect employees' commitment as well as their motivation (Shore & Shore 1995). Workplace support is employees' perception about how much their organization provide them support in difficult situations performing various tasks

## **2. Literature Review**

The Social exchange theory of employer-employee relationship states that employees exchange efforts and loyalty to their organization for tangible benefits

such as pay and allowances and socio-emotional benefits as esteem, approval, and caring (Blau, 1964; Rousseau & Parks, 1993; Zhong et al., 2016). Subscribing to this exchange relationship is the norm of reciprocity which asserts that the receipt of benefits creates an obligation to repay the giver an equivalent favour (Gouldner, 1960). On the basis of the reciprocity, employees getting more resources can be expected to return their employers with higher levels of performance (Angle & Perry, 1983; Rousseau & Parks, 1993, Vandenberghe et al., 2007). Social exchange theorists have referred to employment as the exchange of commitment and efforts for benefits and social rewards (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986; March & Simon, 1958; Organ & Konovsky, 1989). The Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) have been applied to different organization settings to describe the motivational basis of employees' behavior (Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Wayne, Shore, Bommer, & Tetrick, 2002). Based on the work of previous social exchange theorists, Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) used the social exchange perspective of the employee-organization relationship to put both sides of the picture together i.e. employees' perception about how they are treated by the organization and their relative commitment to the organization. According to some researchers (Shore & Tetrick, 1991; Vandenberghe et al., 2007; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) when employees believed that the organization was caring for them, they also showed commitment to the organization.

Shore and Shore (1995) contended that employees judge an organization's conviction to reward increased level of work effort and its willingness to meet the socio-emotional needs of its employees. On the basis of this judgment, employees develop general beliefs concerning the degree to which an organization values their contributions and takes care of their well-being (Caesens, Marique, Hanin, & Stinglhamber, 2016). This subjective valuation about the workplace support also gives confidence to the employees that the required support will certainly be available from the organization when it is needed to perform one's job effectively and to steer through stressful situations (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Arshadi & Hayavi, 2011). Studies consistently show a positive correlation between POS (perceived organizational support) and desirable organizational outcomes such as job commitment and better performance (Cicolini, Comparcini, & Simonetti, 2013).

A number of antecedents of the workplace support have been identified in the literature. Work-related outcomes positively related to Work Support include affective commitment (Jones, Flynn, & Kelloway, 1995; Shore & Tetrick, 1991, Guzzo, Noonan, & Elron, 1994; Settoon et al., 1996; Hutchison & Garstka, 1996; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997), subjective and objective measures of in-role job performance (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011), help extended to co-workers (Witt, 1991; Shore & Wayne, 1993; Wayne et al., 1997), and constructive counselling for improving the working of the organization (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990). Work Support was found to be negatively related to absenteeism (Eisenberger et al., 1990) and turnover intentions (Guzzo et al., 1994; Wayne et al., 1997).

In a meta-analysis, Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) classified workplace support in three general categories that included fairness, supervisor support, and organizational rewards and job conditions. The study, after systematically reviewing literature, suggested that important antecedents of the WS fall in one of the three above mentioned categories.

Workplace support yield benefits both for employers as well as employees in terms of positive attitudes and beliefs about the organization (Malone & Presson, 2016). Supervisors support is found to be related with the employees' favourable perception about the organization (Mearns & Reader, 2008). Because supervisors and managers act as organizational agents to evaluate employees' contribution to the organization and to reward them accordingly (Eisenberger et al., 1986), the employee's receipt of favorable treatment from a supervisor should contribute to WS (Wayne et al., 1997). Healthcare employees are leaving the profession particularly as a result of difficult working conditions and unsupportive workplaces (Purday, Laschinger, Finegan, & Olivera, 2010). Workplace structures can support healthier employees reduce stress and increase motivation and job satisfaction and also improve organizational and patient outcome (Wagner et al., 2010).

According to Cha and Carrier (2016), employees' perception of workplace support and working environment affect employee-organizational relationships and, therefore, highly successful organizations generally provide excellent benefits for attracting and retaining motivated employees. Literature represents extensive

explanation of workplace support and motivation and their relationships have widely been investigated across the world. However, in Pakistan such studies are yet to be conducted. Since Pakistan is distinct in terms of culture, geographic location and organizational makeup, studies conducted in other contexts cannot be generalized here as such. Thus replication of these studies in Pakistan is well justifiable. Further, flexible working hours has been included as a new dimension of WS and the study in hand substantiates it.

This study has examined relationship of workplace support with employee motivation in public sector healthcare organizations in Pakistan. The given study aimed at:

- To measure workplace support and employees' motivation.
- To see relationship between workplace support and employees' motivation.
- To focus employees of public sector healthcare organizations
- To partly test Eisenberger's theory of workplace support in Pakistan.

## **2.1. Research framework**

Workplace support (WS) is defined as “employees' global beliefs about the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being” (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Employees' perception that the organization facilitates them to achieve organizational and personal goals leads to a favorable perception of the organization.

*Hypothesis:* The perception of workplace support is positively associated with the work motivation among employees.

### *2.1.1. Workplace support*

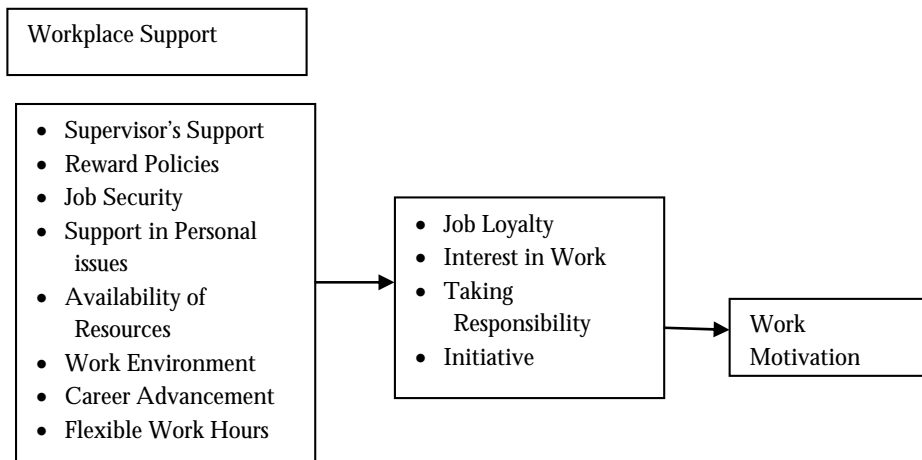
Managers in healthcare organizations nowadays tend to incorporate factors such as empowerment, addressing personal issues, and conducive work environment into their strategies in order to enhance employees' commitment and their motivation (Chang, Wang, Li, & Liu, 2011).

Perception of employees that their supervisor supports them, reward policies are fair and their contributions are appreciated in monetary and career advancement terms, job security and congenial working environment is provided with availability of required resources and they get support of the organization in their personal issues.

Workplace support has been measured along eight dimensions. These were supervisor's support, reward policies, job security, working environment, availability of required resources, career growth opportunities, support in personal issues, and flexible working hours.

### 2.1.2. Motivation

Motivation refers to the drive either within or external to an organism (employee) that gives birth to enthusiasm and persistence to chase a certain course of action in the organization. Employee motivation is exhibited by his enthusiasm towards job loyalty, work itself, risk taking and responsibility acceptance. The dimensions used to measure motivation were job loyalty, interest in work, acceptance of greater responsibility, and initiative.



**Figure 1:** Schematic View

### **3. Methodology**

Survey method was used to collect data. Survey, according to Bryman and Bell (2003) is “a cross-sectional design in relation to which data are collected predominantly by questionnaire or by structured interview on more than one case (usually quite a lot more than one) and at a single point in time in order to collect a body of quantitative or quantifiable data in connection with two or more variables (usually many more than two), which are then examined to detect patterns of association.” This method is relatively an efficient and economic method of data collection (Gay, 1999). A large public-sector hospital, having 2400 beds, and 2900 employees, was chosen as population for the study in question. Employees were classified into four strata 1) clinicians, 2) administrators, 3) nurses and paramedics and 4) Class-VI employees (cleaners, ward orderly, office boys and other ancillary staff working at lower level ranks).

#### **3.1. Sample and data collection procedure**

Overall, 550 questionnaires were administered, however, 400 questionnaires (100 from each strata) complete from all respects were included for analysis. Respondents were selected on convenient basis—as per availability. Questionnaires were personally administered and collected. Questionnaire was designed in English language and clinicians, administrators, and nurses and paramedics did not face any linguistic problem. However, since the Class-IV employees were mostly illiterate, they were helped through a translator to understand questions. Questions were translated to them in local language while they were responding to the questionnaires. The span of data collected stretched over two months period.

#### **3.2. Instrument and scale**

For the given study the basic idea was borrowed from the Eisenberger 36 point questionnaire. However, certain changes were made to make it context specific. A close ended questionnaire with five points likert scales (from strongly disagree to strongly disagree) was applied. POS was measured along 48 questions and motivation along 19 questions. To check the reliability Chronbach Alfa and split-half reliability tests were used. Cronbach Alfa 0.9510 and split-half reliability

test (0.8724 for part 1, and 0.8219 for part 2) proved the high reliability of the instrument. Chi Square, Cross Tabulation and correlation statistics was applied to analyze the data.

#### 4. Data Analysis and Results

The values of Cronbach alpha in split half reliability test (0.8724 for part 1, and 0.8219 for part 2) are very close with each other and show that the two halves are consistent in terms of Cronbach alpha values. The correlation between the forms is 0.77 that indicates the two forms of the instrument are highly correlated. The above tests show that the instrument used was highly consistent and reliable.

**Table 1:** Cross Tabulation: Workplace Support and Employees' Motivation

			Level of Workplace Support			Total
			1. High	2. Medium	3. Low	
Employees' Motivation	1. High	Count	39	12		51
		%within level of Workplace Support	47.6%	5.7%		12.7%
	2. Medium	Count	35	114	43	192
		%within level of Workplace Support	42.9%	54.7%	39.1%	48.0%
	3. Low	Count	8	82	67	157
		%within level of Workplace Support	9.5%	39.6%	60.9%	39.2%
Total	Count	82	208	110	400	
	%within level of Workplace Support	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Cross-tabulation displays the number of cases in each category defined by WS and Employees Motivation variables. As cross-tabulation is useful for summarizing categorical variables-the variables with a limited number of distinct



categories, it is appropriate to run cross tabulations between workplace support and employees' motivation.

The column-wise percentages are calculated in the table. Total of 51 respondents hold high level of workplace support out of which 47.6% (39 respondents) have high level of motivation, while 42.9% respondents have medium and 9.5% respondents have low level of motivation.

Out of 208 respondents having medium level of WS, highest percentage 54.8% have medium level of motivation. Only 5.7% have high and 39.4% have low level of motivation. That indicates when level of WS decreases from high to medium, only a small percentage with medium WS would have high motivation. However, the reason for low motivation among 39.4% respondents having medium perception of workplace support could be because of some other demotivating factors like personal and family issues.

Out of 110 respondents having low WS, majority percentage i.e. 60.9% has low level of motivation and 39.1% respondents with low WS have medium level of motivation. No respondent with low level of WS falls in high motivation category. The results are in consistence with earlier discussion in literature review and theoretical framework which suggested that employees having high WS tend to be more motivated and employees having low WS are less motivated.

The results also indicate that there might be a few employees having medium level of WS but they are still highly motivated because of some other factors that may include career aspirations, personal inclination towards learning and passion to outperform. However, when WS fall below from medium to low level not a single employee had high level of motivation. A threshold of WS is essential to attain appropriate level of employees' motivation.

Table 2: Correlations among Key Study Variables

	Supervisor's Support	Reward Policies	Job Security	Working Environment	Availability of Reg Resources	Career Growth Opportunities	Support in Personal Issues	Flexibility in Working Hours	Job Loyalty	Interest in Work	Acceptability of Greater Responsibility	Initiative	
Supervisor's Support	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000	.420**	.405**	.491**	.324**	.477**	.225**	.425**	.541**	.195*	.288**	.427**
Reward Policies	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	1.000	.569**	.581**	.587**	.460**	.450**	.485**	.558**	.373**	.098	.335**
Job Security	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	1.000	.582**	.400**	.474**	.406**	.441**	.575**	.428**	.127	.322**
Working Environment	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	1.000	.446**	.466**	.534**	.633**	.602**	.366**	.266**	.349**
Availability of Resources	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	1.000	.282**	.419**	.317**	.271**	.230*	.140	.346**
Career Growth Opportunities	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	1.000	.267**	.528**	.397**	.311**	.166	.306**
Support in Personal Issues	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	1.000	.458**	.372**	.388**	.132	.119
Flexibility in Working Hours	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.478**	.362**	.306**	.383**	.383**
Job Loyalty	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	1.000	.473**	.193	.294**	.294**
Interest in Work	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	1.000	.206*	.206*	.206*
Accept. Of Responsibility	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	1.000	.346**	.346**
Initiative	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	1.000	1.000

Note:

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

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

N=400

## 5. Discussion

This paper proposed and tested a model describing the factors perceived to be organizational support and their influence on employees work motivation. Since motivation is indispensable for organizations to be effective and efficient, managers are supposed to keep employees' motivational level high. The perception of organizational support is the variable that explains employee work motivation significantly.

Correlation table shows that most of the dimensions have significant correlations with each other with an exception of *acceptance of greater responsibility*. The *supervisor's support* has moderate correlation with all other dimensions. It indicates that different pieces that contribute to the perception of workplace support have correlation with supervisor's role and support. It makes sense that a supportive supervisor may take care of the job security, provision of required resources to subordinates, career growth opportunities through favourable evaluation of performance and working environment. As Rousseau, (1990, 1993) has also mentioned that favourable attitude of the supervisor would give sense of job security to employees that resultantly generates motivation.

*Reward Policies* again have significant correlations with all other dimensions except the *acceptance of greater responsibility*. There are four dimensions having correlation value more than 0.5. The correlations of *reward policies* with *job security*, *working environment*, *availability of required resources* and *job loyalty* are respectively 0.569 (P<.01), 0.581 (P<.01), 0.587 (P<.01) and 0.558 (P<.01). The correlations among dimensions of WS show moderate relationship among them. It shows that these dimensions are interlinked and co-vary with each other. While correlation of *reward policies* with *job loyalty* indicates that fair reward a policy lead to higher level of job loyalty and ultimately creates higher level of motivation. The results are consistent with the earlier discussion and study of Kalleberg and Griffin (1978) they conclude that employees who get lower level of salaries are less satisfied and this lower level of satisfaction leads to lower level of motivation.

The correlations of *work environment* with all other dimensions are significant ( $P < .01$ ) although there are weak positive correlation with some dimensions. Correlations with support *in personal issues*, *flexibility in working hours* and *job loyalty* are relatively higher which is consistent with the studies of Campbell, Philip, and Willard (1976), Miller (1980), and Quinn, Graham, and Margaret (1974). These studies describe that *working conditions* and *work environment* are related with various aspects of work motivation.

*Availability of required resources* has significant correlation ( $P < .05$ ) with all other dimensions except *acceptance of greater responsibility* however, the correlations are not very strong and less than 0.50 in all cases.

The correlations of *career growth opportunities* are also significant with all other dimensions ( $P < .05$ ) except *acceptance of greater responsibility*. The correlation with *flexibility in working hours* has relatively higher value 0.528. The flexibility of timings may provide opportunities to improve their qualification, attend some training programmes because of the time adjustment. As there is an increasing trend in the organizations that employees are improving their qualifications and gaining management degrees in evening executive programmes, the flexibility in timings may provide an opportunity to them to adjust job schedules for personal development.

*Support in personal issues* may create sense of greater loyalty and enhanced interest in work. Personal and domestic problems may increase the employees' level of stress which affects employees' interest in the work. *Support in personal issues* helps employees reduce their stress level that result in higher degree of interest in the work. The support will also give perception to the employees that the organization intends to help them in stressful situations at work or home and it would create job loyalty among them. Results are consistent with the work of Guzzo et al., (1994) who found a relationship between support in personal issues and the employees' motivation. Support in personal issues have significant relationship with all other dimensions ( $P < .05$ ) except *initiative* and *acceptance of greater responsibility*.

*Flexibility* in working hours has significant relationship ( $P < .01$ ) with all other dimensions. It has moderate relationship with *job loyalty* (0.478) and relatively

low correlation, although positive and significant with *interest in work*, *acceptance of greater responsibility* and *initiatives*.

It is evident from the correlations table that the dimensions of *employee motivation* have significant relationships among themselves.

*Job loyalty* has significant relationship with *interest in work* and *initiative* ( $P < .01$ ). As results indicate that correlation between *job loyalty* is moderately strong (.473) while correlation between *job loyalty* and *initiative* is relatively weak (.294). *Job loyalty* represents desire to stay and promote organization that requires *interest in work* and *initiatives*, so the results are logical and consistent with earlier discussions.

*Interest in work* and *initiative* also have relationships with *workers' productivity*. As *Interest in work* and *initiative* are related with *job loyalty*, the *job loyalty* will lead to higher degree of motivation and productivity. Schultz and Schultz, (1998) also narrated that such loyalty has a relationship with productivity of the employees.

*Interest in work* has significant correlation ( $P < .05$ ) with both *acceptance of greater responsibility* and *initiative*. Although in both cases the positive correlations are fairly weak, it provides evidence that *interest in the work* has positive relationship with *acceptance of greater responsibility* and *initiative*.

The correlation between *acceptance of greater responsibility* and *initiative* is significant ( $P < .01$ ) with correlation value 0.346 that indicates that employees tend to take initiatives when they have greater sense of responsibility.

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The analysis of the data indicates a positive relationship between workplace support and employees' motivation. The results were tested n cross tabulation and chi-square and they were found significant. Further, the Gamma test was applied to check the direction and strength of relationship. The data in non-categorical, numeric form were tested with correlation test statistic as well.

Cross tabulation of the workplace support and employees' motivation indicates that most of the respondents fall in same categories of both the variables

(i.e. high WS-high employees' motivation, medium WS-medium employees' motivation, low WS-low employees' motivation).

Some respondents having higher WS also fall in the lower categories of employees' motivation (e.g. 42% of respondents having high WS have medium motivation) which points out that there could be other factors that have some impacts on employees' motivation. However, none of respondents having low WS had high motivation level. The results suggest strategy-makers, top management and human resource managers of healthcare organizations to provide sufficient level of support to the employees if they want to receive high level motivation in return. In absence of sufficient level of WS, employees' motivation will go down and ultimately productivity and overall organizational performance will suffer.

The correlations among most of the dimensions indicate that WS and employees' motivation are complex wholes of many dimensions and factors which are interconnected with each other. So the top management, human resource managers and immediate seniors/managers should understand important dimensions of the WS and motivation to turn these concepts into practice in effective ways. For example, if an employee has serious reservations about the reward policies, it may affect his perception about other things that form workplace support. This low perception about the reward policies may lower his/her perception about supervisor's support and career growth opportunities as well, and resultantly the motivation would go down.

The results of the study are well consistent with studies of norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) and social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). The results of current study support the findings of Eisenberger et al. (1986, 1990). The results and discussion of the current study are also in harmony with earlier studies of Shore and Shore (1995), Guzzo et al. (1994), Hutchison and Garstka (1996), Jones et al. (1995) and Settoon et al. (1996). All these theories and the current study support the notion that higher perception of workplace support leads to higher level of employees' motivation.

Based on the results, the study recommends that: (i) Organizations in general and healthcare organizations in particular should focus on the factors that affect employees perception about the support they receive in return for their

contributions. (ii) Besides pay and other financial benefits, employees in healthcare organizations are more sensitive to non-financial support and so managers have to focus on this area. (iii) Employee empowerment, in particular, has proved to be a dominant factor in increasing employees' perception of organization's support. (iv) Healthcare organizations need to invest in their employees in terms of training and other socialization opportunities to make them develop positive attitudes toward the environment they work in.

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