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Effects of perceived organizational support on organizational citizenship behavior – Sequential mediation by well-being and work engagement

Abstract

Based on the premise of organizational support theory this study investigates the relationship between perceived organizational support and citizenship behavior of employees. The study offers a novel explanation by testing the sequential mediation through well-being and work engagement. Data was collected from 273 employees from diverging service organizations working in Lahore and its nearby cities. Results of the study revealed that POS has a direct bearing on citizenship behavior, but sequential mediation relation is not proved. Though the findings are against the hypothesized relations, but can still offer new theoretical directions and implications for practices. Limitations and future directions are also given at the end.

Keywords: Perceived Organizational Support; Well-Being, Work Engagement; Organizational Citizenship Behavior; Service Organizations

Introduction

In contemporary organizations, employees are considered the most valuable source as it ensures a competitive advantage over rivals (Singh & Singh, 2010). This has led organizations to put more emphasizes on the human side of the organization rather than merely profit or financial considerations (Blancero et al., 2009). The employee-centered policies are often seen from the lenses of employees, instead of an organization, as this is believed to be the only way that may make organizations offer value to their employees (Ahmed & Nawaz, 2015). Employees' such positive belief is often termed as perceived organizational support (the belief that organization takes to care of them, their well-being and values their contribution; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Provision of such

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support at work is often seen to be an investment made by the organization in their employees and is often found to be reciprocated by employees positively.

Employees are found to reciprocate POS by showing positive job attitudes and behaviors, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job involvement, reduced absenteeism and extra-role behavior (Ahmed & Nawaz, 2015; Paillé, Bourdeau and Galois, 2010; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Tekleab and Chiaburu, 2011). The extra role behavior of employees is often cherished and valued as the most desired behavior because it covers employees' roles that are beyond their duties and are a volunteer (Organ et al., 2005). Such behaviors are deemed important as they require employees to work beyond their conventional roles (Organ & Ryan, 1995), which enables the organization to work well in the contemporary working environment (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1994). It consists of activities like, going extra mile from conventional duties, supporting peers in accomplishment of their job related tasks, and working for the sake of organization as a whole being the citizen of the organization (often termed as Organizational Citizenship Behavior, OCB; Bateman & Organ, 1983; Niehoff & Moorman, 1993). Organ (1988) states OCB as one of the most important factors that ensure survival and growth of the organization in changing working environment. Organizations value employees' OCB because of its abilities to influence the effectiveness of an organization (Walz & Niehoff, 1996), and often employees' with high OCB are rewarded and provided growth opportunities (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1994; Swaminathan & Jawaher, 2013).

Although the link between OCB and its organizational determinants (e.g., POS) is widely investigated, a comprehensive model covering both individual and organizational factors in tandem is mostly not tested (Ahmed & Nawaz, 2015; Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2005; Islam et al., 2013). Against this backdrop, this study values the investigation of individual attitudinal variables that can bridge the relationship of POS and OCB. Past studies have provided evidence of various attitudinal factors that may influence OCB of employees. For instance, Swaminathan and Jawahar (2013) found that employees' engagement can influence their OCB positively. Similarly, well-being is also considered an essential factor that can make employees work beyond their roles (Grady et al., 2008; Burke, 2000).

This study considers both work engagement and well-being as explanatory variables in the relationship between POS and OCB. A profound look at literature highlights the fact that there is a dearth of literature focusing on the said association. This study also overweighs other studies, as it covers the sequential/chain mediation investigation. The following section covers theoretical background and literature review on the presumed relation.

Literature Review

Past studies have noticed that POS is an important predictor of employees' organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). For instance, Organ (1998) commented that POS is a better predictor of employees' extra role behavior/performance (OCB) than the in-role behavior. While explaining the

relation Rhoades and Eisenberger (2001) commented that POS makes employees reciprocate favorably and they often work beyond their organizational roles. This could also be explained by the fact that POS is believed to be an organizational favor which is beyond conventional organizational roles, thus reciprocated by extra role behavior instead of job roles (Wayne et al. (1997). Extra role outcomes could also be because POS obliges employees and makes them reciprocate positively (Eisenberger et al., 2001). Thus it is concluded that higher level of POS leads to increased OCB's. So that POS is hypothesized to have a positive relationship with extra role behavior. Various past studies have found that POS and OCB are positively related in various workplace settings (Kaufman, Stamper & Tesluk, 2001; Lynch et al., 1999; Podsakoff et al., 2000). Meta-analysis of Ahmed & Nawaz (2015) also found that POS is a significant predictor of OCB in past studies. Based on the discussion mad in the section above, following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: POS positively predicts employees' organizational citizenship behavior

Based on OST, it is assumed that provision of support from organization creates a sense of responsibility and norm of reciprocation among recipients (employees). Thus they repay with actions that are beneficial for the organization (Caesens, Stinglhamber & Ohana, 2016). It is also found to influence employees' psychological states (Kurtessis et al., 2017), specifically psychological well-being (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). It could be attributed to the fact that POS is considered as the treatment that is provided to employees from organization side (Tyler & Blader, 2003). Employees, in return, manage the discomforts and overcome the gaps that generate deficiencies, thus enabling them adjusting themselves to the environment (Jones & Sharlicki, 2013), thus ensuring well-being. Based on the discussion generated above, following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: POS positively predicts employee well-being

Like other various job-related outcomes, POS is found to influence employees' engagement at work. Eisenberger and Stinglhamber (2011) found that POS positively influences employees by increasing their interests in job tasks. Caesens and Stinglhamber (2014) also found that POS influences engagement positively, as support is considered as a favor from an organization which employee repay by showing positive response towards the organization. This relation could further be explained with the help of Job Demand-Resource Model (JD-R model), which connotes that provision of support from organization is considered as resource which is repaid by employees with positive job attitudes and behaviors and work engagement is one of them (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Based on the discussion made in lines above, following relation could be assumed between POS and work engagement:

H3: POS positively predicts work engagement

While looking at the determinants of employees' work engagement, well-being is also believed to be one of the most important factors. Well-being is valued for its value it can create for the organization; for instance, Burke (2000) commented that organizations could gain a competitive advantage by focusing on the well-being of their employees. Luthans and Youssef (2004) found that well-being after pays offs in shape of positive emotions at work, resulting in employees' psychological and emotional attachment to the organization and its goals. It is therefore believed that organizations should focus on the development of well-being of employees, as it increases their satisfaction (Daley & Parfitt, 1996) and engagement (Grady et al., 2008). Based on the discussion above, it could be assumed that well-being will positively influence employees' job attitudes, specifically work engagement; which is hypothesized as follows:

H4: Well-being positively predicts work engagement of the employees

Well-being, often termed as happiness as well, is believed to have positive effects on employees, thus bringing positive changes in employees (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Thoresen et al., (2003) also commented that happy employees respond positively to better work attitudes and outcomes. One of such outcomes is their extra-role behavior (OCB), as happy employees' are always willing to work for their organization irrespective of their duties and responsibilities (George, 1991). Grant (2008) also found that employees' with well-being feelings are prone to perform volunteer tasks beyond their duties (OCB). Based on the discussion mentioned above, following hypotheses could be formulated:

H5: Well-being will significantly predict employees' OCB

OCB is also predicted by employees' psychological and emotional attachment to the organization. Bennet and Robinson (2000) found that extra role behavior is only the outcome of employees' emotional attachment, as higher the level of positive affectivity at work the greater one could be willing to put volunteer efforts for the betterment of the organization. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) commented that employees who are more engaged with the work are more inclined towards volunteer extra-role behaviors. It is thus assumed that engagement predicts OCB positively, which is hypothesized below:

H6: Work engagement positively predicts OCB

As mentioned in the preceding sections, POS positively predicts well-being (e.g., Caesens, et al., 2016; Kurtessis et al., 2017), and well-being influences engagement (e.g. Burke, 2000; Grady et al., 2008); while work engagement leads to increased citizenship behavior (e.g., Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), it could be assumed that there will be a chain mediation mechanism (through well-being and engagement) between POS and OCB; which is hypothesized as follows:

H7: Both well-being and Engagement create a chain in the relationship of POS and OCB

Methodology

This study comprised a sample from various service firms working in Lahore. A sample of the study was 420 employees from these companies. Data was collected through questionnaire survey technique, where each responded was approached through personally administrated questionnaire. Out of 420 questionnaires only 273 useful responses were received back. Perceived organizational support was operationalized with the (shorter version) seven items seven-point scale of Eisenberger et al., (1986). The scale is widely used by past studies and found reliable. Well-being was measured with 12 items (seven-point scale) of Watson et al., (1998). Work engagement was operationalized with Schaufeli & Bakker (2006) measure of work engagement covering three dimensions. OCB, on the other hand, was measured with eight items scale of Lee and Allen (2002) covering two dimensions. All these scales are widely used in past studies with high-reliability values.

Results & Discussion

After preliminary analysis (data preparation tests), data were analyzed in two phases; where the first phase was to test the descriptive statistics and correlation of variables. The second phase covered hypotheses testing through Hayes (2013) PROCESS macros.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics, Reliability and Correlation Analysis

Variable		Mean (SD)	POS	WB	WE	OCB
Pos	Pearson Correlation	5.25 (1.33)				
	Sig. (2-tailed)		(.894)			
WB	Pearson Correlation	5.39(.987)	.476**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	(.902)		
WE	Pearson Correlation	6.46 (1.01)	.579**	.685**		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	(.931)	
OCB	Pearson Correlation	5.37 (1.05)	.355**	.631**	.594**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	(.759)

Table 1 covers the results of descriptive statistics, reliability and correlation analysis. It is revealed that all the measured were reported at seven-point scale, where responses were above mean value (four), thus showing the positive response for all the variables of interest. Reliability analysis results also reveal that all the measures were reliable (alpha values >.70) (Nunnely, 1998). Correlation analysis reveals that all the POS is significantly correlated with well-being ($r=.476$, $p=.000$). Similarly, POS is correlated with other outcomes, i.e. engagement ($r=.579$, $p=.000$) and OCB ($r=.355$, $p=.000$). Thus supporting our study assumptions, i.e., H1, H2 & H3. These results helped us move a step further with data analysis. Results of hypotheses testing through regression analysis (PROCESS macro) are presented below.

Relations tested through PROCESS macro are highlighted in figure-1. Model 6 of process macro was used to test the association. The results of the study are presented in table 2 and 3.

H4

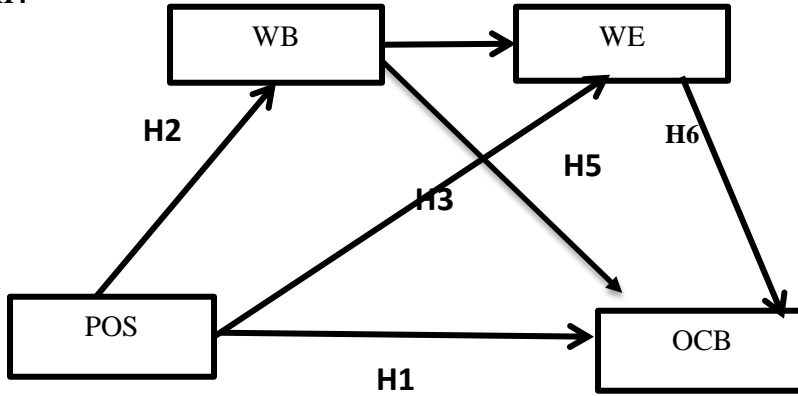


Figure 4.1: Paths for Chain mediation (POS--WB—WE—OCB)

Table 2: Regression paths for POS-WB-WE-OCB

	M ₁ (WB)				M ₂ (WE)				Y (OCE)			
Antecedents	β	LL CI	UC LI	P	β	LL CI	UCL I	P	β	LL CI	UCL I	P
X (POS)	.351	.273	.4286	.00	.248	.179	.318	.00	-.023	-.096	.051	.54
M ₁ (WB)	----			----	.546	.452	.640	.00	.385	.274	.497	.00
M ₂ (WE)	----			----	---			--	.280	.164	.397	.00
Constant	3.55	3.13	3.972	.00	1.208	.738	1.678	.00	1.889	1.411	2.366	.00
R ² = .2264					R ² = .5520					R ² = .4487		
F(1, 272) =					F(2, 271) =					F(3,270) = 72.9896,		

79.2992, p = .000	166.3098, p =.000	p = .0000
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Table 2 presents results of hypotheses testing, where all the hypotheses are tested for their possible association. It is evident from the table that POS is significantly predicting well-being ($\beta=.351$, $SE=.039$, $p=.000$) and engagement ($\beta=.248$, $SE=.035$, $p=.000$), but its relationship with OCB is not significant ($\beta=-.023$, $SE=.037$, $p=.543$). These findings help us conclude that POS does not predict all outcomes, but only H2 and H3 are supported, and H1 is not supported. While looking at the reasons of insignificant association between POS and OCB, it could be inferred that provision of support from the organization may increase employees' job-related roles, as they may feel to put more efforts in job tasks rather than the extra role activities. A profound look at the table also reveals that well-being also predicts both work engagement ($\beta=.546$, $SE=.048$, $p=.000$) and OCB ($\beta=.385$, $SE=.057$, $p=.000$), thus supporting H4 and H5. Findings also reveal that H6 is also supported by work engagement positively predicts OCB ($\beta=.280$, $SE=.059$, $p=.000$). These results highlight that POS is not directly linked with OCB, rather the mediation mechanism is associated, and basic assumptions of mediation test are met. Thus we proceeded further with mediation analysis.

Table 3: Direct, Indirect & Total Effects

	Effect	Boot SE	p	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Total Effect of POS	.2359	.0377	.0000	.1616	.3102
Direct Effect	-.0277	.0372	.5425	-.6098	
Indirect Effects					
Total indirect effects	.2586	.0898		.1421	.4407
POS-WB-OCB	.1353	.0608		.0509	.2670
POS-WB-WE-OCB	.0537	.0205		.0203	.1026
POS-WE-OCB	.0696	.0469		.0156	.1906
Specific Indirect Effects					
C1	.0816	.0615		-.0079	.2099
C2	.0657	.0761		-.0868	.2196
C3	-.0159	.0364		-.1204	.0183

Mediation (sequential) analysis results are shown in table 3. Here three forms of relations are tested, i.e., total, direct and indirect effects. Results of the study reveal that direct effect of POS on OCB was insignificant ($\beta=-.0277$, $SE=.0372$,

$p=.5425$), thus eliminating the possibility of partial mediation. It could thus be assumed that if the indirect effects are present, the mediation chain will only be full mediation. The analysis shows the total effects of POS on OCB (without mediators), here the relations become significant ($\beta=.2359$, $SE=.0377$, $p=.0000$), thus highlighting that the presence of variables in the relationship of POS and OCB change their relation from insignificant to significant one thus full mediation could be assumed present in the model. Indirect relation results further highlighted that the indirect paths were significant ($\beta=.0537$, $SE=.0205$, $LLCI=.0203$ & $ULCI=.1026$), thus highlighting that there exists a sequential mediation and the original insignificant relation of POS and OCB becomes significant in the presence of both well-being and work engagement, thus supporting H7 of the study. These results support our assumptions, though this sequential mediation has not been tested in the past, yet the results support our assumption.

Implications

These study results are useful for researchers, practitioners, and managers. For researchers, this study highlights an unexplored link between organizational support and employees' extra role behavior. In past, up to the best of researchers' knowledge, no such study is presently investigating the said association. Thus this study uncovers research gaps, and highlight that organizational support can work well in improving employees' volunteer behaviors. Moreover, it provides a guideline by providing explanatory mechanism between POS and extra-role behavior. Practically, it leaves message and direction for managers who intend to increase the extra role behavior of employees. These results highlight that managers should support them, and an environment where their well-being (happiness) nurtures and flourishes. Both these form of support and favors will increase their engagement and citizenship behavior.

Limitations & Future Directions

Though this study is based on a careful attempt in terms of research process, it is still prone to some limitations. The foremost is sample size and cross-sectional study design. The one-spot studies, often, have limitations of time biases and issues of common method biases. Moreover, this study covers only one form of social exchange as predicting force of happiness (well-being), and employees attitudes and behaviors at work. Other forms of support (e.g., peer support, supervisor support) could also be used as predicting force in the same model. Moreover, outcomes could also be added to have a comprehensive model. One of such outcomes could be taking charge (a volunteer but proactive behavior than a conventional reactive behavior). In past taking, the charge has not received due attention by researchers.

Conclusion

Based on data collected from service sector employees, it could be inferred that organizational support is an essential predictor of employees' perceptions, attitudes, and behavior. Here perceptions of happiness (well-being) are found to be

Effects of perceived organizational support on organizational citizenship behavior

significantly predicted by POS, which in turn influences employees' work engagement and citizenship behavior.

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Effects of perceived organizational support on organizational citizenship behavior

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