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Impact of Supervisor Support on Employee Task Performance: Developing and Testing of an Integrated Sequential Mediated Model

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Abstract: The aim of the paper was to develop and test an integrated model of supervisor support and employee task performance with sequential mediation of reliance, disclosure, and felt an obligation. Data was collected through self-administrated questionnaires from public sector organization's employees. Overall, 228 samples were collected by using purposive sampling techniques. SEM was applied for testing the sequential mediation. The results revealed that supervisor support has a significant impact on employee task performance. Reliance and felt obligation are also playing a positive sequential mediation role in the said relationship. The second path disclosure and felt obligation also shows the supporting sequential path.

Key Words: Supervisor Support, Task Performance, Disclosure, Reliance, Felt obligation

JEL Classification: E32.

Introduction

In today's competitive environment, organizations are searching for an effective and efficient workforce that can help boost the organization's Performance (Malik et al., 2021). For this purpose, organizations focus on the mechanisms as a motivational tool that help employees foster their performance and remain on track (Riyanto et al., 2021). Despite these initiatives, organizations cannot gain the required output from the employees, specifically, the organization coming under the umbrella of public sector or government organizations (Khan & Malik, 2017). Hence, public sector organizations face some problems in terms of their workforce. In government organizations, permanent employees are not given up-to-the-mark performance because these employees have

the liberty of permanent jobs despite their low Performance (Malik & Khan, 2020). Such employees are mostly involved in non-work-related activities. Organizations are taking the initiative to boost the performance of their employees; in this regard, supervisors, who are metaphorically known as the human faces of the organization, are playing an imperative role in addressing the said problem. Supervisors in the organization are the best source to build trust in their employees in such a way as to motivate the employees to fulfill their working responsibilities (Basit, 2017). In the said context, the current study aimed to test the relationship of supervisor support and task performance with trust (reliance and disclosure) as mediators further leads to the felt obligation. Social exchange theory broadly supports the objectives of the current study

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because supervisor support can build trust, and employees reciprocate this trust to complete their assigned tasks. Prior studies investigated several aspects of supervisors and leaders as potential sources of trust concerning performance and other positive behaviors such as knowledge sharing (Srivastava et al., 2006; Lee et al., 2010). Trust is recorded as the most effective mechanism for promoting knowledge-sharing behavior, building relationships, cooperativeness, and justice in the organizations (Lin, 2007). The current study is comparatively new because it includes dimensional aspects of trust and felt an obligation as mediators in supervisor support and task performance. It has been identified in the previous studies that supervisors are the best source to promote task performance among employees; however, the relationship was not fully tested specifically in the context of public sector-related organizations. Afzal et al. (2019) explained that supervisor support has received enormous attention from research scholars because it has several positive employee outcomes. Prior research on supervisor support has focused on the supervisors in shaping extra-role behaviors of employees (Afzal et al., 2019). It can be defined as the extent to which leaders value the contribution of their employees and care about their well-being in the organization where supervisors are supportive and gain the trust level among their employees identified as the effective source to produce the desired level of performance. The research has made a significant contribution to the available literature in such a way to increase the behavioral components of employees, i.e., performance, and will guide the top management to overcome the performance problem to survive in the competitive environment.

Literature Review

Theoretical support and hypothesis development

Supervisor Support and Task Performance

Chiang and Hsieh, (2012) defined that

supervisor support has the potential to inculcate attitudinal and behavioral components in employees, such as increased task performance. Social exchange theory broadly supports the relationship between supervisor support and task performance because employees reciprocate the efforts of the organization and support supervisors to perform well and work for the betterment of the organization (Afzal et al., 2019). Supervisors are the ones in the organization who are putting their efforts to meet the requirement of the organization, and when their subordinates feel that their supervisor is compassionate enough to fulfill his/ her job responsibility, also valuing their subordinates and supporting them, then the employees try to reciprocate the efforts of their supervisors by putting more efforts to increase their task performance (Park et al., 2018). Moreover, Decononck and Johnson (2009) used the lens of social exchange theory to explain and support the relationship that the supervisor's Support is working as the motivation for the employees, which they used as motivation and reciprocate it by producing a high-quality outcome. In this regard, several empirical studies are available that examined, researched, and established the relationship of supervisor support and task performance and got significant results (e.g., Paterson et al., 2014; Park et al., 2018; Afzal et al., 2019). Based on the theoretical Support and empirical studies support, the formulated hypothesis is as under:

Supervisor support has a significant impact on employee task performance.

Sequential Mediation of Reliance and Felt obligation in the relation of Supervisor Support and Task Performance

Dionisi and Brodt (2008) explained that the mechanism of trust is rooted in the social exchange theory and based on the rational choice model. The rational choice model discussed that the individuals are working for their self-interest and motivated to minimize their losses and maximize their gains while maintaining the social interactions at the organizational level. This assumption was also

found in the essence of social exchange theory, where it has been discussed that the individual constantly weigh costs and benefits and make decisions based on which side outweighs the other (Homans, 1958). The previous literature covered three elements of interpersonal trust; among these components, reliance is an important emotional element. The employee or subordinate displays the reliance on their supervisor that they will support them to perform the work-related activities (Rotenberg et al., 2005). Moreover, reliance on the supervisors reciprocates in the form of felt obligation, and it further leads the employees to fulfill their job responsibilities i.e. increased task performance (Thompson et al., 2020). The felt obligation is defined as the belief of an individual that the organization and supervisors are caring about them, valuing them, and care about their well- beings (Eisenberger et al., 2001; Paille & Valeau, 2021). Such perception worked as motivation for employees to complete their assigned tasks on time in order to reciprocate the organization's efforts. With the basis of social exchange theory, it can be defined that the supervisor support leads to reliance (Rotenberg et al., 2005), and reliance leads to felt obligation (Paille & Valeau, 2021) that further has a positive impact on employee task performance. So these are working in a sequence hence reliance and felt obligation is working as sequential mediators.

Reliance and felt obligation sequentially mediated the relationship of Supervisor support and employee task performance.

Sequential Mediation of Disclose and Felt obligation in the relation to Supervisor Support and Task Performance

Disclose is recorded as an important element of feeling trusted and identified as the subfactor of behavioral trust in the working environment (Lewicki et al., 2006). In working relationships, disclosure is an extreme form of trust because supervisors are willing to disclose sensitive information in front of their subordinates. Hence it creates a trustworthy environment that motivates the employees to fulfill their job responsibilities and meet the expectations of their supervisors because they are showing full confidence in them and providing them Support (Afzal et al., 2019). Gillespie (2003) identified disclosure as a salient form of trusting behavior among supervisors and their subordinates. The supportive environment of an organization create a trust (disclose) among employees that lead to felt obligation. In this context, felt obligation is an important element for social exchange between supervisors and employees to develop and maintain a positive relationship. Felt obligation has the potential to establish cooperation between supervisors and subordinates to accomplish the defined organizational goals that often cannot be achieved alone (Lewicki et al., 2006), particularly because it shapes the positive relationship between supervisor support and task performance (Lee & Peccei, 2007). Social exchange theory supports the complete path of supervisor support, disclosure, felt an obligation, and employee task performance. Employees who are getting support from their supervisors where supervisors share the information with their subordinates are trying to complete their tasks because they feel valued and obliged.

Disclose and feel obligation sequentially mediated the relationship of Supervisor support and employee task performance.

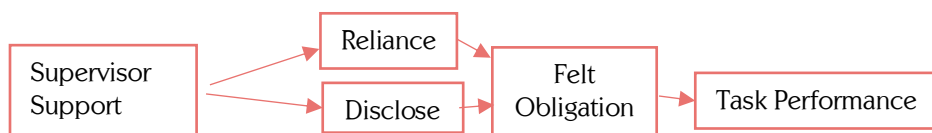


Figure 1: Research Frame

Methodology

Sample and procedure of the study

Since the problem was related to the public sector organizations, the study's objective was also related to the development of management of public sector organizations in such a way as to motivate the employees to meet their job requirements. So the study sample is the employees who are working under the umbrella of public sector organizations. A survey method was used to collect the data from the selected population, and for this purpose, the self-administrated questionnaire was used whereas an adopted questionnaire from previous studies was used. Supervisor support was rated by the subordinates where they rate their department manager as well as rate reliance, disclose, and felt an obligation. Whereas the task performance of the employees was rated by their direct supervisors/ managers. For this purpose, the researcher coded both questionnaires with employee Id and Supervisor Id. On the basis of Id, both questionnaires were enclosed together before entering into the SPSS. Moreover, the study was time-lagged, and to avoid common method bias; data was collected after an interval of a week. A purposive sampling technique was applied for the collection of the data. Overall, 250 questionnaires were distributed among employees (subordinates) of 28 supervisors. Out of 250 questionnaires, 228 were received back with a percentage of 91.2%.

Measurement

Rhoades et al., (2001) four items scale was

used to measure perceived supervisor support. Supervisor rating four items scale of task performance developed by [Van Dyne and Lepine \(1998\)](#) was used to measure the task performance of employees/ subordinates. Ten items scale developed by [Gillespie \(2003\)](#) was used to measure reliance (5 items) and disclosure (5 items). All the items were rated by the subordinates on how they rely on their supervisors and how willing the subordinates to share their personal information with their supervisors. The felt obligation was measured by using seven items scale of [Eisenbeger et al., \(2001\)](#).

Data Analysis Techniques

In order to test the collected responses, SPSS and AMOS techniques were used jointly. Data normality, reliability, validity, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), Structured model, and Measurement model were obtained and analyzed for testing the hypotheses.

Results

Sample Demographics

The demographic table (table 1) revealed that 87.7% of respondents were male, and 12.3% of respondents were females. Out of which 126 reported their age between 22-and 30 years, 96 reported 31-40 years, and 6 (2.6%) reported their age between 41-and 50 years. Most of the respondents had experience of 0-5 years (128). Similarly, 147 respondents are graduated with the percentage of 64.5%. The rest of the respondents acquired Master (70) and M.S degrees (11).

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

Characteristics		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	200	87.7
	Female	28	12.3
Age	22-30	126	55.3
	31-40	96	42.1
	41-50	6	2.6
Experience	0-5	128	56.1
	6-10	94	41.2
	11-15	6	2.6

Characteristics		Frequency	Percent
Qualification	Graduation	147	64.5
	Master	70	30.7
	M.S	11	4.8
Total		228	100.0

Measurement Model

Before running the formal tests on the collected data, the reliability of each variable was examined, and it has been identified that all the reliability of each construct met the defined criteria i.e. >0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The Cronbach's alpha of the Supervisor Support is 0.84, Felt obligation is 0.94, Reliance is 0.91, disclosure is 0.95, and Task performance is 0.88. After performing these tests, performed confirmatory factor analysis for the purpose of assessing

discriminant and convergent validity. For this purpose, the current research used the guidelines of Haier et al., (2006), which stated that in order to meet the criteria, it is important to assess, factor loadings, composite reliability, and AVE. Table 2 shows the values of significant factor loadings, Composite reliability i.e. > 0.7, and AVE i.e. >0.5. Hence all the defined criteria are met, so no validity is found in the data. In addition, table 2 is also shown the values of mean, and standard deviation.

Table 2: Reliability and Validity

Construct	Mean	SD	Items	Loading	CR	AVE	CA
Felt Obligation	4.04	0.61	F1	.880***	0.94	0.69	0.94
			F2	.757***			
			F3	.847***			
			F4	.946***			
			F5	.845***			
			F6	.848***			
			F7	.792***			
Supervisor Support	3.68	0.64	SS1	.828***	0.84	0.57	0.84
			SS2	.833***			
			SS3	.873***			
			SS4	.677***			
Reliance	3.87	0.58	R1	.647***	0.90	0.64	0.91
			R2	.933***			
			R3	.585**			
			R4	.911***			
			R5	.947***			
Task Performance	3.78	0.64	T1	.798***	0.88	0.66	0.88
			T2	.880***			
			T3	.867***			
			T4	.834***			
Disclosure	3.16	0.77	D1	.959***	0.96	0.83	0.95
			D2	.812***			
			D3	.950***			
			D4	.976***			
			D5	.962***			

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$,

Below table 3 is showing the values of correlation analysis. All the values are having a

significant relationship with each other. Moreover, discriminant validity was also not

deducted when comparing the bold values with the correlations among the latent variables that are basically the square root of the AVE

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

S. No	Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1	Supervisor Support	0.753				
2	Disclosure	.118	0.911			
3	Disclosure	.459**	0.070	0.802		
4	Felt Obligation	.417**	.368**	.445**	0.829	
5	Task Performance	.404**	.131*	.512**	.489**	0.810

***P* < 0.01, **P* < 0.05.

Table 4: Mediation Analysis

Dependent	Disclosure	Reliance	FO	TP
Direct Effect				
SS	0.118***	0.459***	0.236***	0.242***
Disclosure			0.319***	
Reliance			0.316***	
FO				0.387***
Indirect Effect				
SS				0.162***
Total Effect				
SS				0.404***

****p* < 0.001, SS= Supervisor Support, FO= Felt Obligation, TP= Task Performance

The values of Table 4 and Figure 2 revealed the direct and mediation-related results. The standardized direct (unmediated) effect of Supervisor Support on Task Performance is .242 (*p* < 0.001). The value supports Hypothesis 1 i.e. Supervisor support has a significant impact on employee task performance. The table also records the values for mediation analysis, and for the purpose, direct, indirect, and total effects were generated with the help of AMOS. The results showed that the standardized direct effect of Supervisor

Support on Disclosure is .118. The standardized direct effect of Supervisor Support on Reliance is .459. The standardized direct effect of Supervisor Support on Felt Obligation is .236. The standardized indirect (mediated) effect of Supervisor Support on Task Performance is .162. The total (direct and indirect) effect of Supervisor Support on Task Performance is .404. Hence all the hypotheses identified significant results, and mediation was recorded for both defined paths.

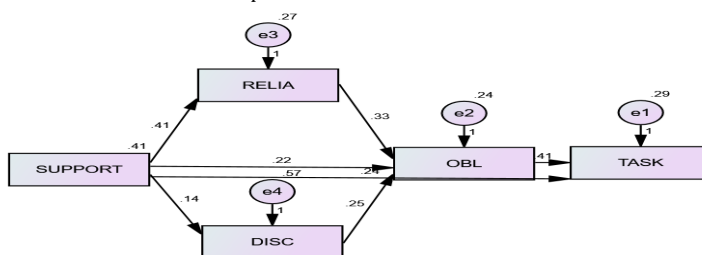


Figure 2: Path Model

Discussion

The results of the current study revealed that supervisor support has a significant impact on employee task performance. The results are aligned with the previous research e.g. [Kuvaas & Dysvik, \(2010\)](#) identified a significant relationship between supervisor support and employee attitude (0.52***). [Talukder and Galang \(2021\)](#) conducted research in Australia and found that Support from the supervisor is positively related to employee job performance. Since the inception of the concept and relationship, most of the researchers have examined and summarized that supervisor support is a positive contributor of employee extra-role Performance and in-role Performance ([Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006](#)). In the context of Pakistan, another research (see. [Saleem & Amin, 2013](#)) recommended a strong and significant relationship between Supervisory Support and Employee Performance on the basis of results where $r = .594$, $p = .000$. However, the research did not identify the type of performance. In line with the results of previous studies, the current study identify the similar results but with the specific Performance-related outcomes i.e. employee task performance. Moreover, the previous research overlooked the public sector related organization employees who are more involved in procrastination and non-work-related presenteeism ([Akhtar & Malik, 2016](#)). The current study also developed and test a comprehensive model with the inclusion of dimensions of trust to test the sequential mediation and it has been identified that supervisor support created positive mechanism and trustworthy environment which further leads to felt obligation, subsequently increase employee task performance. [Afzal et al., \(2019\)](#) extended the work of [Eisenberger et al., \(2002\)](#) by adding mediations such as self-efficacy in the relationships of supervisor support and employee turnover intentions and found a significant relationship with supervisor support and task performance ($r = 0.31$, $p = 0.001$) in the retail workers. Similarly, indirect effect of supervisor support on task

performance via mediation was also found significant ($r = 0.18$, $p = 0.001$). In this regard, the current study also supported the findings of [Shanock and Eisenberger \(2006\)](#), where it has been concluded that the direct effect of supervisor support has a positive impact on employees' extra-role and in-role performance with mediation. The current study defined and test that supervisor support create the trustworthy environment where supervisor created reliance and disclose the information with their subordinates in such a way where the subordinates feel obliged and it motivate them to fulfill their job responsibilities.

Theoretical Implications

The current study was intended to develop and test an integrated model of supervisor support and task performance of employees with the inclusion of trust dimensions reliance and disclosure and also included felt obligation as mediators. It has contribution in the theory of social exchange and organization support theory in such a way that the supervisor support have the potential to create trustworthy environment that leads to positive employee attitude and employee behavior. Moreover, the research was conducted in the developing country where most of the economy relies on the performance of public sector organizations as well as most of the expenses generated by such organizations. If the employees of such type of organizations are not giving the up to the mark performance, so these organizations fails to contribute to the economy of the country.

Managerial Implications

The findings of the current study exposed some critical managerial implications. First it provided a comprehensive mechanism through which organizations specifically public sector organizations can gain the up to the mark performance from the employees through human faces of the organization i.e. supervisors. Secondly, Public sector organizations are not afraid of turnover intentions but the performance of the employees, so it is necessary to develop and train their supervisors regarding creating a

trustworthy environment where employees feel obliged and then come up with performance. Thirdly, the article enlightened that the supervisors not only provide Support to their subordinates that are related to the work rather they support and value their efforts to become an essential part of the organization. It motivates the employees to fulfill their job responsibilities and also feel obliged about the efforts of their immediate supervisors which in turned to pose positive behavior.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite current study covered an important issues that were overlooked in previous

research. Some limitations have been identified. First of all, the research took only public sector organizations because the issue is related to the said organizations. Secondly, the research was conducted in the country that have different cultural orientation, but no cultural related variable was introduced. However, this research opens several avenues for future research. First, the future studies can add the culture related moderator in the current study, second the Support was added as a unidimensional construct, and future research should add social Support or technical Support as antecedents of trust. Thirdly, future researchers should take the data from public and private firms to compare the results.

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