PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT: A REVIEW ON ITS ANTECEDENTS AND OUTCOMES

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ABSTRACT
The idea of perceived organizational support has overtime gained much significance with the view that if employers want their employees to be committed and loyal towards their organization, employees in turn want their organization to pay back by being focused towards their needs. In view of rule of reciprocity, employees try to reciprocate, when they feel that they are supported by their employers and that their efforts are being recognized and rewarded by their organization. Therefore, being loyal and committed to the organization as well as performing their jobs as desired by the organization is the best possible way for them to reciprocate. Thus, organizations need to improve those conditions that influence organizational support perception of their employees, so that they perform as per the organizations requirements. Further, organizations need to manage and monitor employee perceived organizational support to ensure employee loyalty, commitment and performance. Against this backdrop, the paper attempts to identify the factors that determine organizational support perception of employees. Further, the paper explores the important outcomes of perceived organizational support. This study is important in the view that it bridges the human resource management and organizational behavior literatures by linking employee perceptions of a variety of human resource practices. The objectives of the paper in particular have been; to explore the various factors that determine perceived organizational support, and to find out the various consequences of perceived organizational support based on existing research literature.

Keywords: Perceived Organizational Support; Organizational Commitment; Performance; Human Resource Practices

INTRODUCTION
In today’s era every organization aims to be competitive by having best human resources (Singh and Singh, 2010). Getting best out of workforce requires investment and support from organization, as employees’ expect best possible rewards and benefits from their employer for the devotion and work efforts which they show to achieve the organizational goals. Organizations also strive to pay the best returns and rewards to employees both in tangible and intangible form. But whether the rewards received by employees’ are good or worst depends on their perception of reward meeting their expectations and needs. When they perceive that reward is valuable and meets their expectations, they try to reciprocate it by increasing their efforts and performance. So it can be inferred that there is an exchange relationship between organization and employees. This exchange relationship between
employees and their organization is best explained by organizational support theory. Organizational support theory (Eisenberger, et al., 1986; Shore & Shore, 1995) supposes that to determine the organization’s readiness to reward increased work effort and to meet socioemotional needs, employees develop global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. This global belief of employees towards organization is what is called as perceived organizational support. Such perceived organizational support (POS) would increase employees’ felt obligation to help the organization reach its objectives, their affective commitment to the organization, and their expectation that improved performance would be rewarded. Behavioral outcomes of POS would include increased in-role and extra-role performance and decreased withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism and turnover.

Efforts from the Human Resource Department to understand and analyze the aspects which affect the performance of the employees is a basic necessity to ensure effectiveness and efficiency. Past research indicates that POS positively leads to a number of outcomes favorable to both the organization and the employees. Therefore the level of POS of employees needs to be constantly reviewed to ensure favorable outcomes to the organization which ultimately leads to profitability.

Interventions designed to address the antecedents of POS are more likely to be successful in increasing organizational commitment of its members as well as the quality of their work life. Hence the study on POS is needed to generate favorable outcomes for both the organization and the employees.

Many firms are seen investing important resources in POS programs, examples of which can be found in fortune’s annual listing of “The 100 Best Companies to Work For” (Levering and Moskowitz, 2007). Google for example, offers a Global Education Leave Program for its employees, so that they can further their education. It can be seen as a means for career development opportunities. Not only this, it also encourages its employees to spend 20% of their time working on independent projects, and provide employees with other benefits like gourmet meals, onsite doctors, and the use of swimming and spa facilities at no cost. Another example can be of Qualcomm which encourages its employees to submit new product concepts through an online network. It also provides health care for employees and provides a service of catered dinners for the employees who work for late hours. Yet another example can be of S.C. Johnson & Co. which provides its employees living 25 miles or more from workplace subsidized hotel stays. These examples highlight the fact that employee support programs have become commonplace today (Great Place to Work Institute, 2007). By providing such facilities and support to employees they are actually investing in something very significant as it is the means through which organizations will get best out of their employees. So there is a need to explore the various factors that determine POS and also various outcomes associated to it.

OBJECTIVES

This research paper is an attempt to achieve the following specific objectives:-

1. To explore the various factors determining perceived organizational support.
2. To find out the various consequences of perceived organizational support based on existing research literature.
3. To conclude and recommend measures for improving and enhancing organizational support perceptions of employees in organizations.

Perceived Organizational Support - A Literature Survey

A study conducted by Eisenberger et al., in 1986 revealed that employees form global beliefs concerning the extent to which organization values their contributions and cares about their well being. The study revealed that POS reduces absenteeism and the relation between POS and absenteeism is greater for employees with a strong exchange ideology than those with weak exchange ideology.

Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) reviewed more than 70 studies concerning employees’ general belief that their work organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being. A meta-analysis...
indicated that 3 major categories of beneficial treatment received by employees (i.e., fairness, supervisor support, and organizational rewards and favorable job conditions) were associated with POS. POS, in turn, was related to outcomes favorable to employees (e.g., job satisfaction, positive mood) and the organization (e.g., affective commitment, performance, and lessened withdrawal behavior). These relationships depended on processes assumed by organizational support theory: employees’ belief that the organization’s actions were discretionary, feeling of obligation to aid the organization, fulfillment of socioemotional needs, and performance-reward expectancies.

In a meta-analysis of 167 studies by Riggle et al., (2009) which was meant to examine the effects of perceived organizational support on four employee outcomes: organizational commitment, job satisfaction, performance, and intention to leave, it was found that perceived organizational support has a strong, positive effect on job satisfaction and organizational commitment; a moderate, positive effect on employee performance; and a strong, negative effect on intention to leave.

In a meta-analysis of 112 studies by Ahmad et al., (2015), it was revealed that perceived organizational support had a strong positive impact on employee engagement, job satisfaction and organizational commitment, while its impact on organizational citizenship behavior and turnover intentions was found to be moderate.

In a meta-analysis of 170 studies by Ahmad and Nawaz (2015), it was found that POS is largely influenced by justice, growth opportunities, supervisor support, and coworker support. While having a profound look at the outcomes it is evident that POS significantly influence employee engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment; while its impact on organizational citizenship behavior and turnover intentions is moderate.

A past review of both the POS literature and the HR literature point the significance of research on the linkage between HR practices and POS. In the POS literature, Shore and Shore (1995) identified two types of HR practices that are crucial to the development of higher POS: (1) discretionary practices that suggest organizational caring but are not mandated by company policy or union contract, and (2) HR practices that suggest organizational recognition of the employee’s contribution. This proposition reveals that those HR practices that signify different ways in which the organization shows concern for the employees and values their contributions may be mostly critical for the improvement of high POS.

In view of that, several HR practices are very essential in showing support for employees to satisfy these needs. First, satisfactory pay is crucial for meeting individual’s physiological or existence needs. Second, growth needs can be fulfilled by sufficient career development opportunities that help employees extend their potential and develop their capabilities. Third, HR practices that provide social support, such as helping employees maintain good work and family relationships and extend positive leader-member exchange relationships, can be helpful in fulfilling employees need for relatedness. Therefore, the HR practices that have been usually chosen to investigate as antecedents of POS include: pay level, career development opportunities, work-family support and leader member exchange (LMX).

**Antecedents of POS**

On the basis of above literature survey there are many factors that determine perceived organizational support: rewards and job conditions, career development, supervisor support, coworker support, procedural justice and work-family support.

**Rewards and Job Conditions**

Shore and Shore (1995) suggested that human resources practices showing recognition of employee contributions should be positively related to POS. A variety of rewards and job conditions have been studied in relation to POS—for example, recognition, pay, promotions, career development, job security, autonomy, role stressors, and training. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) in a study found organizational rewards and job conditions as one of the important factors associated with POS.
Recognition pay and promotions—According to organizational support theory, favorable opportunities for rewards serve to communicate a positive valuation of employee’s contributions and thus contribute to POS. Providing, pay and promotion on the basis of performance and recognizing employees for new ideas can serve the idea of support from the organization.

Job security—When the employees get the assurance that organization wishes to maintain their future membership, they feel supported by their organization. This is particularly true at times when downsizing is prevalent.

Autonomy—Employees when perceive that they have control over how they carry their jobs including scheduling, work procedures, and task variety, they feel supported by their organization as it indicates the organization’s trust in employees to decide wisely how to carry their work.

Training—Wayne et al. (1997) suggested that job training is a discretionary practice communicating an investment in the employee, thus leading to increased POS. When employees receive training for carrying their jobs efficiently and competently, they feel supported by their organization.

Role stressors—By role stress, we mean the demands at work with which individuals are unable to cope. When employees perceive that job related stressors are caused by the factors which are controllable by the organization, and that the organization does not make any effort to lessen it, they feel less supported. Stressors related to three aspects of employees’ role in the organization have been studied as antecedents to POS: work overload, involving demands that exceed what an employee can reasonably accomplish in a given time; role ambiguity, involving the absence of clear information about one’s job responsibilities; and role conflict, involving mutually incompatible job responsibilities.

Career Development

Career development is another HR practice that can serve as an indication of support from the organization. Organizations which provide their employees’ an opportunity for developing their careers by informing them about various posts available within the organization and making them compatible for the same by providing various training and education facilities serves as an indicator of support. Research has provided some evidence that career development opportunities offered by the organization may enhance POS beliefs (Meyer and Smith, 2000; Nasurdin et al., 2008).

Supervisor Support

Supervisors always act as agents of the organization and have the responsibility of directing and evaluating their subordinates’ performance. Therefore, employees view their supervisor’s favorable or unfavorable treatment towards them as an indicative of the organization’s support (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Levinson, 1965). Many researchers have shown supervisor support as one of the important factors influencing POS (Ahmed and Nawaz, 2015; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002; Hutchison, 1997).

Supervisor can also be called as a leader, because as a leader should be readily available to its followers, a supervisor should be there to help and make employees perform their tasks. Wayne, Shore and Liden argue that the concept of Leader-member exchange can be attributed to supervisor’s support and thus both the constructs can be used interchangeably. They further concluded that supervisor support is having great bearing on the employee’s perception of organizational support. Sluss, Klimchak and Holmes (2008) concluded that higher the level of exchange between employee his/her leader, higher and positive will be employees’ level of perception of organizational support.

Coworker Support

Employees working in an organization represent that organization. Therefore employees’ or peers can also have an influence on the perceptions of support. Friendly, supportive and cooperative peers imply a positive support from the organization. To the extent that coworkers’ favorable treatment is discretionary and possibly attributable to organizational culture, and so forth, receiving employees could view the coworkers’ support as an additional indicator of the organizations’ valuation of their
contributions and concern for their well-being. Research has found coworker support strongly related to POS (Ahmed and Nawaz, 2015; Ladd and Henry, 2000).

Procedural Justice

Procedural justice concerns the fairness of the ways used to determine the distribution of resources among employees (Greenberg, 1990). Shore and Shore (1995) suggested that repeated instances of fairness in decisions concerning resource distribution should have a strong cumulative effect on POS by indicating a concern for employees’ welfare. Research has proved procedural justice as an important factor influencing POS (Ahmad and Nawaz, 2015; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002).

Work-Family Support

POS may be related to such organizational actions that strengthen employee beliefs that the organization would provide sympathetic understanding and material help to deal with stressful situations at work or home. By providing such understanding and help, organizations would fulfill the employee’s need for emotional support and interpersonal relationships, thus enhancing employee POS. It is very likely that if the organization provides a high level of work-family support, the employees will consider the organization as more focused of their well-being and being more supportive. Research has supported this relationship between work-family balance and POS (Kossek and Nichol, 1992).

Outcomes of POS

POS may lead to various employee and organizational outcomes like job satisfaction, positive mood at work, reduced strains, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, employee engagement, high in-role performance, less turnover intentions, high desire to remain and less withdrawal behaviors.

Job-Related Affect

POS may influence employees ‘general affective reactions to their job, including job satisfaction and positive mood. Job satisfaction refers to employees’ overall positive feelings toward their job. POS should contribute to overall job satisfaction by meeting socio-emotional needs, increasing performance-reward expectancies, and signaling the availability of aid when needed. Positive mood differs conceptually from job satisfaction in that it involves a general emotional state without a specific object. POS may contribute to employee’s feelings of competence and worth thereby enhancing positive mood. Many researchers have shown POS as positively influencing job satisfaction (Riggle et al., 2009; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002) and positive mood (Ahmad et al., 2015).

Strains

POS is expected to reduce aversive psychological and psychosomatic reactions (i.e., strains) to stressors by indicating the availability of material aid and emotional support when needed to face high demands at work.

Organizational Commitment

An important organizational outcome that might result from POS is commitment of employee to the organization. Organizational commitment is the degree to which an employee identifies with the organization and wants to continue active participation in it (Newstrom and Davis, 2002). According to organizational support theory, POS is an indicator of the organization’s commitment to the employee and in turn creates an obligation within the employee to care about the organization and reciprocate in terms of commitment and loyalty. Therefore organization’s favourable treatment in terms of rewards and other benefits towards employees may enhance organizational commitment. Research conducted by researchers (Riggle et al., 2009; Ahmed et al., 2015) have provided the evidence of organizational commitment as one of the important outcomes of POS. Research has shown POS to be associated with three types of commitment:
Affective commitment- By affective commitment we mean a state where an employee has emotional attachment to its organization and a belief in its values. POS should increase affective commitment by fulfilling such socio-emotional needs as affiliation and emotional support. Fulfilment of such needs by the organization produces a strong sense of belonging to the organization among the employees, and it involves the incorporation of employees ‘membership and role status into their social identity. Research has supported the relationship between POS and affective commitment (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002).

Normative commitment- By normative commitment we mean a state where an employee feels it his responsibility to remain in the organization. When employees perceive that their employer shows care about their wellbeing, they feel indebtedness to the organization and thus indicate loyalty. Ucar and Otken (2013) in a study showed a significant relationship of perceived organizational support with normative commitment.

Continuance commitment- By continuance commitment we mean a state where an employee perceives the value of remaining with an organization economically. Shore and Tetrick (1991) suggested that POS might reduce feelings of entrapment (i.e., continuance commitment) that occur when employees are forced to stay with an organization because of the high costs of leaving.

Employee Engagement

By employee engagement, we mean a state where an employee is involved with, satisfied with and has enthusiasm for the work he or she does. It is very important for an organization to have its employees engaged with their work. Employees who feel supported by their concerned organization get more involved and satisfied with their jobs and also have strong enthusiasm for the work they do. Research has provided evidence on the relationship between POS and employee engagement (Ahmad et al., 2015).

In-Role Performance

Task performance or in role performance include such behaviors or tasks that an employee has to perform and which he/she would typically find on a job description. According to the norm of reciprocity, employees are obligated to repay the organization in ways that the organization finds valuable for any beneficial treatment they may receive (Eisenberger et al., 1986). One way those employees can fulfil this obligation is by heightening job performance behaviors – specifically, task/in-role performance. Research on this link between POS and in-role performance has found empirical support (Eisenberger et al., 1990; Randall, et al., 1999; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

By organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) we mean the behaviors of employees which are discretionary and which are beneficial for the organization. Such behaviors are also called as extra role behaviors as these are not specified by the organization but when performed by the employees are highly beneficial for organization. Employees that feel supported by their organization indulge in increased or heightened extra-role behaviors. Heightened OCBs and extra-role performance might include employees helping each other more often, complaining less, exhibiting more conscientiousness, and acting more courteous to each other. Research on the link between POS and extra-role performance has found empirical support for the relationship (Shore and Wayne, 1993; Smith, Organ, and Near 1983).

Turnover Intention

Organizational support theory suggests that employees who receive high levels of support from the organization are inclined to repay the organization. One essential way to reciprocate the organization’s favorable treatment is through continued participation. Employees who receive more support as part of the inducements offered by the organization would have less desire to leave the organization. Research on POS provides evidence in support of this proposition. E.g. Guzzo et al. (1994) found that expatriate
managers who perceive higher levels of support from the organization were less likely to seek employment elsewhere. The negative relationship between POS and turnover intention was also evident in some other studies (Riggle et al., 2009; Ahmad et al., 2015)

**Withdrawal Behavior**

Withdrawal behavior refers to employees’ lessening of active participation in the organization. High POS may indicate lessened withdrawal behaviors such as tardiness, absenteeism, and voluntary turnover. When employees feel supported by their organization they reciprocate in ways like retaining organizational membership, high attendance, and punctuality. POS may also increase affective organizational commitment, thereby lessening withdrawal behavior. Research has supported the negative relationship between POS and withdrawal behavior (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002).

**CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

This research endeavor is an attempt to provide the idea of Perceived Organizational Support and to explore the important factors and their contribution to enhance the organizational core competency. Further, this study provides a base for building a theoretical model for future evaluation of employee-employer relationship. It suggests the measures that are necessary to improve the relationship between management and employees.

This study bridges the human resource management and organizational behavior literatures by linking employee perceptions of a variety of HR practices with POS. It also provides guidance on how organizations can foster high levels of perceived support through implementation of appropriate HR practices.

Efforts from the Human Resource Department to understand and analyze the aspects which affect the performance of the employees are a basic necessity to ensure effectiveness and efficiency. The research literature indicates that POS is positively related to a number of outcomes favorable to both the organization and the employees. Therefore the level of POS of employees needs to be constantly reviewed to ensure favorable outcomes to the organization which ultimately leads to profitability.

Management can improve the support perceptions of employees by treating them in favorable ways and helping them in performing their tasks efficiently (supervisor support). By providing justice in terms of fair allocation of resources (procedural justice) and developing a culture based on trust and cooperation between employees (coworker support), management is likely to improve employee perceptions of organizational support. Further various HR practices, such as, rewards on equitable basis, recognition of new ideas by employees, providing career development opportunities, training, job security and job autonomy can also help management to improve support perceptions of employees. Providing work-family support is another way to improve support perceptions.

The significant effects of POS on important employee and organizational outcomes demonstrate the importance of POS research and the need for organizations to provide adequate support to their employees. POS may lead to various employee and organizational outcomes like job satisfaction, positive mood at work, reduced strains, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, employee engagement, high in-role performance, less turnover intentions and reduced withdrawal behaviors. Such outcomes and behaviors are highly in focus of almost all organizations. Therefore, organizations need to take care of all such factors that might impact POS and in turn organizational excellence.

POS is somewhat a new concept, as such, questions about its distinctiveness from other concepts have been raised and still much research needs to be conducted on its contribution on organizational excellence through the excellent performance by the employees.

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