

Determinants of perceived organizational support: an empirical study of administrative staff at public hospitals in Viet Nam

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Received: 25 August 2020

Revised: 7 November 2020

Accepted: 8 November 2020

Available online: January 2021

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the factors that affected perceived organizational support (POS) and was conducted on participants from the administrative staff at public hospitals in Viet Nam. A quantitative approach was used for collecting and analyzing data, and hypothesis testing was performed by structural equation modeling using Smart PLS 3.0. Analysis of 128 participants showed that the perception of employees toward their organization was influenced by organizational reward, procedural justice, and perceived supervisor support. The results suggested that to increase POS, public hospitals should focus on improving their reward systems—for example, building non-financial policies that currently lack opportunities for administrative staff, such as training and promotion. The organization's accountability policy needs to emphasize attention to transparency, and managers should listen carefully to the feedback from their employees. Finally, supervisors must nurture the goals and values of their employees. This study also provides suggestions for future research related to POS, including an expanded sample size or a cross-lagged longitudinal survey design to reduce bias.

Key words: hospital, human resource, justice, reward system, support

INTRODUCTION

An organization that wants to operate well requires the management system to operate effectively, and the administrative staff are the key factors in the smooth operation of the system. However, for administrative staff to increase their productivity, commit to the organization, or undergo more work improvement initiatives, they need to receive more attention from the organization. Numerous studies have demonstrated the importance of employee awareness of organizational support, which contributes to positive behaviors such as organizational citizenship behavior¹ and reducing turnover intention². Other studies show that there is a wide range of factors that affect employees' perceptions of organizational support, such as organizational reward, procedural justice, and perceived supervisor support³, as well as person-job fit⁴. In the context of the hospital, the organizational structure consists of two main components: the clinical frontline and the administrative back office. However, especially in the public sector, the administrative staff (back-office staff) are often perceived as being neglected in the development of the organization. Many financial benefit policies and non-financial policies (for example, promotion or training) focus mainly on frontline staff, such as doctors or nurses. Consequently, the management system cannot perform optimally. This reduces the general performance of the organization and indirectly leads to the reduced satisfaction of all employees. The reduction of organizational performance could reduce the quality of medical treatment and increase negative effects such as turnover rate and withdrawal behaviors.

This study was initiated due to the reality observed at a hospital in the public

sector when the administrative staff felt the lack of support from the organization. This study contributes to the exploration of the factors that have an impact on the perception of the administrative staff about their organization. This study also suggests managerial implications for improving policies for administrative staff of public hospitals in Viet Nam.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived organizational support (POS) is defined as “the employees' beliefs regarding the extent to which an organization assesses their contributions and care for their well-being”⁵. According to Rhoades et al. stated that POS can also be defined as “a way for managers to raise employees' awareness that the organization values contributions and takes care of employees' well-being”³. Makanjee et al.⁶ have a different definition of an organization's perceived support, in which it is viewed as a measure of the organization's commitment to its employees. In other words, the POS is the awareness of organizational commitment to a person due to their contributions, according to their level of commitment to the organization.

Organizational support theory, proposed by Eisenberger et al. states that perceived organizational support is a factor that influences employees' feelings on their organization⁵. According to organizational support theory, a rise in POS will increase the tendency of employees to view these supportive actions as organizational rather than due to direct superiors. It is these supportive characteristics of the organization, in addition to the rules, ethics, and financial responsibilities, which continually influence the formation of employee behaviors.

Considerable research has been done to understand the factors that impact POS. According to Rhoades and Eisenberger³, fairness, supervisor support, organizational rewards, and job conditions are factors that influence POS. Another study by Moorman et al.⁷ on employees at a military hospital in the Middle East showed that there was a direct impact of procedural justice on POS of employees and that there was an intermediary role of POS in the appearance of organizational citizenship behavior under the impact of procedural justice. A study by Rhoades et al.⁸ is seen as fundamental research confirming the strong link between the POS and the three key elements of organizational rewards, procedural justice, and supervisor support. That study, combined with the findings of Allen et al.² on the relationship between supportive activities in human resources management and its consequences, indicated that POS is a positive factor that increases employee emotional commitment or diminishes employee intention to quit. Another study by Allen et al.⁹ on factors affecting POS of public service providers in

information technology showed that three groups of factors affect POS, including job characteristics, stressor factors, and organizational actions. Dawley et al.⁴ surveyed the relationship between supervisor support and person-job fit to POS on 346 employees at manufacturing companies. This study showed that the higher the supervisor support, the greater the resulting POS; and the relationship can be clarified through person-job fit. Similarly, the combination of satisfaction of needs and POS has been identified as an intermediate in the relationship between autonomy support, procedural justice, and performance and organizational identity¹⁰. Vatankhah et al.¹¹ in a study on the impact of empowerment, reward, and promotion on aviation service providers based on the previous work of Rhoades et al.⁸ point out that the above factors all affect POS and that the role of POS is important in reducing counter-productive behaviors. The above-mentioned studies and the appearance of impact variables in these studies are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary of studies that have an impact on perceived organizational support

Rhoades et al. ⁸	Studies related to Rhoades et al., 2001					
	Moorman et al. ⁷	Allen et al. ²	Allen et al. ⁹	Dawley et al. ⁴	Gillet et al. ¹⁰	Vatankhah et al. ¹¹
Organizational reward		X	X			X
Procedural justice	X	X			X	
Perceived supervisor support			X	X		

Organizational Reward and Perceived Organizational Support

Porter and Lawler¹² have classified commendation into two categories: intrinsic reward and extrinsic reward. Katz and Van Maanen¹³ developed ways of

dividing Porter and Lawler's reward system into three categories: organizational, social, and social and task reward. In fact, this division is still based on intrinsic reward (reward related to work) and extrinsic reward (reward from the organization or

society). Williamson et al.¹⁴ further developed the concept based on the two models of the reward system—the organization of Porter and Lawler¹², and Katz & Van Maanan's¹³—when dividing the organization's reward system into three categories: intrinsic, extrinsic and social.

An organizational reward system is the total benefits employees receive from the organization¹⁵. Malhotra et al.¹⁶ more specifically defined the organizational reward system, referring to all financial and non-financial compensation that employees can achieve through their working relationship with the organization. Accordingly, opportunities for recognition by the organization, opportunities for promotion, and financial incentives are found to have a positive effect on employees' perceptions of the organization's support¹⁷.

Based on supporting organization theory, the recognition of being treated kindly (e.g., fairness, and the organizational reward system, or working conditions) is effectively an activity to increase employee perception of the organizational support⁵. Rhoades and Eisenberger¹⁸ when reviewing POS, also determined that the organizational reward system positively impacts on POS. Shore et al.¹⁹ also stated that organizational actions conveyed to employees expressed in praise, recognition, and unexpected rewards will tend to increase employees' POS. Many other subsequent studies also demonstrated that the organizational reward system positively affects perceptions of organizational support^{8,19,21}.

Hypothesis 1 (H₁): Organizational reward is positively related to POS.

Procedural Justice and Perceived Organizational Support

Leventhal et al.²⁰ considered a process to be fair when it followed systematic guidelines, such as consistent

decision-making, without bias. Another definition of procedural justice addresses the effects of equity in decision-making processes related to the behavior and attitudes of the people who are affected in that decision²¹. Cropanzano and Greenberg²² distinguish the structural determinants and the social determinants of process equity. The structural determinant is understood as the organization's rules and policies associated with decision-making that affects employees (for instance, employees are fully informed when decisions are made and employees receive full and accurate information). The social determinant involves individual processes in the allocation of resources; these actions can treat employees with respect, dignity, or provide employees with an understanding of how the outputs are evaluated.

Procedural justice is reflected in the way resources are distributed among employees²³. Eisenberger et al.²⁴ in summarizing the theory of organizational support, stated: "Perception of support from the organization will be influenced by many aspects related to the organization's treatment employees". According to this summary, one of the factors related to POS is fairness, and procedural justice has a positive impact on the perception of support from the organization. Shore et al.¹⁹ stated that repeating the fairness in the process of distributing resources will create a cumulative effect on the perception of organizational support through an interest in employee welfare. Fasolo²⁷ studied 213 staff providing legal services and found that fairness in the processes makes a difference in the perception of support from the organization.

Hypothesis 2 (H₂): Procedural justice is positively related to POS.

Perceived Supervisor Support and Perceived Organizational Support

Supervisor support refers to an employee's overall view of the extent to which their superior assesses their dedication and interest²⁵. Although the nature of supervisor support and organizational support both involve assessing employee dedication, theorists note that employees can distinguish the relationship between themselves and direct supervisors or with the organizations²⁶. Eisenberger et al.¹⁸ define supervisor support as the extent to which employees create a general impression of their superior's appreciation for their dedication or of the superior's support and concern for employee's well-being. Supervisor support has been shown to increase employee awareness of organizational support by contributing to the organization's general policies, workflows, or culture²⁷.

Regardless of how their organization evaluates them, employees tend to shape their views on how their current supervisors directly assess their dedication and concern for their well-being as the support at the organizational level²⁵. The direct supervisor is considered to be the representative of the organization, responsible for managing and evaluating work performance. Employees will view the favorable or unfavorable actions of the superior as coming to them as organizational support⁵. In addition, employees understand that the direct superior's rating will be communicated to a higher level, further contributing to the relationship between perceived supervisor support and POS (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Several other studies also confirm the positive impact of perceived supervisor support on POS^{28,29}.

Hypothesis 3 (H₃): Perceived supervisor support is positively related to POS.

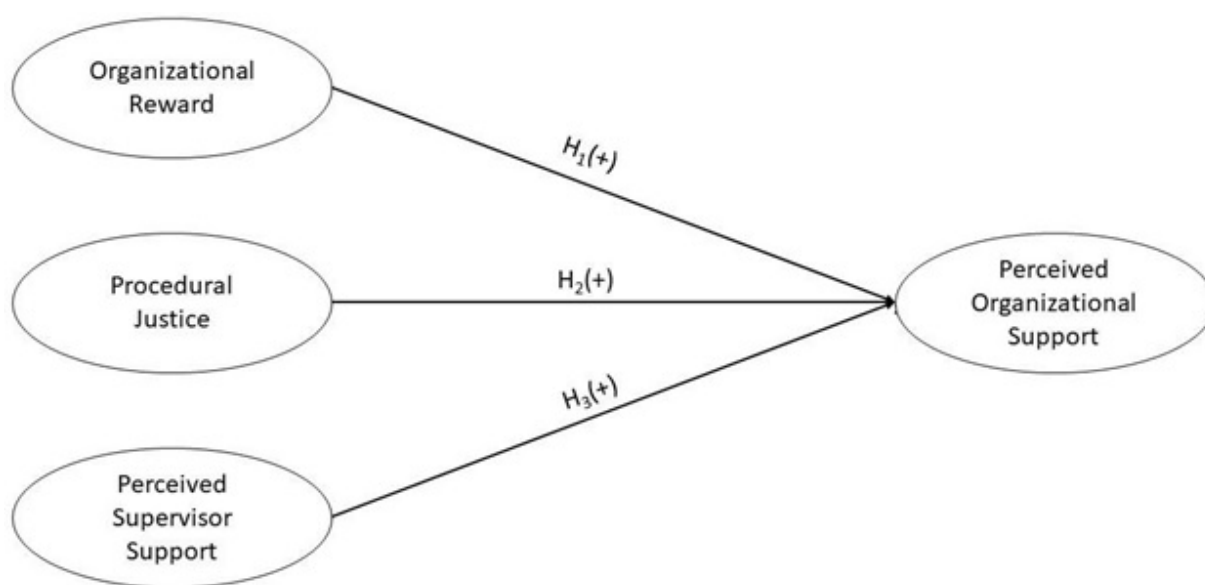


Figure 1. Research model.

METHODS

Design and Procedures

This study used a cross-sectional questionnaire design and was conducted on back-office staff at public hospitals in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. This questionnaire research was a staff survey and had approval from the institutional review board. The questionnaire was distributed to the leader of the department for each team. Team members then completed the questionnaire anonymously and returned it to the leader of the department, who then returned it to the investigators. Pre-test and pilot tests were conducted before questionnaires were distributed to the staff.

Participants

A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed, and 128 questionnaires with valid data were returned, a response rate at 85.3%. Among the subjects, 37.4% had a university or higher education, and 60.3% were men. The average tenure was approximately 3 years with about half having been working for less than 3 years and one-third for 3–5 years.

Measures

Organizational Reward used a three-item scale developed by Eisenberger et al.³⁰ including recognition for good work (OR1), opportunity for advancement (OR2), and opportunity for high earnings (OR3). A five-point Likert-type scale was used for response options, ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (5) “strongly agree”. The internal consistency reliability of this scale was $\alpha = 0.784$ in this study.

Procedural Justice used a five-item scale developed by Leventhal³¹ including “Have those procedures been applied consistently” (PJ1), “Have those procedures been free of bias” (PJ2), “Have those procedures been based on accurate

information” (PJ3), “Have you been able to appeal the (outcome) arrived at by those procedures” (PJ4), and “Have those procedures upheld ethical and moral standard” (PJ5). A five-point Likert-type scale was used for response options, ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (5) “strongly agree”. The internal consistency reliability of this scale was $\alpha = 0.862$ in this study.

Perceived Supervisor Support used a three-item scale developed by Eisenberger et al.⁵ including “My supervisor cares about my opinions” (PSS1), “My work supervisor really cares about my well-being” (PSS2), and “My supervisor strongly considers my goals and values” (PSS3). A five-point Likert-type scale was used for response options, ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (5) “strongly agree”. The internal consistency reliability of this scale was $\alpha = 0.812$ in this study.

Perceived Organizational Support used a six-item scale developed by Eisenberger et al.³⁰ including “My organization really cares about my well-being” (POS1), “My organization strongly considers my goals and values” (POS2), “My organization cares about my opinions” (POS3), “My organization is willing to help me if I need a special favor” (POS4), “Help is available from my organization when I have a problem” (POS5), and “My organization would forgive an honest mistake on my part” (POS6). A five-point Likert-type scale was used for response options, ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (5) “strongly agree”. The internal consistency reliability of this scale was $\alpha = 0.843$ in this study.

Observed variables with variable correlation coefficients with an item-total less than 0.3 were removed and the criteria for choosing a scale was where there was a confidence dependability of 0.6 or more³². In this study, the variable POS6 had a low

item-total correlation ($0.274 < 0.3$), and Cronbach's alpha coefficient after POS6 removal was higher than the tested value ($0.843 > 0.805$), so it should be considered for removal. The variable POS6 stated, "My organization would forgive an honest mistake on my part". In fact, there are very few cases where employees' daily mistakes are brought up as issues at the organizational level, and instead, they were primarily addressed at the group or department level. Therefore, the POS6 variable type was removed, retaining the remaining five variables of the scale.

RESULTS

Hypotheses were tested using partial least square modeling (PLS-SEM) conducted in Smart PLS 3.0. The research

model was evaluated for its reliability, convergent validity (CV), discriminant validity (DV), and structural model.

Measurement Model

Composite reliability is a measure of internal consistency and the threshold should be between 0.7 and 0.9³⁶. CV is the degree to which indicators of a specific construct converge a high proportion of variance in common. Hair et al.³³ suggested that scale meets the CV when the value of AVE is ≥ 0.5 and factors loading should be ≥ 0.708 to achieve at least 50% variance. Figure 2 and Table 2 illustrate the evaluation of whether the current model meets the requirement of CV and internal consistency reliability.

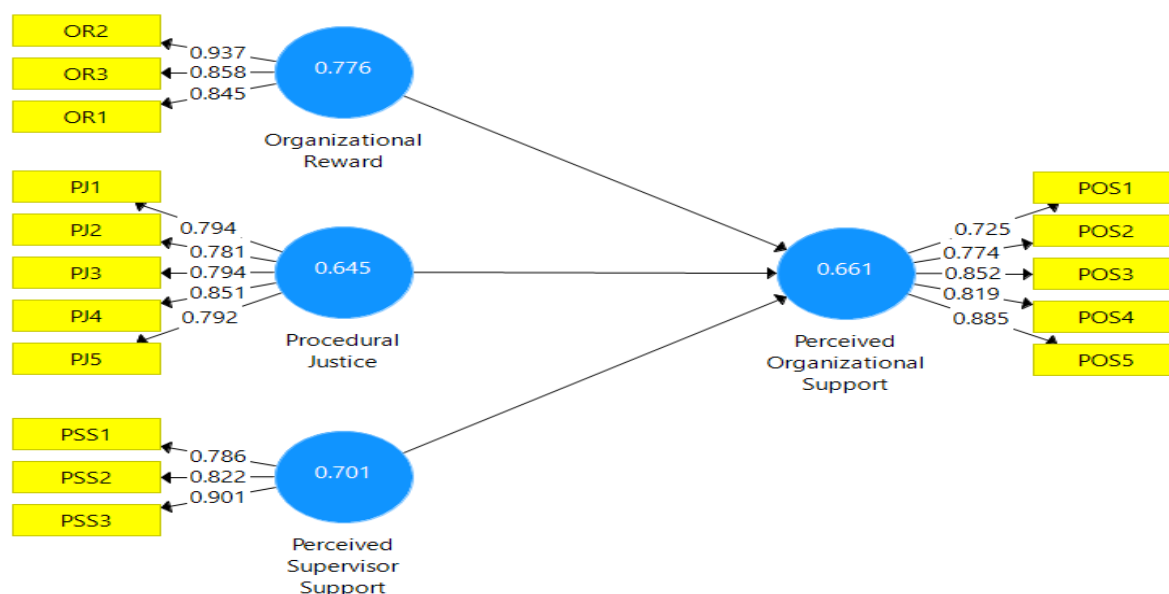


Figure 2. Measurement model. (N = 128)

Table 2 Internal consistency reliability and convergent validity

Construct	Items	Item loading	AVE	CR
Organizational reward	OR1	0.845	0.776	0.912
	OR2	0.937		
	OR3	0.858		
Procedural justice	PJ1	0.794	0.645	0.901
	PJ2	0.781		

Construct	Items	Item loading	AVE	CR
Perceived supervisor support	PJ3	0.794	0.701	0.875
	PJ4	0.851		
	PJ5	0.792		
	PSS1	0.786		
	PSS2	0.822		
	PSS3	0.901		
	POS1	0.725		
Perceived organizational support	POS2	0.774	0.661	0.907
	POS3	0.852		
	POS4	0.819		
	POS5	0.885		

AVE: average variance extracted; CR: composite reliability.

DV was considered using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations approach, rather than Fornell-Lacker criterion and the cross-loading factor, because of its better clearance than the traditional methods³³. A value above 0.9 indicates that constructs are similar and scales that meet the requirement of DV should have a value lower than 0.9. In this analysis, all scales had a DV for all values that were less than 0.9 (Table 3).

Table 3. Discriminant validity: heterotrait-monotrait criterion

	OR	PJ	POS	PSS
Organizational reward				
Procedural justice	0.116			
Perceived organizational support	0.238	0.562		
Perceived supervisor support	0.214	0.329	0.546	

OR: organizational reward; PJ: procedural justice; PSS: perceived supervisor support; POS: perceived organizational support.

Structural Model

Testing of direct effects indicates that all hypotheses are supported: the relationship between organizational reward and POS (H_1), procedural justice and POS (H_2), and perceived supervisor support and POS (H_3) are all positive and significant ($\beta_1 = 0.193$, $\beta_2 = 0.411$, $\beta_{1=3} = 0.331$, respectively, $p < 0.05$) (Table 4).

Table 4 Results of hypothesis testing

Direct effect	β	P Values	Result
Organizational reward $\rightarrow$ perceived organizational support	0.193	0.009	Supported
Procedural justice $\rightarrow$ perceived organizational support	0.411	< 0.001	Supported
Perceived supervisor support $\rightarrow$ perceived organizational support	0.331	< 0.001	Supported

DISCUSSION

Research Implications

This study shed light on how to manage perceptions of employees in the hospital sector. This study found that organizational reward, procedural justice, and perceived supervisor support have a direct effect on the POS of the administrative staff at public hospitals. This result is consistent with the previous study of the determinants of POS⁸. Organizational reward can enhance the perception by staff of caring at organization level, and we therefore have potential to improve the current “everyone should be the same” reward system in the public health sector in Viet Nam. Procedural justice also has a positive impact on POS, and it is expected that the more an organization makes their policies or processes transparent, the more POS will come from staff. Finally, caring from a direct supervisor directly leads to a positive perception by staff about their organization.

Managerial Implications

This study’s result suggests that to increase POS, public hospitals should focus on improving their reward systems, such as building non-financial policies that currently lack opportunities, such as training and promotion, for administrative staff. The organization’s accountability team then needs to pay more attention to ensuring transparency and managers should listen carefully to feedback from their employees. Finally, the supervisors must nurture the goals and values of employees and respect the diversity in the organization. POS, when achieved, could lead to encouraging effects such as reduced turnover rate and absenteeism, or improving work satisfaction and work commitment.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study only focuses on public hospitals in Viet Nam, and due to the sample size, cannot be considered representative of all hospitals in the public sector. A future study could expand sampling to other provinces or make a comparison between the POS of public and private hospitals. Further, future studies could analyze the perception of staff from different job sections (frontline department, back-office department). This study was based mainly on quantitative analysis to illustrate the relationship between factors and POS, and future research should consider using mixed-methods to explore the relationship, and explain why some relationships do not exist or could not exist.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors are grateful to the anonymous referees of the journal for their extremely useful suggestions for improving the quality of this paper.

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