The Impact of Perceived Organizational Support on Positive Psychological Capacities: A Study of Nurses

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Extensive Summary

1. Introduction

Positive organizational behavior is the study of positively focused human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in workplaces (Luthans, 2002, p.59). As stated in this definition, some criteria needed to be included as a psychological resource capacity such as the capacity must be theory and research based, state-like, and have a performance impact (Luthans, 2002). Based on these criteria; optimism, hope, and self efficacy were selected as positive psychological capacities to study in this research.

Optimism is about making positive attribution about achieving now and future (Luthans et al, 2007). Hope is defined as a positive motivational state, which is composed of agency and pathways (Snyder et al., 1991; Snyder, 2000). Self efficacy is the individual’s conviction about his or her abilities to successfully execute a task (Bandura, 1982).

Perceived organizational support (POS) assumes that employees form general beliefs regarding how much their organization values and cares about them (Eisenberger et al., 2001). POS underlines three important psychological processes for the employees such as felt obligation, fulfilling socioemotional needs, and performance-reward expectancies (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Perceived organizational support can play critical role when explaining some positive psychological capacities (Luthans et al., 2008). For instance, employees can become more confident in their organizations when they fulfill their socioemotional needs such as respect and approval. By the same token, employees can become more optimistic and hopeful in work settings when they feel that their organization cares about their well being.

Therefore, the following hypotheses will be tested in this study.

H₁: Perceived organizational support positively affects individual’s positive psychological capacity of optimism.
**H$_2$**: Perceived organizational support positively affects individual’s positive psychological capacity of hope.

**H$_3$**: Perceived organizational support positively affects individual’s positive psychological capacity of self efficacy.

### 2. Method

Data is collected by questionnaires from 161 nurses, who work for the hospitals of foundation universities in Ankara. Average age and tenure of the respondents were 31.65 and 9.75 years, respectively. The sample was predominantly female (95%).

All of the survey items, excluding demographic ones were responded to on five-point Likert scales, with anchors ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Perceived organizational support was measured by six-item scale from the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger et al., 2001). After the confirmatory factor analysis, one item is excluded due to the low factor loading. Five items have demonstrated validity and reliability ($\chi^2/df = 1.98; \text{CFI}= 0.97; \text{RMSEA}=0.07; \text{The Cronbach’s alpha} = 0.88$).

Three items were adapted from Scheier and Carver’s (1985) Life Orientation Test, as modified by Shifren and Hooker (1995) in order to measure the optimism. The Cronbach’s alpha of the scale was 0.75.

Six items from Snyder et al.’s (1996) State Hope Scale were used to measure hope. After the confirmatory factor analysis, two items are excluded due to the low factor loadings. The validity and reliability of the four items have been supported ($\chi^2/df= 1.23; \text{CFI}= 0.98; \text{RMSEA}=0.04; \text{The Cronbach’s alpha} = 0.77$).

Finally, self efficacy was measured by six items from Parker (1998), as adapted by Luthans and his colleagues (2007). Six items have demonstrated validity and reliability ($\chi^2/df = 1.26; \text{CFI}= 0.97; \text{RMSEA}=0.05; \text{The Cronbach’s alpha} = 0.87$).

### 3. Findings

Initially; means, standard deviations, and correlations among the variables are examined. The results show that the means of hope, optimism, and self efficacy were high and the level of perceived organizational support was above the average. Perceived organizational support was positively correlated with hope, optimism, and self efficacy. Also, self efficacy was positively correlated with hope and optimism. Finally, optimism and hope were positively correlated.

In order to test the research hypotheses, structural equation modeling was utilized. Measurement and structural models were constructed based on standardized estimates. Results reveal that perceived organizational support positively and significantly affects the optimism ($\beta =0.64; p<0.01$), hope ($\beta =0.38; p<0.01$), and self efficacy ($\beta =0.21; p<0.05$). Further, goodness-of-fit statistics for the full structural equation model produce acceptable values ($\chi^2/df = 1.56; \text{GFI}=0.88; \text{CFI}= 0.95; \text{RMSEA}=0.05$). Therefore, results provide full support for the study’s hypotheses.

### 4. Discussion

This study investigated the impact of perceived organizational support on the optimism, hope, and self efficacy from a sample of 161 nurses. Results showed that
perceived organizational support has positive effect on optimism, hope, and self efficacy. In other words, nurses are more likely to increase their levels of optimism, hope, and self efficacy, when they feel that their organization supports them. This finding is in line with Luthans and his colleagues (2008). Employees will probably attribute positive events in terms of personal, permanent, and pervasive causes and negative events in terms of external, temporary, and situation-specific ones when they feel that their organization values them. Further, employee’s motivation in terms of agency and pathways will be higher when they feel that their organization cares about them. Finally, employee’s conviction about their abilities to complete their assigned roles will be higher, when they experience their organization’s support.

Results reveal that perceived organization support is an important factor to build the positive resources for high demanding jobs such as nursing. The employees, who feel that they are supported, will mobilize positive resources effectively and these resources will save the employees from the traumatic effect of stress. Thus; managers should pay attention to the procedural justice in organizations and they should provide favorable working conditions. All of these experiences will contribute to the perceived organizational support, which leads to more optimistic, hopeful, and confident employees.

The present study was subject to some limitations. First, data were measured from a single employee’s perspective, which may lead to common method variance. Some of the procedural remedies recommended by Podsakoff and his colleagues (2003) were used to reduce method variance. Further, Harman’s single-factor test was employed in the study. A single factor can account for only 33 % of the variance in the data. Thus, it might be concluded that common method variance is not a major problem for the hypothesized relationships in this study. Second, the sample consisted of mostly female nurses. Although male nurses represent a small fraction of the nursing workforce, there may be a need for replication of the study in other samples (including other industries) for the generalizability of the findings. Finally, cross-sectional design of the study makes it difficult to determine the direction of causality among the variables. Future research should attempt to replicate the current findings in a longitudinal study.