

**TRAINING AND PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT: AN ANALYSIS OF
THE IMPACT OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL TRAINING SUPPORT INDEX AND THE
SURVEY OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT**

Mark A. McKnight, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Business Communication
Department of Marketing and Business Communication
University of Southern Indiana
8600 University Boulevard
Evansville, IN 47712
(812) 465-1012
mamcknight@usi.edu

ABSTRACT

Both the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support and the Organizational Training Support Index focus on employee perceptions of organizational support. The present research asked three specific questions related to the relationship between these instruments and their respective constructs. A positive, moderate relationship was found between the two items. Additionally, the present research indicates similar reliability coefficients between the two instruments. Finally, neither gender nor education levels were found to mediate differences between the constructs.

INTRODUCTION

Organizational resources (human, capital and financial) are invested into employee training at an unparalleled rate (McKnight, 2007). Seventy percent of businesses provide some type of formal employee training. To that end, employers spend an estimated \$50 to \$60 billion annually on training activities (Frazis, Gettleman, Horrigan & Joyce, 2000); as far back as 2002, organizations allocated over \$54.2 billion in direct training dollars (Galvin, 2002). Employees spend approximately 30 hours annually in employer provided training (Frazis, Gettleman, Horrigan & Joyce, 2000). According to the U.S. Department of Labor, by the end of 2005 approximately 75% of the workforce, approximately 90 million people, needed to be retrained. This represents a major organizational investment in the human capital of the modern organization.

Previous studies (McKnight, 2005; McKnight, 2007) have established the Organizational Training Support Inventory (OTSI) as a valid diagnostic tool for gauging organizational readiness for training initiatives. However, there is no indication that the OTSI is correlated with, and thus predictive of, the construct of perceived organizational support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986), which is measured with the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS). Through having organizational members complete a more fully validated OTSI, and rectifying situations that are identified by the instrument, a higher return on investment for training activities can be realized by the organization. Circumstances in which organizational training efforts fail because of lack of support could be avoided, saving companies the problem of mismanaged training resources.

Because of the emphasis that organizations and business have placed on training and educational programs, the outcomes of those efforts have become increasingly important. Phillips (1997) developed the first training evaluation model that focused on the return on investment of training expenditures. Organizations are now evaluating the outcomes and goals of education, training and development efforts, with the objective of improving the resources (financial, capital or human) as a result of these efforts (Scott, 2003).

METHODS

The present research investigated the extent to which the Organizational Training Support Inventory (OTSI) and the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) yield results that are reliable and also explored key similarities and differences of the instruments. More specifically, the present research yielded additional analysis of validity for the OTSI, which is a relatively new instrument, and requires subsequent research to properly identify construct, content and concurrent validity. Because the OTSI was conceived as a result of a direct application of perceived organizational support (from the SPOS) in the context of an organization's training readiness and support, the proposed study should clarify the exact relationship of the two instruments.

Subjects of the study completed a three part survey. The first element of the survey consisted of a range of general demographic items. These included gender, education, tenure with the organization and specific tenure within present position within the organization, the supervisory role (if any) of the subject, number of subordinates (if applicable), size of department, nature of work (full time, part time, temporary, etc.), and age.

The second section of the survey consisted of the short version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger, et al., 1986). This abbreviated (eight item) scale was used to assess the subject's overall perception of organizational support. The results of this survey served as the primary dependent variable for the present research.

The third and final section of the survey consisted of the 25 item Organizational Training Support Inventory. This inventory seeks to measure organizational members' relevant beliefs about the organization's commitment to training and training related activities. The individual scores from the OTSI served as the independent variable for the present research.

Specific research objectives addressed in the present research follow as explicitly stated research questions. These include:

- Research Question 1: What is the nature of the correlational relationship between OTSI scores and SPOS scores?
- Research Question 2: Do demographic characteristics such as gender or education level impact the relationship between OTSI scores and SPOS scores?
- Research Question 3: Given a consistent subject group, what is the degree of similarity in reliability between the OTSI and SPOS?

RESULTS

Employees from three separate organizations (a total of 91 subjects) participated in the study. The vast majority of participants (72.5%) were female (Table 1). Employees ranged in age from 21 to 72, with an average age of 39.58.

Table 1:
Gender of Participants

| | Frequency | Percent |
|--------|-----------|---------|
| Male | 25 | 27.5 |
| Female | 66 | 72.5 |
| Total | 91 | 100.0 |

Participants were wide ranging in their prior educational achievements. All participants had completed at least a high school education, and just 12% had completed a graduate degree. A vast majority had completed education in excess of high school (70.3%). One individual held a completed doctoral degree (Table 2).

**Table 2:
Highest Completed Education**

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| High school | 27 | 29.7 |
| Technical or community college | 25 | 27.5 |
| Four year college or university | 28 | 30.8 |
| Master's degree | 10 | 10.9 |
| Doctoral degree | 1 | 1.1 |
| Total | 91 | 100.0 |

Roughly one-third of participants held supervisory positions (Table 3). Of those supervising employees, the average number of subordinates reporting directly to the supervisor was 4.69. Supervisors managed as few as one employee and as many as 75.

**Table 3:
Do you supervise
employees?**

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-------|-----------|---------|
| Yes | 29 | 31.9 |
| No | 62 | 68.1 |
| Total | 91 | 100.0 |

Participants reported various levels of experience – both within the organization and within their present positions. The mean tenure of participants with their organizations was 9.66, and the mean tenure of participants in their present positions was 5.15.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, “What is the nature of the correlational relationship between OTSI scores and SPOS scores?” A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the scores of

both instruments. The correlation was identified as .613. The Pearson correlation coefficient was found to be significant at the .001 level. This indicates a moderate positive correlation between the two instruments.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 asked, “Do demographic characteristics such as gender or education level impact the relationship between OTSI scores and SPOS scores?” To address this question, a comparison of means across the demographic categories of gender and education level were calculated and compared.

Gender

Twenty five (25) males and sixty-six (66) females participated in the study. Table 4 provides an analysis of the Training Support Index (TSI) and the Perceived Organizational Support Score (SPOS) by for males. Table 5 provides corresponding results for females.

Table 4: TSI and SPOS Scores for Males

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|----|--------|----------------|
| Training Support Index | 25 | 100.08 | 21.237 |
| Survey of Perceived Organizational Support Score (8 item) | 25 | 37.72 | 8.359 |

Table 5: TSI and SPOS Scores for Females

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|----|-------|----------------|
| Training Support Index | 66 | 88.14 | 27.43 |
| Survey of Perceived Organizational Support Score (8 item) | 66 | 35.45 | 10.09 |

Males tended to perceive slightly higher levels for both the Training Support Index as well as Perceived Organizational Support than did females. However, no statistical significance was found between the two genders' perceptions of TSI and POS.

Education Level

A majority of study participants possessed less than a graduate degree (88%). Classifications for highest educational level completed included high school (Table 6), Technical or Community

College (Table 7), Four Year College or University (Table 8), Master’s Degree (Table 9) and Doctoral Degree (Table 10). Each table, respectively, is presented below:

Table 6: TSI and SPOS Scores for High School Graduates

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|----|-------|----------------|
| Training Support Index | 27 | 91.68 | 25.98 |
| Survey of Perceived Organizational Support | 27 | 34.68 | 10.12 |

Table 7: TSI and SPOS Scores for Technical or Community College Graduates

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|----|-------|----------------|
| Training Support Index | 25 | 93.26 | 26.65 |
| Survey of Perceived Organizational Support | 25 | 34.69 | 10.89 |

Table 8: TSI and SPOS Scores for Four Year College or University Graduates

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|----|-------|----------------|
| Training Support Index | 28 | 93.95 | 21.02 |
| Survey of Perceived Organizational Support | 28 | 38.05 | 7.90 |

Table 9: TSI and SPOS Scores for Master's Program Graduates

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|---|------|----------------|
|--|---|------|----------------|

| | | | |
|--|----|-------|-------|
| Training Support Index | 10 | 98.30 | 24.52 |
| Survey of Perceived Organizational Support | 10 | 36.60 | 12.12 |

Table 10: TSI and SPOS Scores for Doctoral Program Graduates

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|---|--------|----------------|
| Training Support Index | 1 | 107.00 | NA |
| Survey of Perceived Organizational Support | 1 | 38.00 | NA |

Means for Tables 6, 7 and 8 were overwhelmingly consistent. For those who had completed high school, technical or community college or four year universities, means were virtually identical – offering little variance, if any. Those with graduate degrees tended to yield higher TSI and POS scores, but no statistical significance in the differences was identified. Because there was only one participant with a completed doctoral degree, there was no standard deviation calculated for Table 10.

Research Question 3

Research question 3 asked, “Given a consistent subject group, what is the degree of similarity in reliability between the OTSI and SPOS?” Reliability was calculated using Cronbach’s Alpha. The reliability coefficient for the OTSI was .909. The reliability coefficient for the SPOS was .893. The degree of variance between the reliability coefficients for the two measures was found to be insignificant.

DISCUSSION

Data indicate that the OTSI and SPOS instruments are similar, but not identical. While the two instruments share very similar reliability coefficients, the positive moderate correlation between the two reveals some key differences exists between these measures. More specifically, a moderate, positive correlation would indicate a linkage between organizational support for training activities or initiatives and overall perceived organizational support.

Although a linkage between the two appears to exist, the linkage is not categorized as strong. Because of this variation, the two constructs – perceived organizational support and

organizational support for training – do appear to be separate in their respective scopes. Further, one construct does not appear to be a direct subset of the other. However, additional research should investigate the degree to which an organization's support for training is related to overall perceptions of organizational support.

Basic demographic differences (gender and education level) do not appear to mediate differences in mean scores for either the SPOS or the OTSI. Even so, females did tend to indicate lower perceived levels of both perceived organizational support and organizational support for training. This finding merits further investigation.

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