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The Role of Perceived Supervisor Support and Organizational Identification in Job Satisfaction

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the role of perceived supervisor support and organizational identification in job satisfaction among Turkish medical secretaries. The data were collected using a questionnaire form among a convenience sample of 549 secretaries working in various private hospital settings located in Istanbul. Job satisfaction was found to be positively correlated with perceived supervisor support and organizational identification partially mediated this relationship. Thus, having a supportive relationship with the supervisor increased job satisfaction, and organizational identification was found as a significant component of this relationship.

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1. Introduction

Job satisfaction is defined as “how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs” (Spector, 1997, p. 2). It is the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs. Job satisfaction is a critical challenge in Turkish healthcare organizations, as the reports have projected the fact that there is high demand for health care employees in Turkey; yet, the supply is not sufficient to meet this demand (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2012). Thus, the retention of qualified and trained health care employees is vital in hospital settings which

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can be accomplished by increasing their job satisfaction level. Previous research on job satisfaction among health care employees usually focused on the perceptions of nurses and physicians. This study concentrated on the perceptions of job satisfaction among medical secretaries. Medical secretaries seem to belong to a female-dominant occupation group working at lower structural levels in hospital settings. They work as transcriptionists, receptionists, intermediaries between patients and staff and coordinators of patient logistics communication (Lærum, Karlsen, and Faxvaag, 2004). They may be seen as an important part of administrative support services (Hertting, Nilsson, Theorell, and Larsson 2003) since they are responsible to the administration in addition to the physician(s) they work for. Evers (1977) reported that encountering incompatible role expectations from different supervisors leads to dissatisfaction among medical secretaries. Moreover, high work demands, low control, lack of recognition and low rewards are also introduced as other unfavourable working conditions (Hertting *et al.*, 2003), which might have an impact on the satisfaction level of medical secretaries. Within this framework, the support of supervisors can be considered as a strong determinant of job satisfaction among medical secretaries. Perceived supervisor support defines the degree to which a subordinate feels that he/she is supported and respected by his/her supervisor. It also refers to the supervisor willingness to help the subordinate. Thus, we expected that perceived supervisor support would be positively related to job satisfaction among medical secretaries (Hypothesis 1). Job satisfaction has been linked to many other organizational outcomes including organizational identification (Van Knippenberg, and Van Schie, 2000). Organizational identification is defined as “the degree to which a member defines him- or herself by the same attributes that he or she believes define the organization” (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail, 1994, p. 293), or in other words, “perceived oneness” with the organization (Mael, and Ashfort, 1992). When an employee identifies him/herself with the organization, he or she develops emotional ties with the organization and this often results in greater job satisfaction. Organizational identification provides a psychological link between the employee and the organization. This link is generally developed through the relations with the supervisors since the supervisors act as organizational agents in their treatment of the employees. Besides there is evidence that supervisor support has a positive impact on the employee identification with the organization (Van Knippenberg, Van Dick, and Tavares, 2007). Accordingly, it may be expected that perceived supervisor support would contribute to organizational identification and subsequently, higher identification would lead to higher job satisfaction. Thus, our second hypothesis was that organizational identification would partially mediate the relationship between perceived supervisor support and job satisfaction (Hypothesis 2), as partial mediation is shown when the independent variable (perceived supervisor support) and the mediating variable (organizational identification) each significantly predict job satisfaction. Only a few studies had investigated the perceptions of medical secretaries regarding their job satisfaction in the related literature. Therefore this study would contribute to understanding the role of supervisor support and organizational identification in job satisfaction among medical secretaries.

2. Methods

2.1. Sample and Data Collection

Data were collected through anonymous self-report questionnaires between September 2013 and February 2014 among a convenience sample of 549 medical secretaries working in various private hospital settings located in Istanbul. The mean age was 25 years and the population was predominately female (88.5%). Their experience in the organization ranged from six months to 27 years with an average of 3.5 years. 64% were high school graduates, 37% were vocational school graduates and 16% were university graduates.

2.2. Measurements

Job satisfaction was measured by the 20-item Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (Weiss, Dawis, England, and Lofquist, 1967). Using a five-point response scale (1-5) ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”, participants were asked to specify the degree of satisfaction with their present jobs (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.94). Organizational identification level of the participants was measured using the six-item scale developed by Mael and Ashfort (1992). The measure was assessed on a seven-point scale (1-7) ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” and Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was obtained as .85 in the present study. Perceived

supervisor support was measured with items derived from Downs and Hazen's seven-point (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) communication satisfaction scale (1977). Sample items were "My supervisor trusts me" and "My supervisor listens and pays attention to me". The alpha coefficient was .93. In order to minimize the prospects for spurious relationships, we controlled for demographic variables, i.e., age (in years) and tenure (in months), known to covary with job satisfaction (Bilgiç, 1998).

2.3. Statistical Analyses

Statistical analyses were carried out using SPSS, version 19. We used descriptive analyses to characterize the sample and the study variables. In order to test the relation between perceived supervisor support and job satisfaction, we computed Pearson Correlations, and to test the mediating effect of organizational identification on this relationship, we used hierarchical regression analysis by following the procedure recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986). Accordingly, (1) the antecedent (perceived supervisor support) should be related to the consequence (job satisfaction); (2) the mediator (organizational identification) should be related to the consequence (job satisfaction); and (3) the relation between the antecedent (perceived supervisor support) and the consequence (job satisfaction) should be eliminated or the strength of this relationship should be decreased when the mediator (organizational identification) is controlled. And in order to determine the degree of significance of the mediation effect, we computed a Sobel test using the automated web-based test available on the internet (<http://quantpsy.org/sobel/sobel.htm>).

3. Results

56% of the participants reported satisfaction with their jobs ($M=3.2$, $SD = .81$). Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations and Pearson correlations of the study. As predicted in Hypotheses 1, perceived supervisor support was positively related to job satisfaction ($\beta=.721$, $p < .01$). According to the hierarchical regression results, perceived supervisor support was positively-correlated with job satisfaction after controlling for age and tenure ($\beta=.720$, $t=24.354$, $p < .01$, Adjusted- $R^2=.524$). Secondly, perceived supervisor support was found to be correlated with organizational identification in the expected direction ($\beta=.389$, $t=9.884$, $p < .01$, Adjusted- $R^2=.150$). In the third step, when we added organizational identification to the previous regression analyses, the effect of organizational identification on the job satisfaction was found to be significant ($\beta=.195$, $t=6.322$, $p < .01$), and the regression coefficient for the relationship between perceived supervisor support and job satisfaction decreased from 0.720 ($t = 24.359$, $p < .01$) to 0.644 ($t = 20.770$, $p < .01$). These results supported our second hypothesis indicating that organizational identification would partially mediate the relationship between perceived supervisor support and job satisfaction (Sobel's $Z = 5.878$; 5.858 ; 5.897 $p < .01$). Table 2 indicates the results of hierarchical regression analysis.

Table 1. Results of Descriptive Statistic and Correlations (N=549)

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Age	26.71	6.01	-				
2. Tenure	42.02	51.22	.692**	-			
3. Job Satisfaction	3.17	.81	.086*	.018	-		
4. Perceived Supervisor Support	4.18	1.55	.012	-.045	.721**	-	
5. Organizational Identification	3.48	.86	-.008	-.021	.446**	.389**	-

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 2. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis

	B	SE B	Beta	t-value	ΔR^2	Adjusted R ²
Step 1						
Constant	2.717	.191			.011	.007
Age	.019	.008	.141*	2.400		
Tenure	-.001	.001	-.080	-1.359		
Step 2						
Constant	1.301	.145			.526**	.524**
Perceived Supervisor Support	.379	.016	.720**	24.359		
Step 3						
Constant	1.116	.101			.559**	.556**
Perceived Supervisor Support	.339	.016	.644**	20.770		
Organizational Identification	.183	.025	.195**	6.322		

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to address the role of supervisor support and organizational identification in the level of job satisfaction among medical secretaries. According to our findings, the mean job satisfaction score of medical secretaries was reported to be 3.2 out of 5, similar to those of other studies performed in Turkey. For example, in a study of 134 medical secretaries, job satisfaction score was reported as 2.9 out of 5 (Çetin, Zetter, Taş, and Çaylak, 2013). In another study including 150 medical secretaries, job satisfaction score among medical secretaries was determined as 3.3 based on a five-point scale (1-5) (Top, and Güler, 2013). These data, along with our study, revealed an average job satisfaction level of 3 out of 5 among Turkish medical secretaries.

Our first hypothesis that there is a relationship between perceived supervisor support and job satisfaction received full support, which was expected since medical secretaries work at lower structural levels as subordinates in hospital settings. Thus, supervisors play a critical role in structuring the work environment and fostering job satisfaction among subordinates. Besides, they are considered as agents of the organization in directing and evaluating subordinates and providing information on organizational goals and strategies. Hence, we suspected that supervisors' favourable treatment of subordinates would positively affect subordinates' perceptions of the organization and their belongingness to the organization. Thus, the next step in our study was to investigate the effect of organizational identification as a possible partial mediating variable in the relationship between perceived supervisor support and job satisfaction. Our findings provided full support for our second hypothesis and indicated that organizational identification partially mediated the relation between perceived supervisor support and job satisfaction. Having a supportive relationship with the supervisor increased job satisfaction, and organizational identification was found to be a significant part of this relationship. In other words, subordinates who received support from their supervisors became more identified with the organization, which again resulted in higher job satisfaction.

At this point, some limitations of our research should be discussed. First of all, this study was based on cross-sectional data, from which it is difficult to make causal inferences, thus, associations between study variables should be considered carefully before drawing some conclusions. In addition, convenience nature of the sample and characteristics of the organizations involved (i.e., private hospitals) limited the generalizability of these results. Thus, future research should adopt samples from public hospitals and include various occupations, from health service employees to physicians, to make comparisons among groups or between organizations. Many researches have been conducted to determine the predictors of job satisfaction in different occupations; yet, only a few studies

have revealed information about medical secretaries (Evers, 1977; Hertting, 2003; Top, and Güler, 2013). Therefore, this study contributed to understanding the importance of support from supervisor and organizational identification in increasing job satisfaction among medical secretaries.

5. Conclusion

In order to ensure high service quality and customer satisfaction, increasing job satisfaction among medical secretaries should be considered as an important retention strategy and one of the key challenges in hospital settings. Therefore, our findings suggest that if medical secretaries are exposed to appropriate communication and perceive support from their supervisors, organizational identification will in turn be improved leading to increased job satisfaction.

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