

## Examining the Influence of Supervisor Support, Colleague Support and Work Autonomy on Job Performance: Case of Public Sector Universities in Saudi Arabia

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### Abstract:

*Job performance has remained a consistent issue across the globe due to which research scholars have been consistently striving to examine and outline factors that could help alleviate the issue effectively (Shields, Brown, Kaine, & Dolle-Samuel, 2015). The current study examined the crucial relationship between supervisor support, colleague support and work autonomy with job performance in two Saudi Arabian public universities. 195 staff members in this regard were targeted through self-administered approach. Therein, 156 questionnaires were received back and 134 were found appropriate and taken for final analysis through using PLS 2.0 M3. Results of structural equation modeling results outlined supervisor support failed to influence and correlate with job performance. Accordingly, colleague support resulted in significant relationship with job performance. Similarly, work autonomy resulted to be highly significant with job performance amongst the staff members in two Saudi Arabian universities. The study outlines that Saudi Arabia has a unique understanding towards job performance and colleague support and autonomy in work can potentially help boost job performance effectively. The study forwards recommendations and scope for further study in this regard.*

**Key words:** Job performance, Supervisor Support, Colleague Support, Work Autonomy, Saudi Arabia.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Every business at the end expects its employees to performance well at work. The core essence of their success lies in the effective performance of employees. Growing literature in the area of performance and how to make people perform have started paying attention towards the social work characteristics (Griffin, Neal & Parker, 2007; Paterson, Luthans, & Jeung, 2014). Studies are empirically outlining that the basic tent of job performance and its enhancement lies under the context of how well a individual is facilitated and supported by his/her immediate supervising authority (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2012) and peers (Karatepe, 213). Accordingly, business research has outlined that the recent trends have pushed people to demand more autonomy in their work (Sapleton & Lourenco, 2016). However, regardless of the significance of these factors in other economies, it is important to note that Saudi Arabian work culture and preferences of people are different (Awadh & Ismail, 2012).

Keeping the significant factors beforehand, the current study aimed to investigate the role and impact of supervisor support, colleague support and work autonomy towards job performance in the Saudi Arabian Market. The study attempted to empirically test how these work prospects are perceived and what impact it makes on the enrichment of employees` job performance for better work prospects in the Saudi Market.

## **SUPERVISOR SUPPORT**

Supervisor support refers to support, acknowledgement and facilitation of the employee from its immediate supervisor (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Supervisor support refers to perceptions about an individual supervisor being caring, supportive and recognizing. Supervisor plays an important role in getting employees to invest their best at work due to which, they are categorized as highly important when it comes to enriching employee behaviors and outcomes (Umair, Abdul Halim Abdul, & Md Lazim Mohd, 2016). According to (Watt & Hargis, 2010) supervisor and its effective support, recognition and acknowledgement towards employees` efforts motivate employees to work with more commitment and hence, enhance job performance.

Similarly, study by (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006) has also outlined supervisor support correlated significantly with employees` job performance. The study outlined that supervisors are experienced individuals with the responsibility to guide, mentor, and facilitate their subordinates and therefore, their support makes a very higher impact on their outcomes. At work, employees look up to their supervisors particularly when they are experiencing any problems and supervisor support in such a situation plays a highly essential role. Study like Ahmed, Abdul Majid, Mohd Zin ML, Phulpoto, Umran (2015) outlined that supervisor instructions and guidance is important at the workplace. Employees on a major note view supervisor support as a positive feature (Khalid, Pahi & Ahmed, 2016; Pahi, Hamid, Ahmed, & Umrani, 2015), and to investigate it how workers view them in the Saudi Arabian market, similar to other regions, the current study formulated the following hypothesis:

*H1: There will be a positive relationship between supervisor support and job performance*

## **COLLEAGUE SUPPORT**

Colleague support denotes to support, help, recognition and acknowledgement an employee receives from his/her coworkers (Van Dierendonck et al., 1998). Similar to supervisors (Umair, Abdul Halim Abdul, & Md Lazim Mohd, 2016), colleague support also plays an important role in furthering positive employee behaviors. Study by Stacy and Murray (2000) tested and found positive link between colleague support and job performance. The study found that colleague support helps in establishing an encouraging work environment and facilitate employees to work in harmony with better outcomes.

According to (Karatepe, 2013) colleagues at work act as a critical resource for better work outcomes including performance. When employees face any difficulty or challenge at work, their first hand choice for resolution are colleagues. It is therefore important for businesses to develop such a work culture where colleagues work in harmony and support to each other (Karatepe, 2013; Pahi, Shah, Ahmed, & Umrani, 2016). Study by (AbuAlRub, 2004) outlined that job performance can be significantly enhanced through receiving prompt help and support from colleagues. The study also outlined that there is a strong connection between the colleague support and overall satisfaction of employees towards the work. Based on this evidence, the current study aimed that, colleague support will also pose positive relationship in Saudi Arabia. Hence examined the following hypothesis:

*H2: There will be a positive relationship between colleague support and job performance.*

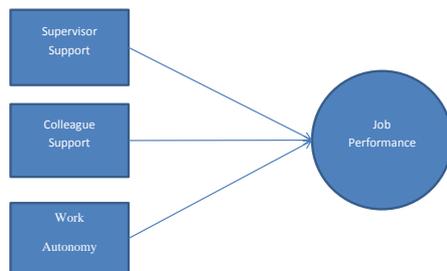
## **WORK AUTONOMY**

Refers to the extent to which an employee has discretion in his/her work (Younts, Wesley, Charles, & Muller, 2001). Work autonomy has attracted scholars from different schools of

thoughts, emphasizing upon the need and importance of work autonomy in the global environment. According to (Berardi, 2009) one of the main expectation of every other employees these days is autonomy at the workplace. Therein, employees expect to be allowed to work with a certain amount of freedom; authority to make decisions pertaining to their work and authority to make decisions about their job.

Empirically, studies (Bakker, Tims & Derks, 2012; Weston, 2009) have outlined a significant impact of work autonomy on numerous employee outcomes. For instance, study by Morgeson et al., (2005) found that employees with higher work autonomy resulted in better job performance. The study also outlined that employees having lower work autonomy expressed desire to have autonomy also. Similarly, Shonin et al., (2014) also concluded positive association between the extent of individual work autonomy and their job performance. Since there had been no studies on this relationship in Saudi Arabia, it was expected that providing autonomy to employees in terms of decisions regarding their work, scheduling flexibility and discretion would enable them to perform better hence, the following hypothesis was tested:

*H3: There will be a positive relationship between work autonomy and job performance.*



**Figure 1 Conceptual Framework**

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Instrumentation**

4 item scale by Saks (2006) was deployed to assess supervisor support. Similarly, 4 item scale by Sake (2006) was used to assess colleague support. Accordingly, 9 item scale by Parket et al., (2006) was used to test work autonomy. Notably, job performance by examined through 8 item scale by Liden, Wayne, and Sparrowe (2000).

### **Sampling**

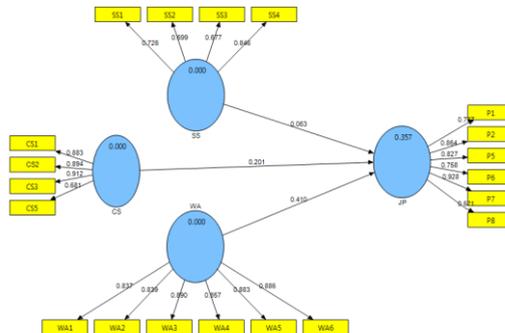
Non-teaching staff members were sample from two major public sector universities in Saudi Arabia. Through using simple random sampling technique, questionnaires were distributed 195 staff members during the period of August, 2016. The respondents were given a period of four weeks to fill and return. Through using self-administered technique, 156 questionnaires were received back from which, 22 were found to be inappropriate for final analysis and hence were discarded. Conclusively, 134 questionnaires were taken for further for final analysis. This resulted in the response rate of 68 percent.

### **Analysis**

Smart PLS 2.0 M3 was employed to examine the hypothesized relationships (Ringle et al., 2005). PLS has been highly recommended for testing hypothesized relationships and is widely used in research studies globally (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). One of the notable aspect of PLS is that it helps to outline the significance of path coefficients amongst the predictor and outcome variables (Chin, 2000). The structural equation modeling process of PLS runs through two stages which are called as measurement model and structural model.

## Measurement Model

In the first stage, the measurement model is examined to assess the convergent validity and discriminant validity. For this reason, composite reliability and Ave scores are examined. As per Chin (1998), the loadings of each of the individual item should be higher than 0.5 and therefore, items loading lower than this threshold are required to be deleted. As a result, three items from work autonomy and 2 items from job performance were respectively deleted. Finally, figure 2 and table 1 results indicate that, majority of the items have attained significant loadings going higher than 0.5. This is in parallel to the explanations and recommendations of Hair et al., (2011).



**Table 1 Individual Item Loadings, AVE and CR**

Latent variables	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR	R-square
Supervisor Support (IV)	SS1	0.726	0.547416	0.827603	
	SS2	0.699			
	SS3	0.677			
	SS4	0.846			
Colleague Support (IV)	CS1	0.883	0.718499	0.909783	
	CS2	0.894			
	CS3	0.912			
	CS4	0.881			
	CS5	0.681			
Work Autonomy (IV)	WA1	0.837	0.748946	0.947056	
	WA2	0.839			
	WA3	0.890			
	WA4	0.857			
	WA5	0.883			
	WA6	0.886			
Job Performance (DV)	JP1	0.787	0.626337	0.907348	0.357297

JP2	0.864
JP5	0.827
JP6	0.758
JP7	0.928
JP8	0.521

### Discriminant Validity

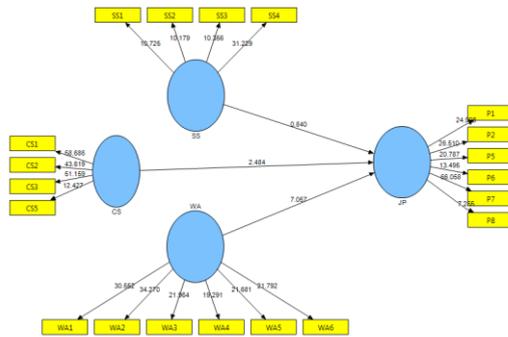
Through bearing suggested threshold of Fornell and Larcker (1981) in mind, the next assessment in the measurement model concerns with discriminant validity. Therein, the square root values of AVE should be greater than the compared correlations. Results in this regard on table 2 outlines that all the latent constructs in the model have adequate discriminant validity.

**Table 2 Discriminant Validity**

Latent Variable	1	2	3	4
<b>Correlations</b>				
CS	<b>0.847643</b>			
JP	0.499003	<b>0.791415</b>		
WA	0.628564	0.566814	<b>0.865417</b>	
SS	0.638336	0.388952	0.481244	<b>0.739876</b>

### Structural Model

The assessment of structural model is performed through bootstrapping procedures to outline the strength of relationship amongst the predictor and outcome variables. The results suggest that supervisor support has marked an insignificant impact on the employees` job performance ( $\beta = 0.0634$ ,  $t = 0.836$ ) hence, not supporting hypothesis 1. Furthermore, the path modeling results have indicated a positive significant relationship between colleague support and job performance ( $\beta = 0.200$ ,  $t = 2.858$ ) thus supporting hypothesis 2. Similarly, work autonomy has also resulted in significantly positive relationship with job performance amongst the staff members in the Saudi Arabian universities ( $\beta = 0.410$ ,  $t = 6.200$ ), thus supporting hypothesis 3. Figure 3 and table 3 outlines further details in this regard.



**Figure 3 Structural Model**

**Table 3 Hypothesis and Statistical Findings**

Relationship	Beta value	Standard Error	T Statistics
SS -> JP	0.06347	0.075903	0.836197
CS -> JP	0.200705	0.074726	2.685872
WA -> JP	0.410113	0.066141	6.200597

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to examine the role and impact of supervisor support, colleague support and work autonomy with job performance of employees in the Public universities in Saudi Arabia. The study has found a positive link between colleague support and job performance. at the first instance, the study has outlined an insignificant relationship between supervisor support and job performance. This findings is contrary to conventional empirical findings (Watt & Hargis, 2010).

There may be different plausible reasons behind this such as region, cultural preferences, behavioral style of people in Saudi Arabia and so on. This insignificant finding may be compensated with the explanations of Deelstra et al., (2003) outlining that receiving instrumental support from supervisor is at times not welcomed and therefore makes no significant positive influence on employee outcomes.

The finding has outlined that support, recognition, help and positive association with colleagues at work can help employees to perform well at work. In other words, colleague support can boost employees through facilitating and guiding them in their work hence making them capable of working with higher performance. Similar to studies conducted in other demographics (AbuAlRub, 2004; Stacy & Murray, 2000), the study has also empirically forwarded support for the importance of colleague support in boosting job performance in economies like Saudi Arabia.

Accordingly, work autonomy has reported to be also significantly related with employees job performance in Saudi Arabia. This result suggests that employees were more inclined to express high performance in their work when they experienced high job performance. This finding in comparison with colleague support results has termed to be more significantly related with job performance hence, outlining a very important aspect concerning to employee behaviors and outcomes in Saudi Arabia. Similar to studies conducted on this relationship in other demographic settings (Shonin et al., 2014; Morgeson et al., 2005), the study has also outlined that employees in Saudi Arabia in the academia also value autonomy in their work and tend to work with more ease, convenience and higher performance potential accordingly.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study forwards several recommendations. At first, the study forwards strong recommendation in relation to colleague support. On the grounds of the finding, the study suggests that authorities need to work on developing strong peer support work environment. Universities need to emphasize on the fact that, colleague support is vital and employees should be encouraged to help facilitate each other to make a better

working influence on each other. This in the long run would help to not only build a high performing work culture but will also elp establish a strong bond amongst the employees as per the recommendations of Thompson and Prottas (2006).

Based on the findings, the current study forwards that employers and top management authorities of the public universities need to develop healthy work environment, providing autonomy to their employees in this work in order to boost performance. The study recommends authorities to realize the cultural significance of autonomy and its need amongst the people to perform well at work.

## **SCOPE FOR FURTHER STUDY**

The study targeted only two public universities in Saudi Arabia and therefore, future studies may target and sample more universities for better generalizable results. Since supervisor support resulted in insignificant relationship with job performance, further study is therefore required to help enhance and understand this relationship. Accordingly, further study is required to examine how supervisor support, colleague support and work autonomy influences job performance in other work sectors.

## **CONCLUSION**

The current study aimed to investigate supervisor support, colleague support and work autonomy in relationship with job performance in Saudi Arabia. The study has responsively achieved its objectives and forwarded promising prospects concerning to boosting job performance through colleague support and work autonomy. The findings have concluded that recognition, facilitation and appreciation by coworkers can help boost job performance. Similarly, the findings have concluded

that providing autonomy can help employees in Saudi Arabia to work to perform well at work.

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