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Social support and Job stress: Moderation role of Locus of control

Abstract

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The purpose of this study is to investigate theoretically how locus of control can moderate the relationship between social support and job stress so as to increase the effect of social support to reduce stress in the workplaces. By utilizing the proposed model the researchers explore how supervisors can increase locus of control among their employees in order to increase the effect of social support to decrease stress in the organizations. This study may help managers and human resource development practitioners to reduce job stress by better understanding the moderating role of locus of control in the relationship between social support and job stress based on the proposed model.

Introduction and problem statement

Job stress as a known phenomenon is increasing in all countries, organizations, and professions. Thus, it leads to physical and psychological risks for both individual and organization; physical results are demonstrated in heart disease, headache ,migraines, back and muscle pain and psychological results due to job stress effect on employee's job satisfaction, organizational commitment and employee's turnover (C. F. Chen & Kao, 2011).

Increased Social support and locus of control are effective ways to help the employees to cope with stress through their work environment. The sources of social support may be from friends, agencies, families, coworkers and supervisors (Stamper & Johlke, 2003).Additionally, social support has two types: tangible and intangible or on the other hand, emotional and instrumental support (Perrin, Yragui, Hanson, & Glass, 2010). Furthermore, the job stress can be decreased when employees with high external locus of control perceived a degree of organizational support such as high salary and medical services (Crothers, et al., 2010). Therefore, locus of control in high degree and perceived social support simultaneously can eliminate stress in the workplaces.

As mentioned above job stress is an imbalance between demands and resources(control, social support)and Coping with stressful situations is a problem-solving way (Sun & Chiou, 2011).Thus, if Social support increased from supervisor or organization and control acts as a moderation between social support and job stress ,the negative outcomes of job stress will be vanished easily. So, providing sufficient emotional support and resources are some solutions to decrease job stress in order to achieve the objectives of an organization. Finally, previous studies have not much paid to the role of locus of control as moderation between social support and job stress. So, this study is going to investigate how locus of control can moderate the relationship between social support and job stress.

Concepts of social support, locus of control and job stress

Social support refers to the efforts and endeavors that provide emotional and psychological ability for another (Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007). The support may be emotional or instrumental depends on whether it can satisfy employee's needs or not (Ben-Ari, 2004). Thus, it understood that social support has tangible and intangible resources. Tangible resources can be

viewed as instrumental support like financial assistance that provided by organizations while intangible support refers to emotions such as feelings of belonging or self-worth that supervisors or managers offer to their employees.

Also, employees can be supported socially by their supervisor or organization ,thus Supervisor support is viewed as the degree to which the employees feel that they are cared and respected by their supervisor, and their supervisor values to their contributions and well- being (R. Eisenberger, F. Stinglhamber, C. Vandenberghe, I. Sucharski, & L. Rhoades, 2002). In addition, supervisor support described as the employees' perceptions that their supervisor supports them by caring and listening to their problems that related to their life and work(Stinglhamber, Cremer, & Mercken, 2006). Also, organizational support refers to perception that the employees feel safe and secure by a perception that their organization is behind and supports them (Polat, 2010). Another definition of organizational support is that it refers to the extent that an organization values to its employees' contributions and well-being (Eisenberg, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986). Lastly, the organization support may be seen in encouraging employees to be innovative and creative so as to provide required sources, facilities and useful policy for their organization (Zampetakis, Beldekos, & Moustakis, 2009).

Furthermore, Locus of control refers to the extent of belief that individuals believe that the outcomes have internal or external sources; thus, individuals with internal perception believe that outcomes are in their control and authority; therefore, they boost their self-confidence to gain information in order to achieve their own objectives and achievements whereas individuals with external control contribute the outcomes to luck, chance, fate, supervisor and organization (Salazar, Pfaffenberg, & Salazar, 2006).Thus, individual with internal locus of control have more ability to overcome on their work related problems.

Finally, Job stress can be defined as the physical and emotional responses that happens when the employee's capabilities and resources cannot satisfy their job demands and requirements (Malik, 2011). Therefore, it is understood that job stress is a serious issue that some solutions should be applied to diminish it at workplaces

because it leads to negative outcomes for both individual and organization.

The proposed Model

In the proposed model, social support from supervisor or organization can reduce job stress among employees significantly if locus of control acts as moderation between social support and job stress. Although, previous studies have examined the role of social support to minimize work stress, this proposed model emphasizes on the role of locus of control as moderation to increase the effect of social support to reduce job stress among employee. Daniels & Guppy(1994) found that when the individuals perceive that they have autonomy to make decision over the situations, they will not perceive the situations as threatening or stressful, on the other hand having high locus of control acts as a buffer to stressful situations. In fact, the moderation of locus of control plays an important role to decrease job stress because individuals with high locus of control display a greater feeling to control the work stress. If they receive a high level of social support, the job stress will be reduced in a high level.

Additionally, the proposed model is based on job demands-control model by Karasek Jr (1979) that has been known as an appropriate model to describe occupational stress .The job demands-control model consists of two main dimensions: demands and control .The demands refer to the amount of work, required skills and intensity that an employee receives in the workplace. Also, control viewed as a general belief that to be able to make decision about different aspects o f work such as time, method, and location (Brough & Williams, 2007).

Furthermore, the job demands-control model developed to have the third dimension (social support) which plays as a moderating between job demands and job control. Thus, it is known as job demands-control-support model (Johnson & Hall, 1988). So, many authors explained (JDCS) model that consists of two main parts: demands (work overload ,conflicts) and recourses (control and social support) that helps employees to achieve well-being by making an equilibrium between demands and recourses (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Linking social support to job stress

Previous studies have reported that social support acts as a buffer to decrease stress in the

workplaces (Wong & Cheuk, 2005);similarly, Daniels & Guppy (1994) found that high social support minimizes the job stress and increases well-being. The social support may be from supervisor or organization:

Supervisor support is described as creating an emotional support by supervisor that it means the state that the employees respected and cared by their supervisor(R Eisenberger, et al., 2002). Also, Organizational support refers to the employee's commitment to their organization when they feel that their organization provides enough training and resources for their well-being (Eisenberg, et al., 1986). So, based on the past studies, we hypothesize in our proposed model that increased social support from supervisor or organization influences on the perception to decrease job stress.

Linking locus of control to job stress

Locus of control has been known as an element to reduce job stress among employees. previous researches reported individual who have high level of locus of control are more powerful to overcome on stress and its negative consequences, for example; Owen (2006) noted that individual with high level of locus of control

especially internal locus of control tend to show more job satisfaction and less stress at their work. Similarly, (J. C. Chen & Silverthorne, 2008) found that people with high level of internal locus of control perform better job performance and they rarely experience occupational stress in their work place. Therefore, increasing locus of control can decrease occupational stress easily because the individuals with high locus of control can determine the outcomes of actions by their own decision-making.

The role of locus of control as moderation

According to the proposed model, locus of control plays as moderation, it seems individuals with higher locus of control have an effective influence on social support to minimize job stress. Sometimes the employees receive social support to reduce their job stress but they do not have adequate locus of control; consequently, the role of social support on decreasing work stress will be negligible. So, supervisors and organizations are responsible for increasing locus of control for their employees in order to increase the effect of social support to minimize job stress.
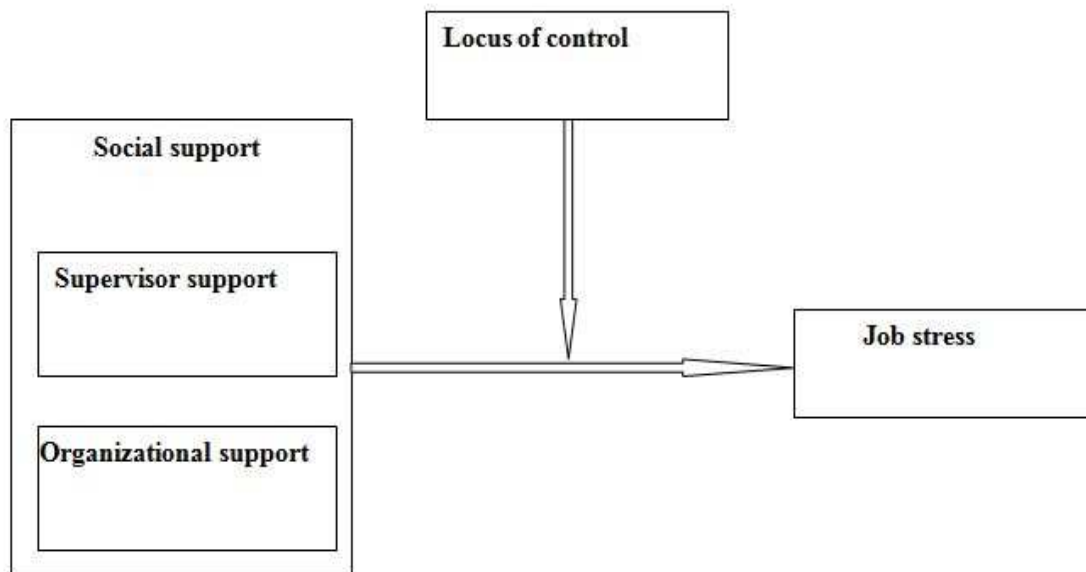

Figure1: The proposed model

Consequences of social support, locus of control on job stress

Social support: Social support can eliminate the effects of stressful experiences (Ko & Lewis, 2011). According to Boles & Babin (1996), supervisory and organizational support can decrease work stress in order to provide more job satisfaction for employees. Supervisor's support helps the employees to enhance their own individual's career growth and feel more responsible for what they should do. In fact, receiving high social support leads to low stress for employees in their organizations(Waters, 1999). Also, the employees will be rewarded for high performance and delegate workload by their supervisor and organizational support (Thurasamy, Lo, Amri, & Noor, 2011).

Additionally, employees are willing to stay in their organization if their supervisors and organizations respect, communicate and value to their contributions and well-being (R. Eisenberger, F. Stinglhamber, C. Vandenberghe, I. L. Sucharski, & L. Rhoades, 2002). Therefore, the employees feel emotionally connected to remain in their organization. Also, Aguinis & Kraiger (2009) reported that the development of training transfer and skill maintenance required support from organization, supervisor, and coworkers (Chiaburu, 2010). Furthermore, Cohen & Wills (1985) noted that social support is a buffer to reduce stress. Thus, people are protected by social support to not encounter to the negative effects of stressful events. So, social support has a significant relationship to the organizational commitment and employee's job satisfaction (Dawley, Andrews, & Bucklew, 2008).

How Supervisors can provide facilities to support the employees?

As mentioned above, supervisors are responsible for providing recourses and facilities to promote the employees' conditions so as to increase their performance in their organizations.
The facilities that supervisors can submit to their employees as follow:
(1) Promotions for employees
(2) Opportunities for the employees to display their competencies and abilities
(3) Effective skills and strategies to achieve work and career objectives;

(4) Situations to avoid of consequence errors that threaten their career; and
(5)Finally, conditions that reveal the employee's skills to manager's attention (Thurasamy, et al., 2011).

The outcomes that will be appeared by social support are:

- Increased job satisfaction
- Increased organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB)
- Improved employee perceptions of organizational support
- Improved relationships with employees
- Improved performance
- Reduced job tension and stress and
- Reduced work conflicts

Locus of control: As mentioned above, control is an effective factor to reduce job stress especially if employees have a high ability and autonomy to overcome on conflicts while they are receiving high social support. So, the effect of social support will increase significantly to reduce job stress (proposed model). The previous studies have explored that individuals who characterizes with high locus of control, experience lower job stress where as they display more job satisfaction and high job performance in stressful working environments (J. C. Chen & Silverthorne, 2008).
In addition, People with internal locus of control are more responsible for what happens, outcomes, their failures and successes which depend on their own efforts. While people with external locus of control believe that their successes and failures determined by external sources like fate, chance, supervisor and organization support (Hsu, 2011). As Daniels & Guppy (1994) reported that internals are stronger to overcome and make decision in stressful situations than externals.

Ways to enhance more locus of control

1-Having a good attitude in your life by communicating with positive people.
2-Always consider I can, avoid I cannot so as to boost your self-confidence.
3- Setting achievable and realistic goals and objectives.
4- Involving in flow experiences to improve your control over different subjects.

5- Increase your skills in your job by participating in workshops hold by your organization.

Conclusion

Stressful situations lead to negative outcomes such as depression, headache, low performance, job dissatisfaction and low commitment on both individuals and organizations. Based on the proposed model, locus of control moderates the relationship between social support and job stress. It means that organizations will be more successful to decrease job stress when they have employees with high level of locus of control. According to the proposed model job stress can be controlled by increasing locus of control like communicating with positive people, boosting self confidence, locating in flow experiences and participating in workshops to enhance more skills. Also, by providing promotions, opportunities, effective strategies, situations to avoid career's problems, conditions to show employee's skills and abilities, the social support will be increased. So, the supervisors should try to increase locus of control in order to increase the effect of social support on reducing job stress in the work places.

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