

Katarzyna Wojtkowska

Faculty of Psychology, University of Warsaw¹

Nina Andersz

Faculty of Psychology, University of Warsaw²

Joanna Czarnota-Bojarska

Faculty of Psychology, University of Warsaw³

Adapting The Survey Of Perceived Organizational Support

Abstract

The subject of the present study was the Polish adaptation of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support. The adapted scale demonstrates good psychometric properties, indicating high internal consistency. Construct validity was assessed using measures of job and life satisfaction, and a Work-Family Fit Questionnaire. The results have shown that the adapted scale is strongly positively correlated with felt satisfaction with work, and also demonstrates a positive, although weaker correlation with satisfaction with life. Correlations with the Work-Family Fit demonstrate that perceived organizational support is important for the relationship between professional and family roles when work is the source of influence. The results of the study indicate that the adapted SPOS can be successfully used in Poland.

Keywords

adaptation, perceived organizational support, work-family balance, job satisfaction, life satisfaction

Streszczenie

W prezentowanym badaniu przeprowadzono adaptację do warunków polskich skali Spostrzeganego Wsparcia Organizacyjnego. Uzyskała ona zadawalające wskaźniki psychometryczne, pokazujące wysoką jednorodność. Do zweryfikowania trafności teoretycznej użyto miar satysfakcji z pracy, satysfakcji z życia oraz kwestionariusza dopasowania praca-rodzina. Przebadano 293 pracowników biurowych. Wyniki wskazują, że adaptowana skala wiąże się silnie pozytywnie z odczuwaną satysfakcją

¹ Katarzyna Wojtkowska, Faculty of Psychology, University of Warsaw, ul. Stawki 5/7, Warsaw; katarzyna.wojtkowska@psych.uw.edu.pl

² Nina Andersz, Faculty of Psychology, University of Warsaw, ul. Stawki 5/7, Warsaw; nina.andersz@psych.uw.edu.pl

³ dr hab. Joanna Czarnota-Bojarska, Faculty of Psychology, University of Warsaw, ul. Stawki 5/7, Warsaw; joanna@psych.uw.edu.pl

z pracy oraz także pozytywnie, choć w słabiej, z satysfakcją z życia. Związki z dopasowaniem pracarodzina pokazują, że odczuwane wsparcie organizacyjne jest istotne dla kształtowania relacji między rolą zawodową i rodzinną wtedy, gdy źródłem wpływu jest funkcjonowanie w pracy. Uzyskane rezultaty przekonują, że zaadaptowane narzędzie może być swobodnie używane w Polsce.

Słowa kluczowe

adaptacja, postrzegane wsparcie organizacyjne, równowaga praca-dom, satysfakcja z pracy, satysfakcja z życia

Introduction

Perceived organizational support (POS) is defined as the extent of employees' belief that an organization cares about them and their values, and protects them by offering help and support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986). The organizational support theory (OST) claims that operating within any organization is a social exchange, which compels employees to help the organization meet its goals and to increase their work effort in return for rewards. Organizational support, as seen by employees, is a global phenomenon, and is not limited to any specific area of activity within an organization. An employee who feels supported believes that the organization is treating him with respect, recognizing his individual needs and limitations, appreciating the effort he puts into his work and the life of the organization, while willing to forgive mistakes or decreased productivity caused by, for example, sickness. The organizational support theory was developed on the basis of Blau's social exchange theory (1964) and empirical findings confirming a positive correlation between employees' work effort and their belief in the certainty and fairness of rewards.

After the publication of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support by Eisenberger et al. (1986), numerous studies worldwide have demonstrated the significance of the construct and its relationship with both work-related and extraneous factors (Kurtessis, Eisenberger, Ford, Buffardi, Stewart & Adis, 2015).

Occupational research has shown that employees who receive organizational support perform better, feel more satisfied with their jobs (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli & Lynch, 1997), are more committed and attached to their job (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011), and are at a lower risk of burnout (Kang, Twigg & Hertzman, 2010).

POS is also associated with employees' emotions and well-being. There have been reports of significant correlations between POS and general health (Bradley & Cartwright, 2002), the number of somatic symptom complaints (Dupre & Day, 2007), anger levels (O'Neill, Vandenberg, Dejoy & Wilson, 2009), stress and levels of self-esteem (George, Reed, Ballard, Colin & Fielding, 1993). Furthermore, POS serves as emotional buffer for negative emotions arising from role conflict (Jawahar, Stone & Kisamore, 2007).

POS has also been shown to be related to factors outside of work, such as employees' psychological well-being (Aggarwell-Gupta, Vohra & Bhatnager, 2010), life satisfaction (Dixon & Sagas, 2007), and finding balance between work and family roles (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Despite many years of prominence in international literature on organization and work, OST had not come to the attention of researchers in Poland. This is why we decided to adapt the instrument (*Survey of Perceived Organizational Support* – SPOS). To assess the validity of the construct, we decided to test the correlation (confirmed in international studies) between POS and satisfaction with work and life, and achieving balance between familial and professional roles. The work-family interference denotes the effects of work on an employee's private life. Its dynamics depend both on the person involved in professional activity and the work environment in general: work conditions and hours, interpersonal relations with colleagues at all levels of the organization and subjective job satisfaction (Frone, Yardley, Markel, 1997). As for the family-work interference, it works in the opposite direction: the term describes the effects of family relations on an employee's professional life. Role spillover may be negative (conflict) or positive (facilitation), depending on the resources at the employee's disposal, the way he/she uses them in various domains of activity, and the external requirements at work and in their private life (Lachowska, 2008; Grzywacz, Bass, 2003). Research has shown (Grzywacz, Butler, 2005) that a positive work-family and family-work facilitation (when there is an absence of unwanted role conflict) is more likely to occur when the employee has at his disposal resources such as professional experience, so-called "hard" and interpersonal skills, and opportunities created by his place of employment and family situation.

One of the key factors mentioned in the context of work-private life interference is the organizational culture at the workplace (Major, Klein, Ehrhart, 2002). Both the demands placed on employees and the organization-dependent factors that stimulate employees' commitment to work are considered significant. POS, defined as the assessment of company policy towards its employees, determines the workforce's commitment to the tasks performed and shapes their work-related emotions (Rhoades, Eisenberger, 2002).

Since the direction of influence is established in the conflict and interference theory, correlations were expected between the magnitude of POS and the measures of work-family facilitation and conflict, as they refer to the effects of the work situation on family life (Lachowska, 2012). The definition of POS includes the assessment of employee-organization relations determined by the rules implemented at the company and the characteristics of employees. Private life experiences are not assumed to affect those relations (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, Sowa, 1986). Therefore, the presence of a relationship between POS and conflict or facilitation from family to professional life is unlikely.

The main purpose of the study was to prepare the Polish adaptation of SPOS. Growing interest in work and organizational psychology provided the motivation for introducing this well-known and widely used instrument in Poland.

Correlations were also expected with measures of satisfaction and the successful balancing of professional and family roles. Consequently, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

1. Perceived organizational support will be positively correlated with job satisfaction and life satisfaction; the former relationship will be stronger than the latter.
2. Perceived organizational support will be positively correlated with the magnitude of work-family facilitation and negatively correlated with the severity of work-family conflict; there will be no relationships with the magnitude of family-to-work conflict or facilitation.

Materials and Methods

Perceived Organizational Support. POS was measured using the Polish translation of SPOS (Eisenberger et al., 1986), which consists of 33 items. Respondents indicated the extent to which they agreed with each item on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. The items were first translated into Polish by a researcher based at the Faculty of Psychology, and then back-translated by an English translator. The back-translated version closely matched the original. The SPOS was translated into Polish with the grammatical form of items preserved, so that negatives in the original version were retained in the translation, with responses to those items subsequently recoded. The structure of the response scale and the sequence of items was also preserved.

Job Satisfaction. Job satisfaction was measured using the scale of six items that refer to the six components of satisfaction (Czarnota-Bojarska, 2010). These components are: amount of earnings, possibility of advancement, self-reliance at work, learning opportunities, relations with superiors and sense of employment stability (cf. Locke, 1976; Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969). Participants responded on a 7-point Likert scale, from 1 (*I am very dissatisfied*) to 7 (*I am very satisfied*). The overall result is calculated by adding up the points and dividing the sum by the number of items in the questionnaire. The higher the overall score, the higher the level of job satisfaction. The internal reliability of the questionnaire measured by Cronbach’s alpha coefficients is 0.82.

Life Satisfaction. Life satisfaction was measured using the Satisfaction with? Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985) adapted into Polish by Jankowski (2012). Rather than measuring specific satisfaction domains, the instrument assesses life satisfaction as a cognitive-judgmental process. The scale consists of five items with answers

given on a seven-point Likert scale, from 1 (*I definitely agree*) to 7 (*I definitely disagree*). The overall result is calculated by adding up the points and dividing the sum by the number of items in the questionnaire. The internal reliability of the questionnaire measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficients is 0.89.

Work-Family Balance. The Work-Family Fit Questionnaire (Grzywacz, Bass, 2003) is an instrument based on a two-dimensional model of interference between professional and family life. The model accounts for the type of influence (conflict or facilitation) and its direction (work affecting family or family affecting work). This yields the four scales of the questionnaire: 1) work-family conflict; 2) work-family facilitation; 3) family-work conflict; 4) family-work facilitation. The model has been validated empirically in Poland (Lachowska, 2005; Lachowska, 2008). The internal reliability of the questionnaire measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficients is 0.69. The reliability values for individual scales in the original are as follows: 1) work-family conflict: 0.82; 2) work-family facilitation: 0.73; 3) family-work conflict: 0.80; 4) family-work facilitation: 0.70 (Grzywacz & Bass, 2003). The reliability values for the Polish version are: 1) work-family conflict: 0.81; 2) work-family facilitation: 0.78; 3) family-work conflict: 0.74; 4) family-work facilitation: 0.72 (Lachowska, 2012). Participants responded on a 5-point scale, from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*all the time, almost always*). The overall result is calculated by adding up the points and dividing the sum by the number of items in each scales of 4.

Procedure

The study group included 293 office workers aged between 17 and 68 years ($M = 39$ years, standard deviation [SD] = 10.88), with average work experience of 16 years and 8 months ($SD = 11.22$), and a mean time working for their current employer of 9 years and 11 months ($SD = 8.17$). All the subjects were recruited in 6 companies. Instructions explained the purpose of the study and the use of its results and informed potential participants that they could obtain the results by emailing the researcher. Participants completed sets of measures on an individual basis. In order to ensure anonymity, subjects placed their completed measures in envelopes and handed them to a co-worker affiliated to the researcher.

Results

Psychometric properties of SPOS. The first step was the Principal Components Analysis. It showed that the first factor accounted for 39.13% of the total variance, and the five remaining identified factors accounted for between 6.98% and 2.98% of the total variance. This indicates a very steep scree plot. The analysis of factor loadings for individual items showed

that only in five cases was the loading on the first factor lower than on any of the remaining factors. The findings validate the categorization of SPOS as a one-factor scale.

The following items had the highest factor loadings: “The organization cares about my general satisfaction at work”, “The organization really cares about my well-being”, “Even if I did the best job possible, the organization would fail to notice”(R), “The organization is willing to extend itself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability”.

The scale’s internal consistency was also assessed. Cronbach’s alpha for the whole scale was 0.952, indicating strong internal consistency. The correlations between individual items and the remainder of the scale ranged between 0.288 and 0.805; any single item could be removed without altering the total variance. In the original version, Cronbach’s alpha was 0.97 for the whole scale, with correlations between items ranging from 0.42 to 0.83 (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986).

Validity

One of the intended methods for verifying the validity of the adapted scale was to test its correlations with job satisfaction. The correlation with the overall satisfaction index was $r = 0.732$ ($p < .000$). The relations with individual components of satisfaction were also calculated. Due to the nature of the measurement, Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient (*rho*) was used. The highest values were obtained for the correlation between POS and satisfaction with possibilities of advancement and opportunities for learning and gaining new skills. All the values are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlation between job satisfaction and perceived organizational support

Job satisfaction component:	Perceived organizational support
Amount of earnings	.572***
Possibility of promotion	.651***
Self-reliance at work / task performance	.454***
Opportunities for learning / gaining new skills	.629***
Relationships with superiors	.481***
Employment assurance / sense of employment stability	.356***

Probability note.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

The relationship between POS and life satisfaction was $r = 0.461$ ($p < .000$), i.e. weaker than the correlation with overall job satisfaction and with most of the components of job satisfaction that were assessed, thus confirming our expectations.

Relationships were also predicted between the magnitude of work-family conflict and facilitation, with no hypothesized correlation between the magnitude of family-to-work conflict or facilitation. These hypotheses were fully confirmed, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlation between work-family balance and perceived organizational support

Interference direction	Type of interference	Perceived organizational support
Work – family	Conflict	-.336**
	Facilitation	.261**
Family – work	Conflict	-.012
	Facilitation	.088

Probability note.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. (one tailed).

POS is important for the relationship between professional and family roles when work relations are the source of influence. The correlations are similarly significant for both conflict- and facilitation-type relations, although, obviously, the correlation is positive for facilitation and negative for conflict. When the source of relationship is family functioning, perceived organizational support is no longer significant either for conflict or for the facilitation of roles between the two domains.

Discussion

The present study demonstrated that the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support can be used for research purposes in Poland. The instrument has good psychometric properties and shows the expected relationships with other measures.

Of note are the relationships between POS and relations between professional and family roles. In the present study, conflict and facilitation between those roles were assessed, and the source of interference (work or family life) was determined. The results confirmed the prediction that POS is significant when the source of conflict or facilitation between roles is work, and non-significant when the influence stems from a person's private life. This is consistent with many previous reports (Casper, Martin, Buffardi & Edwins, 2002; Dixon & Sagas, 2007; Foley, Hang-Yue & Lui, 2005; McNall, Masuda, Shanock, Nicklin, 2011; Shaffer, Harrison, Gilley & Luk, 2001).

The implications are important both for research associated with the work-family and family-work balance, and for the functioning of organizations. Firstly, the identification of the direction of influence between the roles is justified and reflected in the findings. Despite the relationships between the subjective severity of work-family and family-work conflict and the extent of work-family and family-work facilitation, perceived organization-

al support is only significantly correlated with work-family conflict and facilitation. Secondly, our findings indicate specific, although limited, means by which organizations can help their employees reduce conflicts and enhance the facilitation of their work and family roles. Efforts to boost perceived organizational support help achieve the work-family balance, but make very little difference to perceived family-work conflict or facilitation.

With the covariance of POS and the work-family and family-work conflict and facilitation observed in the study, it seems reasonable to focus attention on employee-related factors that may affect the occurrence of conflict and facilitation. There have been studies on the effects of personality within the “Big Five” model on the magnitude of interference between work and private life (Allen, Johnson, Saboe, Cho, Dumani, Evans, 2012; Blanch, Aluja, 2009; Boyar, Mosley, 2007; Michel, Clark, Jaramillo, 2011; Wayne, Musisca, Fleeson, 2004). Perhaps with more data on the differences between individuals with significant work-family spillover and those for whom family-work spillover is dominant, we will be able to explain in more detail the relationships between POS and the effects of work on people’s private life.

POS is also positively correlated with job satisfaction, as confirmed by other empirical findings in this area (Dixon & Sagas, 2007; Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli & Lynch, 1997). Among the components of satisfaction which were tested the highest correlation coefficients were obtained for satisfaction with the possibility of promotion and opportunities for learning and development. This shows the importance of POS, especially for those aspects that enhance ties with the organization and encourage the building of a career within its structure. One valid conclusion is that support is most effective when the organization provides employees with opportunities for self-fulfillment and the improvement of their professional status. Today the need to keep pace with new developments and expand one’s competences seems obvious. Employees who feel supported by their organization are probably more willing to engage in training that brings them personal satisfaction. In addition, research has shown that employees who experience organizational support, and, consequently, job satisfaction, want to make use of the knowledge and skills they absorb in training (Zumrah & Boyle, 2015).

The main purpose of the present study was to adapt the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support for use in Poland. This goal has been met. As a result, Polish organizational psychology has gained a new instrument, one that is widely used internationally and that measures a construct of key importance to a wide range of hypotheses.

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