

EVALUATING THE INFLUENCE OF THE TYPE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT ON JOB SATISFACTION AND WORK RELATED PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

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ABSTRACT

The presence of adequate levels of social support has been demonstrated to reduce the adverse consequences of occupational stress outcomes. The difficulties in demonstrating the *indirect* effects of workplace support, however, have been acknowledged. One explanation for these difficulties is the inadequate definitions of the exact type of social support being measured. This investigation evaluated the influence of both practical and emotional types of workplace social support upon job satisfaction and work-related psychological well-being. Only practical supervisor support directly predicted job satisfaction. Colleague social support was not significantly predictive of either outcome. The importance of supervisor support for the maintenance of positive work attitudes is discussed.

Keywords: Social support, supervisor support, practical support, job satisfaction, work well-being.

INTRODUCTION

The reporting of occupational stress by workers within a variety of industries has demonstrated a marked increase in the last ten years (Bliese & Britt 2001; Brouwers, Evers & Welko 2001; O'Driscoll & Brough 2003). Considerable attention has been focused on identifying the risk factors predisposing individuals to stress and optimal coping strategies (e.g. Brough, O'Driscoll & Kalliath, in press; Cooper, Dewe & O'Driscoll 2001; Guppy, Edwards, Brough, Peters-Bean, Sale & Short 2004). However, recent discussions suggest that the potential moderating role of specific work-related variables in the occupational stress-strain process requires renewed evaluation. In particular, the role of perceived social support within both the home domain (Brough & Kelling 2002) and the work domain (Brough & Frame 2004) has recently been re-examined as an important moderator of the occupational stress process. The presence of such support typically reduces the adverse consequences of both work-family conflict and occupational stress outcomes (see O'Driscoll, Brough & Kalliath, in press, for a review).

Etzion (1984) defined social support as an informal social network that provides individuals with expressions of emotional concern or empathy, practical assistance, informational support or appraisal (i.e. various types of social support). Workplace social support focuses on collaborative problem solving and sharing information, reappraising situations and obtaining advice from a variety of personnel such as colleagues, supervisors and managers (i.e. sources of social support). Johnson and Hall (1988) included a dimension of social support in Karasek's (1979) Job Demand-Control model of occupational stress (Job Demand-Control-

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Support model: JDCS). Johnson and Hall demonstrated that in environments characterised by high demands and low control, workers experienced reduced levels of strain when social support was high. Johnson and Hall suggested that perceived social support influences the stress-strain relationship in a similar manner to the better-established moderating effect of job control. This moderating role of social support has received general endorsement amongst researchers (e.g. Carayon 1995; Nelson & Quick 1991). Indeed, Sauter, Hurrell, and Cooper (1989) demonstrated that job control effectively moderated the relationship between work demands and strain only in the presence of adequate levels of social support (see also de Jonge & Kompier 1997; Mansell & Brough, in press; van der Doef & Maes 1999).

Recent investigations of workplace social support have focused on evaluating the impact of support received from various sources, typically supervisors and colleagues (Brough & Frame 2004; Pears 2004). Supervisor social support, in particular, has been identified as alleviating the negative consequences of occupational stress across a variety of job contexts. For example, Schirmer and Lopez (2001) investigated the effects of supervisor support on occupational stress in a sample of 250 US university employees. Their results indicated that the perception of support from supervisors significantly reduced reported levels of psychological strain. Similarly, Bliese and Castro's (2000) examination of psychological strain in 1,538 US Army soldiers demonstrated that role clarity and decision latitude (i.e. job control) were only beneficial in buffering the effects of psychological strain in conditions where soldiers reported high levels of supervisor support.

Other investigations, however, have failed to demonstrate this moderating effect of supervisor support and have focused instead on the direct relationship between supervisor support and occupational stress outcomes (e.g. Beehr & McGrath 1992). Cohen and Wills (1985) suggested that difficulties in demonstrating the moderating effects of workplace support could be due to inadequate definitions of the type of social support being measured. They concluded that most investigations either failed to specify the type of support, or otherwise combined multiple facets into a single composite measure of social support. Therefore, little is known about which component of workplace social support is more effective in alleviating the impact of job stressors.

Thus it remains to be seen whether practical support (advice, resources or expertise), emotional support (listening, showing concern or consideration), or a combination of both, more effectively reduces symptoms of occupational strain. Other psychological constructs such as coping behaviours have been distinguished by a similar taxonomy (i.e. problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping (Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen & DeLongis, 1986); and this taxonomy demonstrates distinctive results with work-related psychological outcomes (e.g. Brough et al., in press; Folkman & Moskowitz 2004). For example, practical coping behaviours (e.g. active problem solving, prioritising job demands) are associated with positive workplace psychological outcomes, whilst emotion-focused coping behaviours (e.g. seeking sympathy, discussing problems) are associated more strongly with negative strain outcomes (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004), although the validity of classifying coping behaviours by this taxonomy has recently been questioned (Brough et al., in press).

The current research hypothesizes that similar relationships may also be demonstrated with the distinct use of practical and emotional social support in the workplace. Identifying the components of social support that most effectively alleviate strain has important practical implications in the development of workplace support training (Beehr, Jex, Stacy & Murray, 2000; Brough & Frame 2004). This paper evaluates the influence of both practical and

emotional, colleague and supervisor social support on two common work-related psychological outcomes: job satisfaction and work well-being. The current research examines these relationships within a sample of human service workers, who are generally considered to be particularly vulnerable to occupational stress due to the nature of their job demands, i.e. high levels of interpersonal contact and conflict, heavy workloads, and responsibility for others (Kirk-Brown & Wallace 2001; O'Driscoll & Brough 2003). In accordance with the reviewed literature it is hypothesised:

H1: Supervisor social support (emotional and practical support) will have a greater direct positive influence on the two dependent variables (job satisfaction and work well-being) as compared to colleague social support (emotional and practical).

H2: The type of perceived social support (emotional or practical) will produce distinct relationships with the two dependent variables. It is hypothesised that practical support will be related more positively with the psychological outcomes as compared to emotional support.

H3: Social support will moderate the relationship between work role and the psychological outcomes.

METHODS

Participants and procedure

A sample of 205 public sector human services workers were invited to participate in this research. The sample consisted of four categories of employees: direct-care workers, professional staff (including psychologists, social workers and therapists), supervisory and management personnel, and administrative staff. The sample was randomly selected from the organisation's human resources records and represented 46% of the total employees, with an approximately equal number of female and male participants. Self-completion questionnaires were delivered to these employees through the organisation's internal distribution systems. Completed questionnaires were returned directly to the researchers via external mail. Research participation was both voluntary and confidential.

A total of 95 completed questionnaires were returned (46% response rate). Just over half of the respondents were male (55%) and most were direct-care workers (71%). Responses from the professional staff totalled 15%, with 8% of responses from administrative staff and 6% from management personnel, which reasonably reflected the distribution of roles within the organisation. The respondents ranged in age from 20-62 years, with a mean age of 40 years. Most of the respondents (67%) reported living with a partner and 50% had tertiary qualifications. Tenure ranged from less than two years to over ten years, with most respondents (30%) reporting a tenure of between 2-5 years.

MEASURES

Job demands and control: Jackson, Wall, Martin and Davids' (1993) Job Demands-Control scale was employed to measure job demands. The measure assesses general job demands (9 items) and perceived work control (10 items). The respondents rated the relevance of each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *Not at all* to *A great deal*, with high scores representing higher levels of both job demands and job control. Example items include *Does your work need your undivided attention?* (job demands) and *Do you set your own pace of work?* (job control). Acceptable internal reliability estimates (Cronbach's alpha coefficients)

were produced for both measures: .85 (job demands) and .91 (job control).

Supervisor support: Supervisor support was measured using Caplan, Cobb, French, Van Harrison, and Pinneau's (1980) five-item scale, which assesses the frequency of receipt of two types of social support (practical and emotional) from two sources of social support (supervisor and colleagues). Example items include: *How easy is it to talk to the following people?* and *How much are each of the following people willing to listen to your personal problems?* The participants responded on a five-point Likert scale from 0 = *Very much* to 5 = *Don't have any such person*. All items were reverse scored so that high scores indicate high levels of social support. Internal reliability estimates were calculated by hand due to the subscales consisting of only two items each. Acceptable reliability estimates ranging from .63 to .84 were obtained for the four support subscales.

Job satisfaction: Job satisfaction was estimated with Warr, Cook, and Wall's (1979) 15-item measure of job satisfaction. The respondents rated how generally satisfied they are in relation to 15 different job characteristics such as *amount of responsibility*, and *freedom to choose own method of working*. A 7-point Likert-scale was employed to register responses, ranging from *Extremely dissatisfied* to *Extremely satisfied*, with high scores therefore representing high levels of job satisfaction. An acceptable internal reliability estimate of .92 was obtained for this measure.

Work-related well-being: Warr's (1990) 12-item measure of work-related well-being estimates psychological health at work via two subscales: anxiety-contentment and depression-enthusiasm. However, the measure was employed as a composite scale for the purposes of this paper for reasons of parsimony: the composite measure and its two subscales were found to produce similar associations with the job characteristic variables. The measure requests respondents to rate the extent to which their job recently resulted in 12 affective reactions, such as: *tense*, *relaxed*, and *enthusiastic*. The respondents answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *Never* to *All of the time*. The reverse scoring of the scale items ensured that high scores represent high levels of psychological well-being. The internal reliability estimate for this composite measure was acceptable: .90.

RESULTS

The variables relating to gender and operational role were dummy coded in order to evaluate their contribution within the multivariate analyses (i.e. Gender coded: 0 = male, 1 = female; Operational role coded: 0 = other employment positions, 1 = direct care worker). The operational role variable was recoded to enable comparisons between the respondents working in a direct care occupational role with the other respondents. Table 1 depicts the descriptive statistics and the correlations between the research variables. It can be observed that gender was not significantly associated with any of the variables. Operational role was significantly negatively associated with job control, both types of supervisor support and job satisfaction, implying that the role of direct care worker is associated with lower levels of these four variables.

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations and Intercorrelations among Variables

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	M	SD
1. Gender	-											-	-
2. Operational role	-.03	-										-	-
3. Tenure	-.07	.23*	-									-	-
4. Job demands	.16	.18	-.19	(.85)								35.86	5.72
5. Job control	-.13	-.44***	-.14	-.07	(.91)							34.48	7.13
6. Supervisor practical support	.06	-.31**	-.28**	-.08	.39***	(.84)						7.55	1.81
7. Supervisor emotional support	.04	-.27**	-.18	-.01	.35***	.75***	(.74)					7.30	1.85
8. Colleague practical support	.06	-.06	-.20	.06	.06	.41***	.36***	(.80)				8.58	1.51
9. Colleague emotional support	.12	-.13	-.15	.06	.01	.26*	.42***	.82***	(.63)			8.41	1.61
10. Job satisfaction	.02	-.40***	-.22*	-.28**	.58***	.65***	.63***	.31**	.30**	(.92)		64.75	16.96
11. Work well-being	-.05	.10	.08	-.33***	.25*	.17	.18	.07	.05	.58***	(.92)	41.04	9.15

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .01$; all tests are two-tailed; $N = 95$; Cronbach's alpha coefficients are depicted in parentheses along the diagonal;

Gender dummy coded 0 = male, 1 = female; Operational role dummy coded 0 = other employment positions, 1 = direct care worker.

The job demand and job control variables were each significantly associated with job satisfaction and work well-being in the expected directions (i.e. demands were associated with reduced levels, and control with increased levels, of these two outcomes). Job demands were not significantly associated with any of the work support variables, whereas job control produced strong significant correlations with both types of supervisor support ($r = .35$ and $r = .39$, both $p < .001$). The four support variables were all significantly associated with job satisfaction, with the two supervisor support variables demonstrating especially strong relationships ($r = .63$ and $r = .65$, both $p < .001$). None of the support variables were significantly associated with work well-being. Finally, job satisfaction and work well-being produced a strong significant association ($r = .58$, $p < .001$).

The two supervisor support subscales demonstrated a strong association with each other ($r = .75$, $p < .001$), as did the two peer support subscales ($r = .82$, $p < .001$). Both associations therefore indicate that a degree of multicollinearity exists between each respective source of support. A degree of construct overlap is perhaps to be expected, as the provision of social support would typically involve simultaneous practical and emotional support. This point is acknowledged and the value of retaining these separate support constructs (or not) is tested further in the multivariate analyses.

Two hierarchical regression equations were constructed to test the ability of the independent variables to separately predict job satisfaction and work-related psychological well-being. The two regression equations were constructed in a similar method: first occupational role was entered to evaluate the influence of the respondents' work role. Second, the two job characteristics predictors were entered into the equation, followed by the work support predictors at step three, in order to evaluate the unique variance contributed by these two groups of predictors. In addition, to test for the moderating influence of supervisor emotional and practical social support with operational role, two interaction terms were created from these standardised predictor variables. These moderation terms were entered into the job satisfaction equation at the fourth and final step. Only the moderating influence of supervisor support (and not peer support) was tested due to the production of significant associations only between both types of supervisor support, operational role and job satisfaction (Table 1).

Table 2 illustrates the results for the prediction of job satisfaction. Operational role demonstrated an initial significant relationship with job satisfaction, but this was reduced to insignificance with the entry of the subsequent predictors. The job demand and job control predictors accounted for a significant proportion of additional variance of job satisfaction ($R^2 \Delta = .23$, $p < .001$). Job control in particular accounted for a significant proportion of unique variance in the criterion measure, although this contribution was reduced with the entry of the subsequent predictors (final $\beta = .36$, $p < .001$). The four workplace support predictors also accounted for a significant proportion of additional variance ($R^2 \Delta = .25$, $p < .001$). This variance was explained by the two supervisor support predictors and particularly by supervisor practical support, which accounted for a final significant proportion of unique variance in job satisfaction ($\beta = .40$, $p < .05$). The two colleague support predictors did not account for a significant proportion of job satisfaction. Finally, the two interaction terms did not account for any significant proportion of unique or shared variance in job satisfaction. The equation overall explained 65% of the variance in the prediction of job satisfaction ($F(9, 80) = 16.19$, $p < .001$).

Table 2: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for the Prediction of Job Satisfaction

<i>Predictors</i>	β	β	β	β	R^2	$R^2 \Delta$
Step 1						
Operational role	-.39***	-.15	-.05	.05	.16***	.16***
Step 2						
Job control		.50***	.35***	.36***	.39***	.23***
Job demands		-.20*	-.22**	-.23**		
Step 3						
Supervisor emotional support			.27*	.06	.64***	.25***
Supervisor practical support			.25*	.40*		
Colleague emotional support			.06	.06		
Colleague practical support			.05	.05		
Step 4						
Sup emo support x Op role				.24	.65***	.01
Sup prac support x Op role				-.16		

β = standardised beta coefficients. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; $N = 95$

Table 3 illustrates the results for the prediction of work well-being. Operational role significantly predicted the criterion measure ($\beta = .35$, $p < .01$), although its increase in estimation at each step is suggestive of the presence of a third relationship with the subsequent predictors. Both job control and job demands explained a significant proportion of additional variance in the equation ($R^2 \Delta = .22$, $p < .001$), with job demands being an especially substantial negative predictor of work well-being ($\beta = -.39$, $p < .001$). Finally, the four workplace social support predictors did not significantly predict work well-being, either individually or as a group. The ability of the distinct types of workplace social support to predict work well-being therefore appears to be minimal. The equation overall explained 26% of the variance in the prediction of work well-being ($F(9, 80) = 16.19$, $p < .001$).

Table 3: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for the Prediction of Work Well-Being

<i>Predictors</i>	β	β	β	R^2	$R^2 \Delta$
Step 1					
Operational role	.10	.31**	.35**	.01	.01
Step 2					
Job control		.34**	.29**	.23***	.22***
Job demands		-.38***	-.39***		
Step 3					
Supervisor emotional support			.12	.26***	.03
Supervisor practical support			.06		
Colleague emotional support			.01		
Colleague practical support			-.03		

β = standardised beta coefficients. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; $N = 95$

The results of the two regression analyses suggested that the influence of operational role might be associated in a mediating relationship with the subsequent predictors. Tests for the mediating influence of the operational role variable were therefore conducted via a separate series of regression analyses. The tests for mediation using three individual regression equations were constructed with the standardised variables as recommended (Baron & Kenny 1986; Oliver & Brough 2002). Mediation tests were conducted only for those variables meeting the initial criteria: i.e. that the independent, mediator and dependent variables were each significantly correlated with one another (Baron & Kenny 1986). This criteria was only achieved by the two supervisor support variables (predictors), operational role (mediator) and job satisfaction (criterion variable).

First, supervisor practical support was regressed onto operational role. Next, supervisor practical support was regressed onto job satisfaction. Finally, supervisor practical support and operational role were simultaneously regressed onto job satisfaction. Summaries of these three regression analyses are presented in Table 4 (equations 1 to 3). The ability of supervisor practical support to predict job satisfaction was reduced from $B = .64$ ($p < .001$) to $B = .58$ ($p < .001$) with the simultaneous entry of the operational role predictor ($R^2 = .45$, $F(2, 89) = 36.92$, $p < .001$). Operational role does not therefore act as a mediating variable between supervisor practical support and job satisfaction. An identical test for mediation was conducted with supervisor emotional support and a summary of these regression analyses are also presented in Table 4 (equations 4 to 6). The ability of supervisor emotional support to predict job satisfaction was reduced from $B = .62$ ($p < .001$) to $B = .56$ ($p < .001$) with the simultaneous entry of the operational role predictor ($R^2 = .45$, $F(2, 89) = 35.91$, $p < .001$). These tests reveal that operational role does not mediate the prediction of job satisfaction by supervisor emotional support.

Table 4: Summary of Regression Analyses Testing the Mediated Prediction of Job Satisfaction

<i>Criterion variables</i>	<i>Predictor variable(s)</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>F</i>
Equation 1				
Operational role	Supervisor practical support	-.31**	.10**	9.68
Equation 2				
Job satisfaction	Supervisor practical support	.64***	.42***	64.40
Equation 3				
Job satisfaction	Supervisor practical support	.58***	.45***	36.92
	Operational role	-.20**		
Equation 4				
Operational role	Supervisor emotional support	-.27**	.07**	7.31
Equation 5				
Job satisfaction	Supervisor emotional support	.62***	.40***	60.26
Equation 6				
Job satisfaction	Supervisor emotional support	.56***	.45***	35.91
	Operational role	-.22**		

B = unstandardised beta coefficients. **p* < .05; ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001; *N* = 95

DISCUSSION

The Influence of Workplace Support

This research identified differences in the relationships between workplace support and the prediction of job satisfaction and work-related psychological well-being. The source of workplace support produced a substantial difference in the prediction of job satisfaction. Social support received from colleagues had no significant influence on either psychological outcome, whereas social support received from supervisors demonstrated strong associations with job satisfaction, and also significantly predicted improved satisfaction outcomes. Hypothesis 1 was therefore partially supported: supervisor social support is a stronger positive predictor of job satisfaction (but not of work-related psychological well-being) as compared to colleague social support. Other reported research with human service workers has also identified the role of (composite) supervisor support in alleviating the impacts of stressful work environments. For example, Schirmer and Lopez (2001) reported a significant positive association between supervisor support and job satisfaction. Brough and Frame (2004) also demonstrated via structural equation modelling that supervisor support directly predicted job satisfaction, while colleague support did not. The current research therefore supports these previous findings and reinforces the hypothesis that supervisor support has a direct positive impact on work attitudes, while the influence of support from work colleagues is minimal.

The *type* of the support received from supervisors was also found to be important. Supervisor practical support was the only social support variable to significantly predict job satisfaction. Hypothesis 2 was therefore supported in regard to the greater impact of practical support (as compared to emotional support) on job satisfaction, but no evidence of a similar relationship was demonstrated for work well-being. This differentiation of the distinct types of social support received from both supervisors and colleagues is an important contribution made by the current research. The beneficial use of practical support/problem-solving behaviours in the workplace has been previously discussed in the literature and offers some confirmation of the

findings reported here. The preference for employees to utilize problem-solving behaviours to solve work-related problems (e.g. seeking advice and such like), rather than emotion-focused behaviours, has been demonstrated within the occupational stress and coping literature (e.g. Brough et al., in press; Cooper et al. 2001). It is, therefore, not surprising that the provision of practical support by supervisors has a greater influence on work attitudes. It is acknowledged, however, that this finding requires further replication in a larger and diverse sample. It is suggested that the ability for investigations to distinguish between the type and the source of perceived social support may offer an explanation for the mixed findings in the literature that commonly reports composite measures of social support (e.g. Beehr & McGrath 1992; Bliese & Castro 2000; Cohen & Wills 1985).

Finally, no evidence of a significant moderating influence of social support was demonstrated by this research. Hypothesis 3 is, therefore, not supported. Instead, a main effects model, in which occupational role and social support act independently to influence job satisfaction, appears to be the most parsimonious account for the data. The difficulty of demonstrating significant moderation results is acknowledged and has also previously been identified in the literature. Common explanations for a lack of significant moderation results include the poor operationalisation of the concepts, low statistical power to detect interactive effects, and a failure to take account of non-linear relationships that may exist between the measures (Cohen, Cohen, West & Aiken, 2003; de Jonge & Kompier 1997; Mansell & Brough, in press). It is suggested that the small sample size reported by the current research may have adversely influenced the detection of any significant moderating relationships. It is suggested that the apparent non-existence of any moderating relationships therefore requires further confirmation in a larger data sample.

The Influence of Occupational Role

The correlation results demonstrated that the role of a direct care worker was adversely associated with a number of job characteristics. These adverse associations are expected and confirm previous findings: it is apparent that employment within a human service role has adverse consequences on both job characteristics and work attitudes (e.g. Kirk-Brown & Wallace 2001; O'Driscoll & Brough 2003). However, occupational role positively predicted work well-being, implying that whilst the job of a direct care worker may have a negative influence on job characteristics, its influence on actual psychological well-being is positive. It was hypothesised that these mixed results may be caused by the influence of other third variables within the relationship between operational role and psychological outcomes. The mediation analyses tested these hypotheses, however, no significant evidence of a mediating influence of operational role was demonstrated.

The nature of the role of the direct care workers was demonstrated to have a direct influence on the associations with other job characteristics measures, as was generally expected. The direct care workers reported their most demanding job characteristics as including time pressure, need for vigilance and having to deal with problems that had no easy solution. Additionally, the direct care workers work independently and manage clients with challenging and sometimes aggressive behaviours. These human service elements of the direct care workers' roles categorises them as a 'high-stress' occupation and at risk of psychological strain symptomology and burnout (Maslach 1982). Other investigations have also acknowledged the susceptibility of individuals working within human service roles to experience occupational stress. For example, Narayan Menon, and Spector, (1999) demonstrated that adverse client interactions were directly associated with occupation stress and low levels of job satisfaction within their sample of health care workers. Evaluations of

job characteristics have a substantial history within 'high-stress' occupations due primarily to the significant individual and organisation costs involved (see O'Driscoll & Brough 2003). Indeed evaluations of relationships amongst psychological job variables within occupations that are not traditionally perceived as being 'high-stress' have recognised limitations (Brough et al., in press).

Research Limitations

An acknowledged limitation of the present research is the relatively small sample size on which the results are based ($N = 95$). The differential impact on the type of workplace support received, particularly practical versus emotional supervisor support, requires confirmation in a larger sample and in samples of different occupations to determine the generalizability of our findings. A second limitation is the cross-sectional nature of this research: a common limitation of many psychological health investigations. A longitudinal research design would have enabled stronger causal conclusions to be drawn from this data (Zapf, Dormann & Frese 1996). The impact of supervisor social support on long-term psychological and organisational outcomes has received some recent renewal of interest (e.g. Brough & Frame 2004) and remains a fruitful avenue for future research.

Finally, a third limitation of this research is due to the problems associated with response-bias and common-method variance; common problems which plague all questionnaire-based research. The response rate of 46% is acceptable in comparison with other published survey research (e.g. Beaton & Murphy 1993, 50% response rate; Mansell & Brough, in press, 46% response rate; Kalliath, O'Driscoll & Brough 2004, 39% response rate), but does indicate that views of only half the sample were reported. The respondent characteristics were considered to represent the general characteristics of this organisation. However, it is acknowledged that the inclusion of a larger initial sampling pool would also improve the reliability and generalizability of the reported results. These research design points are recommended for consideration in future replications of this research.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrated that perceived supervisor support had a greater impact on improved levels of job satisfaction, as compared to support received from work colleagues. The research also demonstrated that the receipt of practical supervisor support had a greater positive impact on job satisfaction levels as compared to the receipt of supervisor emotional support. The research failed to demonstrate any indirect relationships between social support and the criterion variables, although it is suggested that the relatively small sample size may have reduced the statistical power of any potential moderating relationships. Finally, this research has successfully demonstrated the necessity of distinguishing between specific sources of workplace social support and we suggest this is a fruitful avenue for future workplace psychological health investigations.

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