

# **Support or Fairness? Differential Effects of Social Support and Organizational Justice on Work Outcomes**

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*This study investigates the differential contributions of supervisor support, coworker support, and organizational justice to employee global ratings of job satisfaction and performance. Self-reported questionnaire data were collected from 628 employees across 23 Confucian Asia retail stores. Findings indicate justice is the only significant predictor of both job satisfaction and performance, while supervisor support significantly contributes to performance and coworker support contributes to job satisfaction. Additionally, organizational justice is by far the most robust predictor of job satisfaction and performance. Practical and theoretical implications are discussed.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Understanding both employee satisfaction and performance has been a focus of concern and study for decades. Previous research has found consistently strong positive relationships between employees' job satisfaction and pro-social behavior and organizational commitment, as well as negative relationships between satisfaction and turnover, absenteeism, and counterproductive work behaviors (Fassina, Jones, & Uggerslev, 2008; Ngo, Foley, Ji, & Loi, 2014; Scott & Taylor, 1985). Similarly, performance has demonstrated strong positive relationships with a variety of predictors such as perceived support (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) and organizational justice (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001).

Despite a wealth of prior research concerning job satisfaction and performance, a few gaps remain. Most notably, the majority of research concerning support, justice, and work outcomes has been conducted with largely Western samples. Therefore, the question begs, "Can these prior findings generalize to other cultures?" Previous research suggests that how employees perceive their work context can be critical in shaping their job attitudes and behaviors (Johns, 2006). Indeed, culture plays an integral role in employees' assessment of work context (Loi & Ngo, 2010; Saari & Judge, 2004). More research is necessary to examine the extent to which prior research on support and work outcomes can generalize across cultures.

Additionally, less is known regarding the relative predictive value of perceived support versus fairness for both job satisfaction and performance. Prior research identifies several personal variables that predict work outcomes, particularly job satisfaction (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995). However, there is utility in an examination of organizational factors, such as support and fairness, and their relative impact on job satisfaction and task performance. The question of which has greater impact on employee satisfaction and performance, support or fairness, has strong practical implications for managers and organizations.

The current study attempts to address these gaps in previous research with an examination of organizational factors, specifically perceived supervisor and coworker support and interactional justice, and their impact on East Asian retail employees' satisfaction and task performance. Drawing on social exchange theory several hypotheses are formulated and tested with self-report data collected from East Asian retail employees.

### **Theoretical Background and Hypotheses**

Social exchange has long been the subject of research seeking to explain the fundamental relationship between employers and employees. Gouldner (1960) originally proposed the reciprocity norm that obliges the receiver of favorable treatment to return the favor. The benefits exchanged could involve such resources as money, services, and information or such socioemotional resources as approval, respect, and liking (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Batson, 1993; Blau, 1964; Foa & Foa, 1974). By extending this approach to organizations, employee – employer relationships may be viewed as the trade of employee effort and loyalty for socioemotional benefits and tangible resources (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986; Etzioni, 1961; Kotter, 1973; Levinson, 1965).

The norm of reciprocity obligates employees receiving increased benefits from their organization to compensate their employer with behaviors equally valued by the employer (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rousseau & McLean Parks, 1993). Shore and Wayne (1993) found that when employees receive valuable resources and career opportunities from their organization, they are likely to develop feelings of personal obligation and respond favorably in the form of positive job attitudes and behaviors. Meeting this reciprocal obligation helps employees maintain the positive self-image of those who repay debts, avoid the social stigma associated with the reciprocity norm's violation, and obtain favorable treatment from the organization (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001). Hence, this relationship is mutually beneficial for both reciprocating parties and encourages the development of both positive work transactions and affect.

Blau (1964) was among the first to differentiate social exchange from economic exchange. Blau suggested that social exchange, unlike economic exchange, refers to relationships that involve *unspecified* future obligations. In addition, social exchange does not occur on a calculated basis. Economic exchange is based on transactions, but the key to social exchange relationships is the individuals' trust in the other parties to fairly discharge their obligations in the long run (Holmes, 1981). According to researchers (Blau, 1964; Rousseau & Parks, 1993) "macromotives" such as trust, loyalty, and commitment are essential to maintaining social exchange relationships. Holmes (1981) describes macromotives as sets of attributions that characterize people's feelings and beliefs about their exchange partners. An example might be "My supervisor is trustworthy."

### *Justice*

A component of social exchange macromotives toward supervisors and coworkers concerns the idea of *fairness*. Indeed, a great deal of research has focused on the concept of organizational justice (see Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001, for a comprehensive review). Organizational justice is typically understood under three main headings: 1) *distributive justice*, or fairness of the actual distribution of workplace rewards, 2) *procedural justice*, or the fairness of the methods/procedures by which the rewards are distributed, and 3) *interactional justice*, the fairness of the treatment people receive when procedures are implemented. Additionally, interactional justice can be understood as both interpersonal (focusing on interpersonal treatment during said procedural implementation) and informational (fairness of explanation or information provided regarding said procedure).

Based on the notion of social exchange, Masterson, Lewis, Goldman and Taylor (2000) proposed what is known as the agent-system model. Referring to Bies and Moag's (1986) assertion that individuals draw on interactional justice perceptions before deciding how to react to supervisors and authority figures, Masterson, et al., suggested that individuals are involved in two distinct social exchange relationships. Employees distinctly reciprocate with both their individual supervisors and the larger organization. Therefore, interactional justice should better predict supervisor-referenced outcomes (e.g.

supervisor rated performance) and procedural justice should better predict organizational-referenced outcomes (e.g. organizational commitment). Indeed, prior research seems to support these assertions, finding strong relationships between interactional justice and performance (Colquitt et al., 2001; Masterson et al., 2001).

Job satisfaction, however, is neither simply supervisor-referenced nor organizational-referenced, but rather it is multifaceted and global. Job satisfaction typically refers to employees' overall affect-laden attitude toward their job (Witt, 1991). Consequently, Masterson, et al. (2001), found that both procedural and interactional justice were significant predictors of job satisfaction. Consistent with prior findings, the current project proposes:

*H1: Interactional justice will positively relate to a) employee performance and b) job satisfaction.*

### *Support*

The concept of support in the workplace has received a tremendous amount of research, ranging from the perspective of stress buffering (Lim, 1997) to more recent research regarding organizational support theory (Baran, Shanock, & Miller, 2012). Earlier approaches to the study of workplace support defined social support as "information that leads a person to believe that he or she is cared for, esteemed, valued and belongs to a network of communication and mutual obligation" (Cobb, 1976). Contemporary research typically defines support from the perspective of organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986), which defines perceived supervisor support (PSS) as the extent to which an employee perceives that her supervisor values her contributions and cares for her well-being (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006).

Prior research has found that employees tend to respond with positive job attitudes and behaviors when they receive valuable resources and opportunities from their organization (Shore & Wayne, 1993). Based on this notion of social exchange, if employees perceive favorable treatment and concern from their supervisor, they are obligated to behave in kind. If focusing specifically on in-role performance, one could expect employees that feel supported by their supervisors to exhibit increased or heightened in-role performance behaviors. Much research to date has found strong evidence of the relationship between support from supervisors and more broadly from the organization, to employee performance (Nielsen, 2014; Randall, et al., 1999; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006).

Support in the workplace has been linked not only to performance, but also affective experiences such as positive mood and job satisfaction. George and Brief (1992) originally proposed that work experiences signaling an employee's achievement or perceived competence would increase employee positive mood. Support conveys a positive valuation of an employee's work and care for the employee's well-being (Eisenberger et al., 2001). To the extent that support meets employees' socioemotional needs, increases employee's reward expectations, and signals available aid, support should contribute to employees' job satisfaction. Empirical support has also found a negative link between supervisor social support and job dissatisfaction, suggesting that with greater support employees find greater satisfaction with their jobs (Lim, 1997).

Thus, the current project proposes:

*H2: Supervisor support (PSS) will positively relate to a) employee performance and b) job satisfaction.*

Recent efforts have sought to extend the social exchange relationship beyond the supervisor – subordinate dyad and examined the impact of support received from additional stakeholders, such as coworkers. Coworkers, perceived as a natural extension of the organization, clearly have an important role to play in the social landscape of an organization. When viewed as agents of the organization, supportive treatment from coworkers (PCS) has a positive influence on employee perceived organizational support (Ladd & Henry, 2000; Yoon & Lim, 1999). Additionally, perceived coworker

support is recognized as having many benefits to employees' well being providing a buffer against experienced stress, decreasing job dissatisfaction, and contributing to enhanced performance (Lim, 1997; Nielsen, 2014; Van Emmerik, Euwema, & Bakker, 2007). Based on previous empirical findings, the current project proposes:

*H3: Coworker support (PCS) will positively relate to a) employee performance and b) job satisfaction.*

#### *The East Asian Context*

While there is a plethora of research on the topics of job satisfaction, performance, justice, and support, the vast majority of empirical evidence stems from Western samples. Given the abundant literature that documents the differential effects of Eastern values, attitudes, and behaviors in the workplace (Kim, Triandis, Choi, & Yoon, 1994), there is a need to further explore the generalizability of Western findings across cultures.

East Asian cultures present an interesting environment in which to explore employee perceptions of support and justice in the workplace. Two main factors appear to influence Eastern employees' reactions to support and injustice in the workplace uniquely. First, East Asians have a particularly strong concern for preserving interpersonal harmony and group cohesion. The social relationship holds significant intrinsic value and is viewed as an end in its own right (Triandis, 1989). This focus on relational harmony may influence their response to injustice, such that a negative response to injustice would potentially upset or aggravate social relations. Therefore, East Asians may be more inclined to sacrifice injustice in order to allow the relationship to continue for relational harmony with the hope that the situation will improve (Erdogan & Liden, 2006).

The second influence likely stems from Confucian roots, which places great importance on submission to authority (Zhang, 1999). According to Confucius, orderly subordination to authority ensures the harmony of the entire society. Indeed, one's very self-definition is subsumed in a hierarchical relationship. The role of hierarchy in the maintenance of social harmony is paramount in East Asia (Hofstede, 1980). Given this focus on social status and hierarchical importance, unjust or unfair actions from an authority are less likely to engender negative reaction or voice from subordinates because they perceive the actions as part of the authority figure's role privilege. The norm and behavioral expectation is to submit to authority and maintain role and relational harmony, even at the sacrifice to oneself.

The East Asian values of group harmony and hierarchy are equally likely to influence employees' expectations of and reactions to support in the workplace. Prior research indicates Eastern workers' attitudes are based on concern for the collective group and are relationally oriented, whereas Western employees emphasize individualistic and utilitarian work attitudes (Ko, Price, & Mueller, 1997). This focus on relationships mingled with the historically Confucian focus on family and collectivism, might lead to expectations that supervisors treat employees as family. Supervisors are encouraged to work closely with subordinates, both in an advisory role as well as participating in task accomplishment (Seo, Ko, & Price, 2004).

The typical focus on the personal self and self-advancement predominant in Western society is largely absent in Eastern cultures. Instead, the focus on social harmony and authority/hierarchy that is typical of East Asian societies might lead to less generalizability of any Western empirical findings examining employee reactions to or expectations of justice and support in the workplace. The theoretical assertions above suggest that East Asians will likely have much more tempered reactions to injustice in the workplace leading to less predictive power of justice variables. However, support from coworkers and supervisors may have greater predictive power in the same culture given the importance of and focus on interpersonal harmony and family.

Empirical findings on the matter are slightly mixed. Brockner, Ackerman, Greenberg, Gelfand, Francesco, and Chen et al. (2001) found much more pronounced reactions to having no voice in decision-making (known as the "voice effect") in the USA than in China. Similarly, Blader, Chang, and Tyler (2001) found that when compared to American employees, Taiwanese employees were less likely to

retaliate against their organizations for procedural injustice. However, some findings indicate little to no difference between cultures. For instance, Seo, Ko, and Price (2004) tested a model of job satisfaction predictors in South Korean hospitals and found that the Western model generalized, identifying the same determinants of job satisfaction across cultures. Lam, Schaubroeck, & Aryee (2002) also found no significant difference when comparing justice outcomes across samples from Hong Kong and the USA.

Given the theoretical assertions and preliminary empirical evidence, this project proposes that support from supervisors and coworkers will have greater predictive ability than will justice for employee job satisfaction and performance. Thus:

*H4: Supervisor support (PSS) and coworker support (PCS) will account for more variance in job satisfaction than interactional justice.*

*H5: Supervisor support (PSS) and coworker support (PCS) will account for more variance in performance than interactional justice.*

## **METHOD**

### **Setting and Design**

To test the hypotheses, 23 locations of a large retail firm in East Asia were selected. The retail store chain locations are operated on a regional basis, and carry a wide range of household products such as local daily goods, consumer products such as cosmetics, clothes, and cleaning supplies. Participants in this research were individual team members, reporting directly to a single site supervisor, who worked closely with each other to enhance sales outcomes, monitor product sales, discuss optimal timing of product sourcing, and make decisions for effective product display strategies. Thus, the nature of the work performed by each store location in this study was reflective of both significant interaction among team members and an emphasis on process improvement. Paper surveys were administered to all employees at each of the 23 locations.

### **Participants**

Of the original 700 employees surveyed at the 23 participating locations, a total of 629 team members (90%) responded. Each store, on average, had 29 employees ( $sd = 2.53$ ) but ranged in size from 20-31. Employees were 39 years of age ( $sd = 10.12$ ) and 72% were female. All participants had completed high school, and 34% held bachelor's degrees or above.

### **Measures**

All measures used in this study were drawn directly from the literature. To avoid deviating from the original intended meaning of the scale items we used a translation-back-translation procedure in which the original survey items were translated into Korean, and then back-translated into English (Brislin, 1981). After consultation with five randomly chosen supervisors and 10 employees, the researcher was confident that the meaning of the survey items was not significantly affected by translation.

#### *Perceived Supervisor Support*

To measure perceived supervisor support, Rhoades, Eisenberger, and Armeli's (2001) four-item survey was administered to all participants ( $\alpha = .80$ ). Responses to these items used a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strong disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample item from this survey is "My supervisor cares about my opinions."

#### *Perceived Coworker Support*

To measure perceived coworker support, a modified version of Rhoades, Eisenberger, and Armeli's (2001) 4-item perceived supervisor support survey was administered to all participants ( $\alpha = .73$ ). The "target" of each item was changed such that the referent indicated coworkers instead of the supervisor.

Responses to these items used a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strong disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample item from this survey is “My coworkers care about my opinions.”

*Interactional Justice*

Interactional justice was measured with a 9-item scale developed by Niehoff and Moorman (1993;  $\alpha = .94$ ). Responses to these items used a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items from this scale ask whether the supervisor was considerate and kind, whether the supervisor considered the employee’s rights, and whether the supervisor dealt with the employee in a truthful manner.

*Perceived Performance*

Performance was measured using Edmondson’s (1999) 5-item perceived team performance scale ( $\alpha = .72$ ). Responses to these items used a 7-point scale ranging from “very inaccurate” to “very accurate.” A sample item from this scale is “The quality of work provided by this team is improving over time.”

*Job Satisfaction*

To measure job satisfaction, Aryee, Fields, and Luk’s (1999) 6-item scale was used ( $\alpha = .90$ ). Response options ranged from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). Sample items are “Most days, I am enthusiastic about my job” and “I am seldom bored with my job.”

**RESULTS**

All variable descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients can be found in Table 1. Analyses began by following Becker’s (2005) guidelines for inclusion of control variables. Inclusion of unnecessary control variables increases the chances of Type II error by partialling out variance from underlying relationships (Spector, Zapf, Chen, & Frese, 2000), and Type I error if controls “...are by chance associated with the predictors but not the criterion” (Becker, 2005). Therefore, controls that “uncorrelated with the dependent variable” were avoided to preserve statistical power. Position tenure reported small yet significant correlations (refer to Table 1 for descriptive statistics) with both measures of performance

**TABLE 1  
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND INTERCORRELATIONS**

|                                 | M   | SD  | 1      | 2      | 3      | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8     |
|---------------------------------|-----|-----|--------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Position Tenure              | 3.9 | 3.5 | -      |        |        |       |       |       |       |       |
| 2. Age                          | 39  | 7.8 | .32**  | -      |        |       |       |       |       |       |
| 3. Gender                       | 1.7 | .44 | .07    | .55    | -      |       |       |       |       |       |
| 4. Perceived Supervisor Support | 3.6 | .60 | -.05   | -.28** | -.30** | (.80) |       |       |       |       |
| 5. Perceived Coworker Support   | 3.7 | .50 | -.15** | -.30** | -.25** | .52** | (.73) |       |       |       |
| 6. Interactional Justice        | 3.6 | .59 | -.03   | -.21** | -.28** | .60** | .37** | (.94) |       |       |
| 7. Performance                  | 3.8 | .65 | -.10*  | -.22** | -.23** | .39** | .30** | .46** | (.72) |       |
| 8. Job Satisfaction             | 3.7 | .68 | -.05   | -.11** | -.17** | .33** | .32** | .47** | .55** | (.90) |

*Note.* Cronbach’s alpha reliabilities appear in parentheses along the main diagonal. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$

and perceived coworker support. Participant age and gender were both consistent and significant negative correlates of all study variables. Therefore, position tenure, age, and gender were used as controls in the analyses.

Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were all supported and reported significant positive relationships. Interactional justice reported a significant positive correlation with both performance (H1a,  $r=.46$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and job satisfaction (H1b,  $r=.47$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Perceptions of supervisor support positively predicted measures of performance (H2a,  $r=.39$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and job satisfaction (H2b,  $r=.33$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Additionally, perceptions of coworker support reported significant positive relationships with measures of performance (H3a,  $r=.30$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and job satisfaction (H3b,  $r=.32$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

Hypothesis 4 was tested using hierarchical regression (Aiken & West, 1991). The first step regressed job satisfaction on the aforementioned controls of position tenure, age, and gender. PSS, PCS, and interactional justice were then added as the second, third, and fourth steps, respectively. The significance of the change in  $R^2$  and each variable's  $\beta$  value was examined to test the hypothesis that PSS and PCS predict more variance in job satisfaction than interactional justice. While the regressed model is significant ( $R^2=.27$ ,  $p<.01$ ), the hypothesis was not supported (see Table 2) as PSS failed to account for any significant variance in job satisfaction once interactional justice was added to the model. Only PCS and interactional justice remained significant predictors of job satisfaction, accounting for approximately 3% and 19% of the variance, respectively.

**TABLE 2**  
**HIERARCHICAL REGRESSION ANALYSES – JOB SATISFACTION**

| <i>Variable</i> | <i>Job Satisfaction</i>          |              | $\beta$ |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|--------------|---------|
|                 | <i>Adjusted <math>R^2</math></i> | $\Delta R^2$ |         |
| <b>Step 1</b>   | .03**                            | .03**        |         |
| Position Tenure |                                  |              | -.04    |
| Age             |                                  |              | -.00    |
| Gender          |                                  |              | -.16    |
| <b>Step 2</b>   | .13**                            | .10**        |         |
| Position Tenure |                                  |              | -.04    |
| Age             |                                  |              | .07     |
| Gender          |                                  |              | -.10*   |
| PSS             |                                  |              | .34**   |
| <b>Step 3</b>   | .15**                            | .03**        |         |
| Position Tenure |                                  |              | -.03    |
| Age             |                                  |              | .09*    |
| Gender          |                                  |              | -.09*   |
| PSS             |                                  |              | .25**   |
| PCS             |                                  |              | .19**   |
| <b>Step 4</b>   | .27**                            | .12**        |         |
| Position Tenure |                                  |              | -.04    |
| Age             |                                  |              | .09*    |
| Gender          |                                  |              | -.05    |
| PSS             |                                  |              | -.00    |
| PCS             |                                  |              | .18**   |
| JUST            |                                  |              | .44**   |

*Note.* Standardized regression coefficients are reported. \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\*  $p \leq .01$

The same analytical procedures were used to examine hypothesis 5. The same controls were used (i.e. position tenure, age, and gender) and entered as the first step in the regression. PSS, PCS, and interactional justice were then added as the second, third, and fourth steps, respectively. The significance of the change in  $R^2$  and each variable's  $\beta$  value was examined to test the hypothesis that PSS and PCS predict more variance in performance than interactional justice. Again, the model is significant ( $R^2=.26$ ,  $p<.01$ ), however, the hypothesis was not supported (see Table 3) as PCS failed to account for any significant variance in performance. Only PSS and interactional justice remain significant predictors of performance, accounting for approximately 2% and 12% of the variance, respectively.

**TABLE 3**  
**HIERARCHICAL REGRESSION ANALYSES – PERFORMANCE**

| <i>Variable</i> | <i>Performance</i>            |                        |          |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|----------|
|                 | <i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i> | <i>Δ R<sup>2</sup></i> | <i>β</i> |
| <b>Step 1</b>   | .06**                         | .07**                  |          |
| Position Tenure |                               |                        | -.02     |
| Age             |                               |                        | -.14**   |
| Gender          |                               |                        | -.15**   |
| <b>Step 2</b>   | .18**                         | .12**                  |          |
| Position Tenure |                               |                        | -.01     |
| Age             |                               |                        | -.06     |
| Gender          |                               |                        | -.08     |
| PSS             |                               |                        | .37**    |
| <b>Step 3</b>   | .19                           | .00                    |          |
| Position Tenure |                               |                        | -.01     |
| Age             |                               |                        | -.05     |
| Gender          |                               |                        | -.08     |
| PSS             |                               |                        | .34**    |
| PCS             |                               |                        | .06      |
| <b>Step 4</b>   | .26**                         | .08**                  |          |
| Position Tenure |                               |                        | -.02     |
| Age             |                               |                        | -.06     |
| Gender          |                               |                        | -.04     |
| PSS             |                               |                        | .14**    |
| PCS             |                               |                        | .05      |
| JUST            |                               |                        | .35**    |

*Note.* Standardized regression coefficients are reported. \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\*  $p \leq .01$

## DISCUSSION

The primary objectives of the current project were to examine the generalizability of prior Western empirical findings regarding support and justice and to compare the impact of justice and support on employee job satisfaction and performance. The results, while generally supported, do present an interesting picture. For instance, the first three hypotheses concerning the positive relationships between the predictors were all supported by the current data. However, hypotheses 4 and 5 presented somewhat conflicting results, which are discussed below.

Given the current findings, it is clear that interactional justice, supervisor support, and coworker support all play important roles in employee job satisfaction and performance. The strong positive relationships between all variables indicate that a supportive and fair workplace does indeed impact employees' job satisfaction and performance ratings. These results seem to support previous work finding little to no difference in the generalizability of Western findings to Asian populations (Lam, Schaubroeck, & Aryee, 2002; Seo, Ko, & Price, 2004), suggesting that these basic relationships may be somewhat universal in nature.

Although all the variables reported strong positive relationships with each other, interactional justice remains the only significant predictor of both employee job satisfaction *and* performance when controlling for the other variables. It remained quite a robust predictor, accounting for 19% of the variance in ratings of job satisfaction and 12% of the variance in performance. The treatment that people receive when implementing a policy or procedure clearly has a strong impact on both job attitudes and behaviors. These findings support previous work on the subject of justice indicating it is a predictor of a variety of affective and behavioral outcomes (Colquitt et al., 2001).

The results concerning perceived supervisor and coworker support are rather interesting and suggest they may play somewhat contrasting roles in job satisfaction and performance. Supervisor support only remained a significant predictor in the regression models for employee performance, accounting for only 2% of the variance, and failed to predict employee job satisfaction at all. Coworker support, on the other hand, only remained a significant predictor in the regression models for job satisfaction, accounting for 3% of the variance, and failed to predict performance at all. These findings suggest that support from coworkers has greater impact on employees' affective assessments of their jobs, and supervisor support may provide more performance-related benefits.

Prior empirical findings indicate coworker support benefits employees' well being by providing a buffer against experienced stress and decreasing job dissatisfaction (Lim, 1997; Van Emmerik, Euwema, & Bakker, 2007). Coworkers essentially serve as an emotional and psychological buffer for employees and, therefore, have greater impact on one's job satisfaction. The current findings support this previous work and also contradict prior research indicating coworker support may play a positive role in employee performance.

Previous work provides limited evidence that coworker support impacts employee performance through social exchange. Nielsen (2014), for instance, reported a positive yet weak prediction of performance from employee perceptions of coworker support. Based on organizational support theory (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002), however, supervisors and coworkers only impact employee performance to the extent that the supervisors and coworkers are considered "agents of the organization" with discretion to make decisions. The absence of a predictive relationship in the current project between coworker support and performance suggests that coworkers may not be viewed as discretionary agents of the organization and thus less able to provide access to resources, discretion over decisions and policy enactment, etc. This would naturally limit the impact of coworker support on one's performance.

The present findings with regard to supervisor support are also somewhat mixed. The link between supervisor support and performance is evident, yet weak, and suggests that supervisors do indeed have a direct impact on employee performance. Again, organizational support theory provides an explanation through its focus on the discretionary power and access to resources and benefits that supervisors may provide employees (Eisenberger et al., 2002). However, the lack of a significant predictive relationship between supervisor support and job satisfaction contradicts previous work.

Both George and Brief (1992) and Eisenberger et al. (2001) suggested that positive work experiences, such as supervisor support, serve as a signal to employees of the employer's value, care and concern for the employee, as well as a positive valuation of the employee's competence and achievement. Supervisor support is understood to have a positive effect on employees' mood and affect, and thus result in increasing job satisfaction. However, supervisor support in the current study failed to predict job satisfaction once interactional justice was entered into the model. These findings contradict previous work

and instead suggest that supervisors may have their greatest influence on employees' performance behaviors, rather than on attitudes.

The East Asian culture and its emphasis on preservation of interpersonal harmony and on submission to authority could lead one to expect that support from supervisors and coworkers might have more predictive power than measures of fairness on employee attitudes and behaviors, such as job satisfaction and performance. Previous results comparing Western and Eastern samples have been mixed. Researchers have found much more pronounced reactions to the voice effect and to perceived procedural injustices in American samples when compared to East Asian samples (Brockner et al., 2001; Blader et al., 2001). However, a model of job satisfaction and a comparison of justice outcomes both resulted in similar results when compared across cultures (Seo et al., 2004; Lam et al., 2002). The present findings indicate that interactional justice is by far the most robust predictor of both job satisfaction and performance, suggesting that the perceived East Asian contextual differences may have much less of an impact than previously thought. Instead, it appears that perceived fairness in the workplace plays a large role in East Asian workplace attitudes and performance.

## **FUTURE IMPLICATIONS**

Given the importance of both coworker and supervisor support found in the present study and in prior research (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), future research might examine specific supportive behaviors. Current measures of PSS and PCS do not allow for the assessment of specific behaviors. Future investigations might include objective assessments of such behaviors as positive feedback, coaching, peer mentoring, opinion seeking, inclusion, flexibility, etc. Additionally, it would be valuable to examine the relative impact of such behaviors. This holds significant practical relevance for organizations that want to develop the supportive capacity of supervisors, managers, and coworkers while also doing so very efficiently and with empirical evidence of effectiveness.

Similarly, research should more thoroughly examine the specific mechanisms through which interactional justice is most effectively conveyed. Current measures do not yet allow for the assessment at such specificity, yet would be quite valuable. The current results indicate that fairness in the conveyance of policy and procedure is of paramount importance to employee job satisfaction and performance across cultures. Yet, very little is known regarding the most effective methods an organization should employ to ensure its effectiveness.

While the current project indicates that Western findings regarding the impact of support and justice in the workplace generalize to the East Asian culture, less is known about the mechanisms through which fairness and support are construed across cultures. Future research could focus not only on unpackaging the specific elements of supportive and fair behavior in the workplace, but also on discerning if those elements generalize across cultures.

## **LIMITATIONS**

One limitation of the present study is that all measures come from the same source – the subordinate. Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) discuss common method variance, or variance that is attributable to the measurement method rather than to the constructs the measures represent, and indicate that it is one of the main sources of measurement error, which threatens the validity of researchers' conclusions. Obtaining construct measures from the same individual and using measures that are worded similarly both potentially contribute to common method bias. Common method variance could weaken the findings in the present study.

A second limitation involves lack of generalizability of results. The Asian retail population and settings involved in this study may have somewhat reduced external validity, resulting in less generalizability to other occupations, organizations, and cultures. Different findings might emerge, for instance, when studying occupations with greater autonomy or within more cohesive teams, which could influence employee responses to injustice and the relative importance of peer support.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the current study sought to bridge some gaps in current knowledge concerning the relative strength and predictive value of workplace support and interactional justice on employee job satisfaction and performance. Additionally, this study examined the generalizability of findings to an East Asian sample. The current findings indicate that supervisor support and coworker support likely contribute differently to employee attitudes and behaviors, with employees attributing the utmost importance to fair treatment in the workplace.

These results extend our current knowledge on the topic and provide a different lens through which to examine the otherwise well researched topics of workplace support and fairness. The findings easily lead to a number of very practical implications for organizations, namely the importance of emphasizing and training supervisors on ensuring fairness when interacting with employees. It is also fair to say that the question of generalizability of Western findings regarding the impact of support and fairness on employee attitudes and behaviors, in this case, has been answered affirmatively. The question of how fair and supportive behaviors manifest in the workplace, however, still remains at large.

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