

Review on the Study of Perceived Organizational Support

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Abstract: Perceived organizational support refers to employee's perception of how much their organization supports their work and values their contributions to the organization. Perceived organizational support represents a person's relationship with the organization. If employees get more support from their organization, they may have more positive attitudes toward organization. This paper reviews domestic and foreign research on perceived organizational support, starting from the theoretical background, and discusses that perceived organizational support is based on the theory of social exchange and organizational anthropomorphism. Secondly, the concept, measures, antecedents and consequences of perceived organizational support are summarized and sorted. Finally, the limitations and developments in the field of research of employee's perceived organizational support are discussed.

1. Introduction

How to effectively keep talents and motivate employees has become one of the hot issues of enterprise managers and human resource management experts. A large number of studies have shown that the psychological feelings of employees at work are related to the degree of organizational support, and employees will give feedback of attitude or behavior according to the organizational care or support they feel.

Research on perceived organizational support originates from the importance that organizations attach to employees. Before the 1980s, when discussing the relationship between organizations and employees, academic circles always paid unilateral attention to the commitment of employees to the organization, but ignored the commitment of organizations to employees. Employees are usually more concerned about the organization's commitment to them, and they want to be valued, supported and cared for by the organization. By the mid-1980s, scholars put forward the concept of organizational support theory and perceived organizational support according to the theory of social exchange and organizational personification, emphasizing the importance of support and care that employees feel from the organization. It is of great practical significance to stimulate employees' enthusiasm and enhance their organizational identity and sense of belonging. The concept of perceived organizational support emphasizes the two-way relationship between the organization and employees. For the first time, the support and care of the organization are the important reason why employees are willing to stay in the organization and work hard for the realization of organizational goals.

2. Theoretical foundation

2.1 Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory is a sociological theory that emerged in the United States in the middle of the 20th century, originated from sociology, psychology and economics. The theory of social exchange advocates that all human behavior is influenced and dominated by some kind of exchange activity that can bring rewards. Therefore, all human social activities can be summed up as an exchange. The social relationship formed by people in social exchange is also an exchange relationship. Social exchange theory was first founded by sociologists Homans. He pointed out that

people try to get more pay at the least cost in the process of social exchange with others. At the same time, the principle of fairness restricts the universal norms of social exchange, that is, if people always gain benefits without paying the price, they will feel guilty and embarrassed^[1]. Since Homans founded the theory, Blau and Emerson have further improved the theory of social exchange. Blau studied social exchange from the perspective of microeconomics, believing that social exchange is a voluntary action driven by the demand for others' return, and all contacts between individuals are dependent on the form of giving and equivalent return. He also emphasized the role of trust in social exchange, in which the first person to give an exchange must believe that the other person will give some form of return at some point in the future^[2]. Emerson (1976) extended the duality of exchange to the multi-party exchange network relationship, and believed that the participants in the exchange relationship could be either individuals, organizations or groups. The process of social exchange is a long-term and mutually beneficial continuous exchange process, and only long-term exchange behavior can bring about the balance of exchange value between the two sides^[3]. Social exchange theory suggests that employees who believe they are supported by the organization are usually willing to make sacrifices to help the organization achieve business goals^[4].

2.2 Organizational anthropomorphism

Levinson (1965) proposed the organizational anthropomorphism for the first time. He believed that the process of organization selection often leads to the gathering of people, whose personality structure has many common places, so they tend to take actions along some ways of personality dimension^[5]. These factors lead to corporate personality, that is, the general behavior pattern of employees in a particular enterprise. This behavior pattern is recognized by others in the organization. Therefore, for employees, the organization is not a lifeless material organization, but a certain human. These characteristics, they associate these characteristics with organizations that they think have human characteristics. The manager of the organization is the agent of the organization. The behavior of the manager of the organization not only represents the individual behavior and motivation of the manager, but also represents the will of the organization. Employees often interpret certain ideas or behaviors of organizational managers as the intention of the organization, rather than just as the personal motives of the managers. According to the theory of organizational anthropomorphism, employees judge whether an organization supports them based on the good or bad treatment they receive from their managers. When employees perceive the support of the organization, they will show high work efficiency in the work, and repay the organization with a positive work attitude. Since the managers that the employees have the most contact with are their direct superiors, if the employees can get good support, care and treatment from their direct superiors, they will have a sense of belonging and responsibility to the organization and a strong sense of organizational support. On the contrary, employees' perceived organizational support is lower. Therefore, the organizational support perceived by employees is judged by the behavior of organizational leaders, and organizational anthropomorphism is the theoretical basis of organizational support.

3. The concept of perceived organizational support

Eisenberger (1986) put forward the theory of organizational support, which quickly attracted attention. Among them, the perceived organizational support (POS for short) is the core of the theory of organizational support. Eisenberger et al. (1986) defined organizational support as employees' perception of whether the organization values their contributions, cares about their personal interests, and provides support for their work. The concept of organizational support proposed by Eisenberger reflects employees' expectation of the organization to meet their own "social emotional needs", including two points. One is that the organization attaches great importance to employee contributions and efforts, and employees hope to be recognized by the organization; the other is that the organization attaches importance to employee happiness^[6]. Mc Millin (1997) supplemented and improved the concept of organizational support proposed by

Eisenberger et al. He believed that the support and help felt by employees from the organization should include, in addition to emotional aspects, instrumental support, that is, material support, personnel training and information resources needed by employees in their life and work^[7]. Rhoades et al. (2002) introduced the element of context on the basis of previous studies. He proposed to combine employees' perception of organizational support with organizational context. He believed that when the organization is in two different situations, the employees' perception of support in all aspects of the organization will be different. Perceived organizational support meets employees' psychological needs. Higher perceived organizational support will make employees have a sense of responsibility and mission to the organization. Employees will not only feel that they must make a commitment to the organization, but also believe that they have the responsibility to support organizational goals through practical actions in return for organizational support.

Perceived organizational support is an independent concept. According to the definition of perceived organizational support given by scholars above, although scholars have different definitions of perceived organizational support, they all believe that organizational support is the comprehensive feeling of material or emotional support that employees get from organization.

4. Dimension and Measures

Eisenberger (1986) believed that perceived organizational support was a one-dimensional construct, and developed a scale of perceived organizational support^[6]. The scale contains 36 items, each with 18 items for positive and negative scoring, using Likert 7-point scoring method. Eisenberger et al. used the scale to conduct empirical tests on 9 different types of companies. After testing and analysis, the results show that perceived organizational support is a single-dimensional structure, and the scale has high reliability and validity. This scale is highly recognized and is widely used in subsequent research. Because the scale containing 36 items was too long, the researchers reduced the original 36 items in subsequent studies. They selected several items with high factor load from 36 items to form an new scale. The common short scale includes 6 items, 8 items and 17 items. The results showed that the reduced scale also had good reliability and validity. However, with the development of perceived organizational support theory, many scholars gradually pay attention to the multi-dimensional level of perceived organizational support. The multidimensional view of perceived organizational support is recognized by scholars. Mc Millin (1997) think that the single-dimensional structure of perceived organizational support proposed by Eisenberger is too single, and the perceived organizational support structure should include the instrumental support dimension at material level in addition to the social emotional support dimension at spiritual level. Therefore, Mc Millin proposed a two-dimensional structural model of perceived organizational support and developed an perceived organizational support scale with 15 items^[7]. Bhan and thumbnavin (2003) believed that perceived organizational support included affective support, information support and material support dimension^[8]. Kraimer and Wayne (2004) investigated 230 expatriate employees and their supervisors, verified the three-dimensional structure of perceived organizational support, and developed a 12-item scale with 4 items for each dimension^[9].

5. Antecedents of perceived organizational support

According to the literature review and analysis of perceived organizational support, organizational justice, supervisor support, organizational compensation and working conditions are important antecedents of perceived organizational support.

5.1 Organizational justice

Organizational justice refers to the employees' psychological perception about the subjective environment in their work places (such as organizational systems and policies) based on justice measurement. Organizational justice is one of the most important antecedent variables of perceived organizational support. Many studies have discussed the predictive effect of organizational justice,

from different aspects, on perceived organizational support. Research shows that different dimensions of organizational justice have a significant positive impact on perceived organizational support, and organizational justice will enable employees to establish a positive exchange relationship with the organization. Cropanzano and Ambrose (2001) believe that distributive justice has a predictive effect on perceived organizational support, because distributive justice takes into account social emotional benefits as well as economic benefits. Shalhoop(2003) believes that procedural justice and distributive justice are positively related to organizational support. Cheung and Law (2008) believe that interactive justice has a significant predictive effect on perceived organizational support, and this conclusion has been recognized by other scholars.

5.2 Perceived supervisor support

An organization is a collection of individuals with different cultural backgrounds, personality characteristics, goals and motivations. Previous studies have proved that the support provided by supervisors is an important source of employees' perceived organizational support. Supervisor support refers to employees' perception that supervisors value the contributions of subordinates, provide work-related help to subordinates, and care about the well-being of subordinates. Perceived organizational support theory holds that employees interpret the behavior of the supervisor and organization's agent as the organization's behavior. This perception of organizational visualization and organizational personality makes the perceived supervisor support very important to the entire organization. Since the superior is the agent of the organization, responsible for guiding and evaluating the performance of subordinates, employees will regard their superiors' supportive or non-supportive treatment of them as a manifestation of the level of organizational support^[6]. Wayne et al. (1997) pointed out that the perception of supervisor support and organizational support are conceptually different, but they are related in practice. Because the organization's sense of support is determined by the long-term experience of the individual's direct supervisor (past or current) or senior management in the organization. Therefore, logically, organizational support can be regarded as one of the predictors of employees' organizational support. Generally speaking, employees will believe that the direct superior's evaluation of individuals must represent the opinions of the organization, and then they will associate the support of the direct superior with the support of the entire organization.

5.3 Organizational compensation and working conditions

Working conditions, salaries and benefits will have a positive impact on employees, which to a large extent reflects the organization's recognition of employees' work. Salary and working conditions that meet employees' expectations can greatly improve employees' perception of organizational support. If an organization can provide employees with opportunities for career advancement, talent display, work support and spiritual and material rewards, it is often helpful to improve employees' perceived organizational support. Studies show that there is an important and close relationship between salary satisfaction and organizational support. The salary and working conditions that organizations give employees often have certain motives, and different motives will inevitably have an impact on employees' perceived organizational support in many aspects. If the organization actively provides employees with various kinds of help and support, then employees will tend to give a higher evaluation of the organization, and thus improve the perceived organizational support of employees. Employees hope that the organization can develop their potential and work ability, and obtain future career development opportunities (such as training, promotion, etc.); Career development opportunity means that the organization recognizes and values the employee's contribution to the organization, which implies the organization's support for the employee's future.

6. Consequence of perceived organizational support

Perceived organizational support can affect employees' behavior in many ways. From the literature at home and abroad, it can be concluded that the perceived organizational support will

have a great impact on the job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intention, job stress.

6.1 Job performance

Job performance can be understood as employee's behaviors that contribute to the realization of organizational goals, and its influence on organizational goals can be either positive or negative. The predictive effect of perceived organizational support on job performance has received a lot of research attention and discussion. Studies have shown that organizational support can positively predict the job performance of employees. According to the reciprocity principle, the support given by the organization will increase employees' sense of value and work competence, and encourage them to repay the organization by improving their personal job performance. In a survey of 118 multinational employees, Kawai and Strange found that perceived organizational support had a positive effect on multinational employees' task performance, and job crafting played a fully mediating role.

6.2 Organizational citizenship behavior

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) refers to a self-conscious individual behavior of employees that is beneficial to the organization, but has not been clearly recognized or stipulated in the organization's formal compensation system. These behaviors generally go beyond the employee's job description, are motivated by their own will, have no connection to the formal reward system, and are not required in their role. A large number of studies have shown that there is a significant positive correlation between perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior. Perceived organizational support can well predict organizational citizenship behavior, and the predictive effect of perceived organizational support on organizational citizenship behavior is stronger than that of organizational commitment. Sguera et al. (2018) pointed out that there is a significant positive correlation between perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior. When employees perceive a high level of organizational support, they will proactively take positive organizational behaviors in order to reward the support provided by the organization, such as helping others, saving organizational resources and maintaining the corporate image.

6.3 Organizational commitment

In accordance with the principle of reciprocity, perceived organizational support can enhance employees' sense of responsibility and enthusiasm for work. In essence, this sense of responsibility from the organization makes employees have a strong sense of commitment to their work^[10]. Research found that the higher the perceived organizational support, the stronger the organizational commitment. Based on the principle of reciprocity, perceived organizational support will make employees feel the obligation to care about the welfare of the organization and help the organization achieve its goals.

6.4 Turnover intention

Perceived organizational support can affect employees' turnover intention. Perceived organizational support can affect employees' sense of responsibility for their work goals. The organization provides all kinds of support to employees to make them aware of their obligation and responsibility to help the organization achieve organizational performance and goals. So, from this perspective, a high level of perceived organizational support can effectively reduce or even eliminate employees' turnover intention. Employees with a high affective commitment to the organization tend to be more productive and less likely to quit their jobs^[11]. Singh et al. (2018) used 245 female engineers as the research object and explored the issue of female engineers' turnover, and the results showed that perceived organizational support affects the career commitment and turnover intention of female engineers^[12].

6.5 Job stress

Perceived organizational support is closely related to employees' stress at work. The research of George and Reed (1993) found that the perceived organizational support can reduce the psychological and physiological discomfort caused by job stress^[13]. Especially when employees are under greater job stress, the decompression effect of organizational support is more obvious. High organizational support indicates that employees can get organization's care in time when they encounter problems and pressures at work, which greatly reduces the stress they feel. Employees with higher perceived organizational support tend to have lower job stress, that is, perceived organizational support and job stress present a negative correlation. Therefore, for the problem of how to reduce the job stress of employees, managers can consider taking relevant measures to improve employees' perceived organizational support.

7. Limitation and future research

On the one hand, most of the studies on perceived organizational support adopt cross-sectional data. That is, the same variable is collected at a time point, so it is difficult to truly reveal the causal relationship between variables, which makes the validation of causal relationship between variables in the perceived organizational support model not rigorous enough. Future studies can adopt longitudinal studies, such as time series test, to track the occurrence process of variables and carry out more comprehensive studies, so as to improve the persuadability of research results. On the other hand, studies on perceived organizational support are mostly empirical research using questionnaire survey. In the process of questionnaire survey, researchers usually ask respondents to fill in the questionnaire unilaterally, so the survey data is highly subjective, thus reducing the validity of conclusions. Future research can collect data from multiple channels to enrich the material.

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