



THE IMPACT OF PERCEIVED SUPPORT IN THE WORKPLACE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONSCIOUSNESS AND PERSONAL PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

The purpose of the study in this paper is to estimate the impact of perceived support in the workplace on the relationship between consciousness and personal performance. The study aims to observe the behavioral trend of performance when the perceived workplace support is included as mediator, as a third variable. We expect to notice an increase in professional performance when conscientious employees perceive greater workplace support. Our study was based on a sample of 120 people. To test the mediation relationships, we used the macro PROCESS developed by Andrew Hayes. According to the obtained results, the Support based on the possibilities of contact with colleagues effectively mediates the relationship between Conscientiousness, as independent variable, and the dimensions of Personal performance, as dependent variable. Therefore, Support based on the possibilities of contact with colleagues brings a significant contribution to the cohesion of the team, to the quality of interpersonal relations, to increased performance, to workplace comfort and to diminishing the negative effects of stress.

Keywords: *mediator, workplace support, conscientiousness, performance*

1. INTRODUCTION

According to research in the field, organizations should implement strategies based on capitalizing on the skills and on the motivations of conscientious employees.

Conscientious individuals are characterized by status, acceptance and predictability (Bilbie, Bratu, Rizeanu, 2020). Building organizational frameworks

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that enable conscientious people to meet these motivations is essential to maximizing their professional potential. Having a strong sense for responsibility / focus on their goals (Sulea, Filipescu and Fischmann, 2012), conscientious employees are able and determined to channel their energy into work, thus being more involved, and thus increasing their professional performance.

The meta-analysis of personality and performance at work in relation to the level of conscientiousness, highlights that the level of conscientiousness is responsible with prediction of work performance in all occupations (Hassan, Akhtar and Yilmaz., 2016). Kim, Shin and Swanger (2008) demonstrate the significant influence of conscientiousness on work involvement.

Currently, scientific research in the field focuses on testing the effect of potential moderators (stressors, performance) on the relationship among antecedents and employment. Sulea and his collaborators (2012) mention that there is a relevant link between conscientiousness and work involvement, but it is not clear whether this relationship retains its power when employees experience abuse or decreased performance at work.

On the other hand, Chughtai and Zafar (2006) have shown that people characterized by a high degree of work satisfaction are more likely to have higher performance. People characterized by a high level of commitment have the intention to stay in the organization for a long time (Chughtai and Zafar, 2006 apud Darie, 2011), feeling high professional satisfaction (Al-Hussami, 2008 apud Darie, 2011). Work environment is an important factor that can affect their work performance. Also, the degree of compatibility between the employees and their job is an important influencing factor for employees' work performance (Chang et al., 2020) and is defined as the important factor to which individual and environmental characteristics match (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005 apud Chang et al., 2020). The positive influence of employee-job compatibility on the attitudes and behaviors of qualified professionals has been demonstrated, another important factor related to work performance being organizational support (Chang et al., 2020). Research has shown that the degree of work involvement is dependent on employees' perception of high levels of organizational support and of increased privileges (Liao, Joshi and Chuang, 2004 apud Chang et al., 2020).

2. OBJECTIVE AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. SCOPUS AND OBJECTIVE

The purpose of the study in this paper is to analyze the impact of perceived workplace support in the relationship among conscientiousness and personal performance. The study aims to observe the behavioral trend of performance when the perceived workplace support is included as mediator, as a third variable.

We expect to notice an increase in professional performance when conscientious employees perceive greater support in the workplace.

2.2. HYPOTHESES

We propose to study the following hypotheses in this paper:

- 1) Conscientiousness will predict a significant increase in Personal performance and its dimensions, e.g. those associated with Actions directed towards and for the benefit of the organization (OCBO), respectively Actions directed towards work colleagues, in order to help solve their work-related problems (OCBP);
- 2) Perceived workplace support (as a global factor) and its dimensions (Perceived organizational support; Support based on relationships with the colleagues; Support based on the relationship with the superior; Support determined by the possibilities of contact with colleagues) mediate the relationship among Conscientiousness and Personal performance studied at the dimensions level (Actions directed towards and for the benefit of the organization (OCBO), respectively Actions directed towards work colleagues, in order to help solve their work-related problems (OCBP).

3. METHOD

3.1. PARTICIPANTS

The sample used in the study included 120 respondents from Romania (60.8% women and 39.2% men). The tools used for data collection were questionnaires made available in online format, on a friendly interface of a virtual platform - so as to motivate the participants to fill them in. The recruitment and inclusion of participants from the online environment was performed using the snowball technique, which combines individual activity with group activity and involves reducing the number of elements part of a problem or situation, in order to focus on the basics. Participants were assured that data storage and processing will be carried out by respecting their confidentiality.

3.2. MEASURES

Conscientiousness was evaluated using the conscientiousness scale within the Big-Five Personality Inventory, adapted in Romanian by Iliescu et al. (2015), which includes 20 items. *Perceived workplace support* was estimated using two questionnaires, one with a single scale and the second with three scales, as follows. We use the *Organizational support* Scale (8 items) from the questionnaire proposed by Rhoades, Eisenberger and Armeli (2001), translated into Romanian by Iliescu et al. (2015). *Relationships with Colleagues* (9 items), *Relationship with Superiors* (9 items) and *Possibilities of contact with Colleagues* (4 items) are scales which are part of the QEAW, Questionnaire on the Experience and Assessment of Work

developed by Veldhoven and Meijman. *Professional performance* was estimated using the List of Civic Organizational Behaviors - Long Version (20 items) developed by Fox et al. (2012) and translated in Romanian by Iliescu et al. (2012). One can calculate a total score or scores on two dimensions: Actions directed towards and for the benefit of the organization (OCBO) and Actions directed towards work colleagues, in order to help solve their work-related problems (OCBP). The questionnaire includes 15 items for Actions directed towards work colleagues, in order to help solve their work-related problems (OCBP), and 5 items for Actions directed towards and for the benefit of the organization (OCBO).

3.3. METHODOLOGY

Based on the validated data, we ran in SPSS a series of regression models having as independent variable Conscientiousness, and as dependent variable, in turn: Personal performance and, respectively its dimensions, Actions directed towards and for the benefit of the organization (OCBO) and Actions directed towards work colleagues, in order to help solve their work-related problems (OCBP). Thus, the study focused on observing the behavioral trend of performance when the perceived workplace support is included as mediator, as a third variable. We expect to notice an increase in professional performance when conscientious employees perceive higher workplace support. To explain the influence of perceived workplace support in the relationship between conscientiousness and performance, we used the following mediation process (see Figure 1):

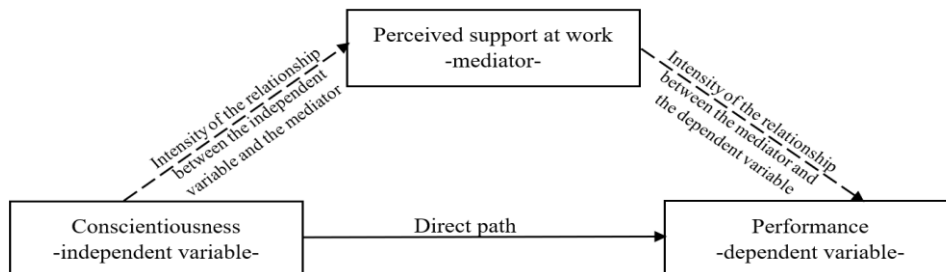


Figure 1. Mediation relationship between conscientiousness and performance

Studying the relationships in the model shown in Figure 1, it is visible that the effect of Conscientiousness, as the independent variable, on Performance, as the dependent variable, is transmitted through two paths. The first path is the direct relationship (called the direct path in Figure 1) between Conscientiousness and Performance. The value associated to the direct effect of the relation represents only a part of the total effect, since in this case a part of the effect on the independent

variable on the dependent variable is transmitted through the mediator variable: independent variable → mediator; mediator → dependent variable. The effect transmitted on the path related to the intensity of the relationship between the independent variable and the mediator is represented by indirect effect (Popa, 2015), and its value is determined as a product of the indices related to the intensity of the relationship between the independent variable and the mediator, as independently of the direct effect of the independent variable on the mediator.

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS

Both for the descriptive/inferential statistics and for testing our hypotheses we used the software SPSS v.23. To test the mediation relationships (Popa, 2015) we used the macro PROCESS v3.5, developed by Andrew Hayes.

4. RESULTS

4.1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The information regarding the descriptive analysis of the data at the level of the three considered variables (Conscientiousness, Perceived workplace support, Personal performance) is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The central tendency (Mean, Median) and SD (standard deviation) for the variables included in the study, calculated on the group of subjects (N = 120)

Variable Dimension	Mean	Median	Standard deviation
1. Conscientiousness	3.07	3.15	0.55
2. Perceived workplace support	2.83	2.79	0.43
2.1. Perceived organizational support	4.71	4.87	1.49
2.2. Support based on the relationships with colleagues	2.29	2.22	0.44
2.3. Support based on the relationship with the superior	2.34	2.22	0.49
2.4. Support based on the possibilities of contact with colleagues	1.97	1.75	0.91
3. Personal performance	3.81	3.93	0.81
3.1. Actions directed towards and for the benefit of the organization (OCBO)	3.84	4.00	0.89
3.2. Actions directed towards work colleagues, in order to help solve their work-related problems (OCBP)	3.79	3.93	0.78

According to the obtained results, Perceived organizational support has the largest influence on Perceived workplace support, with an average of 4.71 \approx 5 that corresponds to the option „Moderate agreement”. In other words, respondents consider that they receive organizational support to an acceptable extent. The standard deviation value of 1.49 shows that scores are quite dispersed around the average, which demonstrates that respondents perceive organizational support quite differently.

4.2. MODEL OF REGRESSION BETWEEN CONSCIENTIOUSNESS AND PERSONAL PERFORMANCE, RESPECTING ITS DIMENSIONS

Information regarding the three estimated prediction models is presented in Table 2. Thus, based on model 1, we can say that Personal Performance is explained in proportion of 10% by Conscientiousness. In model 2, Actions directed towards work colleagues, in order to help solve their work-related problems (OCBP) are explained in proportion of 9% by the predictive variable Conscientiousness. Finally, model 3 estimates that Actions directed towards and for the benefit of the organization (OCBO) are explained in proportion of 10% by Conscientiousness, according to Table 2. Whereas in the three models Conscientiousness predicts with statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) both Personal performance (as a global factor) and its Dimensions, we can confirm the first hypothesis.

Table 2. Regression model between Conscientiousness and Performance (OCBP, OCBO)

Nr. crt.	Dependent variable	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	P-value	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2	<i>F</i> change
1	Personal performance	0.47	3.77	0.001	0.32	0.11	0.10	14.22
2	OCBP	0.33	3.56	0.001	0.31	0.09	0.09	12.73
3	OCBO	0.13	3.91	0.001	0.33	0.11	0.10	15.28

4.3. THE MEDIATION RELATIONSHIP

The results obtained by running the mediation relations in SPSS partially confirm the possibility of mediation between Conscientiousness and Personal Performance. The most effective mediator is represented by Support based on the possibilities of contact with colleagues, one of the dimensions of Perceived workplace support. Table 3 presents the data obtained after mediating the relationship between Conscientiousness and Personal Performance by Support based

on the possibilities of contact with colleagues, one of the dimensions of Perceived workplace support.

Table 3. Results of testing the mediation effect of Support based on the possibilities of contact with colleagues on the considered relationship

Mediator: Support based on the possibilities of contact with colleagues	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>P</i>	Bootstrap 95%CI
<i>The direct effect of the mediator on the Dependent Variable</i>	1.13	0.36	<.05	[0.42; 1.85]
<i>The total effect of the Independent Variable on the Dependent Variable</i>	0.47	0.12	<.001	[0.22; 0.71]
<i>The direct effect of the Independent Variable on the Dependent Variable</i>	0.48	0.12	<.001	[0.24; 0.72]
<i>The indirect effect of the Independent Variable on the Dependent Variable through the mediator</i>	-0.01	0.02	-	[-0.05; 0.03]

On the other hand, in Table 4 are presented the data obtained after mediating the relationship among Conscientiousness and Actions directed towards work colleagues, in order to help solve their work-related problems (OCBP), one of the dimensions of Personal Performance, by Support based on the possibilities of contact with colleagues, one of the dimensions of Perceived workplace support.

Table 4. Results of testing the mediation effect of Support based on the possibilities of contact with colleagues on the considered relationship

Mediator: Support based on the possibilities of contact with colleagues	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>P</i>	Bootstrap 95%CI
<i>The direct effect of the mediator on the Dependent Variable</i>	0.88	0.27	≤.001	[0.35; 1.41]
<i>The total effect of the Independent Variable on the Dependent Variable</i>	0.33	0.09	<.001	[0.1; 0.51]
<i>The direct effect of the Independent Variable on the Dependent Variable</i>	0.34	0.08	<.001	[0.16; 0.52]
<i>The indirect effect of the Independent Variable on the Dependent Variable through the mediator</i>	-0.0008	0.002	-	[-0.005; 0.003]

Finally, Table 5 contains the data obtained after mediating the relationship between Conscientiousness and Actions directed towards and for the benefit of the organization (OCBO), one of the dimensions of Personal Performance, by Support based on opportunities to contact colleagues, one of the dimensions of Perceived workplace support.

Table 5. Results of testing the mediation effect of the Support based on the possibilities of contact with colleagues on the considered relationship

Mediator: Support based on the possibilities of contact with colleagues	Coefficient	SE	P	Bootstrap 95%CI
<i>The direct effect of the mediator on the Dependent Variable</i>	0.25	0.10	<.05	[0.04; 0.46]
<i>The total effect of the Independent Variable on the Dependent Variable</i>	0.13	0.03	<.001	[0.06; 0.20]
<i>The direct effect of the Independent Variable on the Dependent Variable</i>	0.14	0.03	<.001	[0.07; 0.21]
<i>The indirect effect of the Independent Variable on the Dependent Variable through the mediator</i>	-0.002	0.007		[-0.019; 0.011]

The direct effect of the Mediation relations of Conscientiousness to all the other three remaining dimensions of Perceived workplace support is statistically insignificant ($b = -0.01$; $p = 0.74 > 0.05$).

Since only Support based on the possibilities of contact with colleagues effectively mediates the relationship between Conscientiousness, as independent variable, and Personal Performance, as dependent variable, studied both globally and in terms of its dimensions (OCBO and OCBP), we can only partially confirm the second hypothesis.

5. CONCLUSIONS

It is superfluous for Perceived workplace support and its dimensions to be in a reciprocal relationship with Conscientiousness, because conscientious workers, ideal partners for employers, to feel appreciated and motivated to get involved in their relationships with their colleagues and with their superiors, to increase both the level of individual performance and the level of organizational performance. The validity of Conscientiousness as a predictor for Performance was also confirmed in the analysis of personality and performance at work in relation to the level of conscientiousness, where the level of conscientiousness appears to be an important predictor of job performance in all occupations (Hassan et al., 2016).

In conclusion, the Support based on the possibilities of contact with colleagues effectively mediates the relationship between Conscientiousness, as independent variable, and the dimensions of Personal performance, as dependent variable. Therefore, Support based on the possibilities of contact with colleagues brings a significant contribution to the cohesion of the team, to the quality of interpersonal

relations, to increased performance, to workplace comfort and to diminishing the negative effects of stress.

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