

The Influence of Social Support on Employees' Well-being

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Abstract

The importance of social support in the workplace has been receiving more attention, particularly given its positive impact on employees' health, workers' well-being, and job satisfaction. This article explores how support from colleagues and managers influences these critical outcomes. The study uses an artificial neural network model, specifically the multilayer perceptron, to examine the connections between social support and employee health, well-being, and satisfaction. Findings show a strong, positive relationship between social support and physical and mental well-being, underscoring the pivotal role of supportive workplace relationships in boosting employee satisfaction and overall well-being. These results highlight the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive workplace to improve employee outcomes.

Key words: social support, employees' health, well-being, employees' satisfaction

J.E.L. classification: O15, O33

1. Introduction

In recent years, social support in the workplace has become recognized as a vital contributor to employee health, well-being, and satisfaction. Organizations are increasingly aware that social dynamics—like relationships with colleagues and supervisors—significantly shape employee experiences, affecting their performance, motivation, and likelihood to stay with the organization (Bocean, 2007, 2011). Workplace support can manifest in various forms, including emotional encouragement, instrumental assistance, and informational guidance (Vărzaru and Vărzaru, 2015a,b). These elements form the foundation of a positive workplace environment, fostering employees' sense of belonging, security, and purpose.

The present study aims to fill this gap by investigating the influence of social support on employees' health, workers well-being, and job satisfaction. The empirical model captures the nuanced relationships between various dimensions of social support and employee outcomes. This method allows for a detailed examination of how different forms of social support contribute to these outcomes, providing a deeper understanding of the factors that enhance or diminish employee well-being.

In doing so, this paper contributes to the growing body of literature on workplace well-being by offering empirical insights into how social dynamics within organizations shape employee experiences. By using advanced analytical tools, we also push the boundaries of traditional research methodologies, offering a novel perspective on the role of workplace support. The findings of this study have important implications for both research and practice, particularly in designing interventions and policies that promote supportive work environments and enhance employee outcomes.

2. Theoretical background

Health and well-being are core components of an individual's overall life quality, and their importance is increased in the work environment where employees spend a significant portion of their time. Working conditions commonly impact physical health, while job satisfaction, stress levels, and social interactions often influence psychological well-being. Numerous studies have shown that positive social support can buffer against the harmful effects of workplace stress and contribute to better overall health (LaMontagne et al., 2007; Ganster & Rosen, 2013). In contrast, lacking support or negative social interactions may increase stress, burnout, and lower job satisfaction (Parkyn and Wall, 2020).

Job satisfaction, often a critical predictor of employee retention and organizational productivity, is directly linked to social support (Bocean, 2007; Sitnikov and Bocean, 2010, 2013; Boxall and Purcell, 2022). This relationship suggests that creating an environment where social support thrives should be a priority for organizations aiming to optimize both employee well-being and business outcomes (Vărzaru and Vărzaru, 2013a,b, 2016; Ganster and Rosen, 2013; Vărzaru et al., 2013).

Despite the established importance of social support in various domains of life, its specific role in enhancing well-being and satisfaction has received limited attention in empirical research. While several studies have explored the individual impacts of social support on health (Wilton, 2022) and job satisfaction (Torrington et al., 2014), few have examined the interconnectedness of these factors through the lens of advanced analytical methods such as artificial neural networks.

The role of social support in enhancing employee health and well-being has been well documented in the literature. LaMontagne et al. (2007) highlighted the protective effect of social support against workplace stress, emphasizing that supportive relationships can mitigate the psychological toll of demanding work environments. Ganster and Rosen (2013) similarly argue that social interactions at work serve as a critical buffer, reducing the negative impacts of job stress on physical and mental health. Furthermore, Boxall and Purcell (2022) note that employee satisfaction is closely tied to supportive relationships with supervisors and colleagues, underlining the importance of a positive social environment for overall well-being.

Workplace social support is often linked to better employee outcomes, such as lower stress, improved health, and greater job satisfaction. Parkyn and Wall (2020) found that robust social support systems in the workplace can reduce burnout risk, especially in high-stress jobs. Torrington et al. (2014) add that positive social interactions and a sense of belonging within teams are essential for motivating and engaging employees, ultimately leading to higher satisfaction (Bocean et al., 2021, 2023).

Studies also show that social support affects more than just job satisfaction. Wilkinson (2022) observes that social networks at work are essential for psychological well-being, especially during organizational change or uncertainty. This buffering effect against adverse mental health outcomes is also noted by Ganster and Rosen (2013), who found that employees with higher levels of workplace support manage stress more effectively and are less prone to adverse psychological effects. There is also a strong connection between social support and physical health. Wilton (2022) states that a supportive workplace can improve employees' physical health by reducing stress-related illnesses and absenteeism. This link is particularly important in high-stress environments, where a supportive atmosphere can help mitigate health risks. LaMontagne et al. (2007) further highlight that supportive relationships with coworkers and supervisors do not improve mental well-being or improve.

3. Research methodology

This study utilizes a quantitative research design. The data were analyzed using artificial neural networks, specifically the multilayer perceptron model, to examine the relationships between social support and employee outcomes (Nicolescu and Vărzaru, 2020). The MLP model was chosen due to its ability to model complex relationships and identify both direct and indirect effects between variables (Vărzaru, 2022a,b,c,d; Rotea et al., 2023).

Data research was collected from a sample of employees across various organizations. Participants were surveyed using a structured questionnaire, which included items designed to measure social support, health, well-being, and job satisfaction (Table no. 1).

The paper hypothesizes that improving social support leads to better health outcomes, higher well-being, and enhanced job satisfaction. The performance of the MLP model was evaluated using accuracy measures and the interpretation of normalized importance scores. The results were validated through multiple iterations to ensure consistency and reliability.

Table no. 1 Selected variables

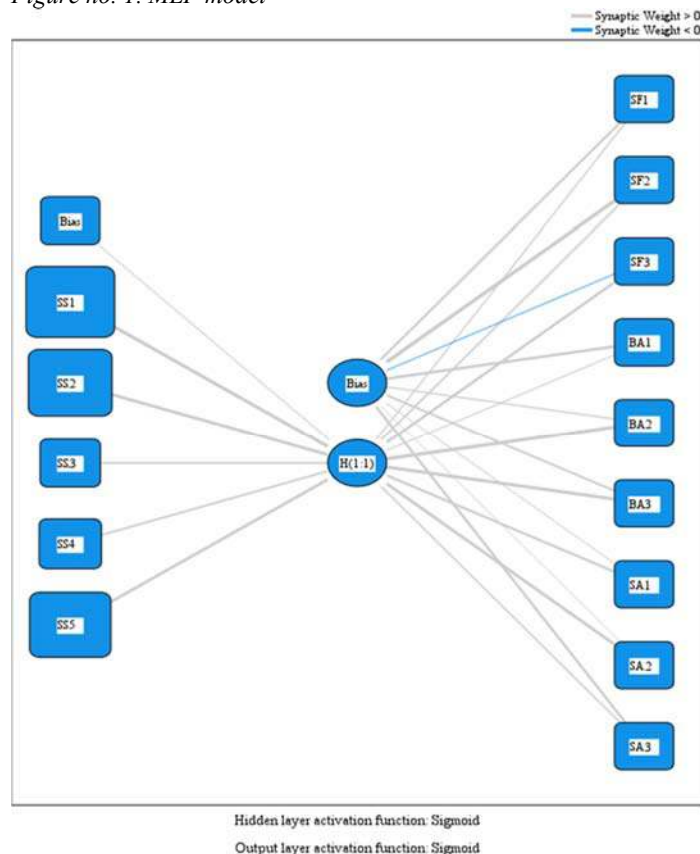
Input variables	Output variables
Support from colleagues (SS1)	Perceived health satisfaction (SF1)
Support from management (SS2)	Commitment to illness prevention for self and others (SF2)
The ability to obtain external assistance (SS3)	Perception of workplace safety (SF3)
A sense of belonging to the organization (SS4)	General well-being (BA1)
Friendships in the workplace (SS5)	Sense of purpose in professional activities (BA2)
	Work-related pride (BA3)
	Job satisfaction (SA1)
	Career advancement satisfaction (SA2)
	Empowerment in decision-making (SA3)

Source: authors' design

4. Findings

The MLP model includes two layers with input (SS1-SS5) and output variables (SF1-SF3, BA1-BA3, SA1-SA3), between which an intermediate layer activated by a sigmoid function is interposed. Figure no. 1 presents the MLP model.

Figure no. 1. MLP model



Source: authors' design

Table no. 2 presents the model values.

Table no. 2 MLP model parameters

Predictor		Predicted										Normalized Importance
		Hidden Layer 1	Output Layer									
			H(1:1)	SF1	SF2	SF3	BA1	BA2	BA3	SA1	SA2	
Input Layer	(Bias)	0.874										
	SS1	1.553										100.0%
	SS2	1.536										91.5%
	SS3	1.074										52.1%
	SS4	1.094										55.4%
	SS5	1.428										87.6%
Hidden Layer 1	(Bias)		1.216	1.640	-0.317	1.424	0.976	1.118	0.832	0.049	1.334	
	H(1:1)		0.893	1.040	1.355	0.878	1.556	1.546	1.311	1.470	0.994	

Source: elaborated by the authors using data processed with SPSS v.27

The MLP model reveals that employee social support from colleagues and managers improves employees' health, workers' well-being, and job satisfaction. In the hidden layer, positive values predominate, reflecting the favorable influence of social support on health, well-being, and satisfaction. The values associated with physical health (SF1-SF3) are relatively high, ranging from 0.893 to 1.335, indicating a clear positive relationship between social support and employee health. Well-being (BA1-BA3) is also strongly influenced, with values ranging from 0.878 to 1.556, showing that social support enhances psychological well-being. Employee satisfaction (SA1-SA3) is also positively influenced, with recorded values ranging from 0.994 to 1.470, highlighting the importance of interactions and social support in increasing workplace satisfaction.

Thus, this model emphasizes the importance of social support in the workplace, particularly concerning the sense of belonging and support from colleagues and managers. These forms of support directly contribute to improving physical and mental health, overall well-being, and employee satisfaction, with a particular focus on the role of organizational belonging. The social support variables positively impact health, well-being, and employee satisfaction, underscoring the importance of a positive and supportive environment and highlighting the beneficial influence of harmonious relationships on psychological well-being and employee satisfaction. The validation of the paper hypothesis is supported by these results: harmonious social relationships at work, especially those based on mutual support, profoundly affect employee well-being and satisfaction.

5. Conclusions

The findings of this study highlight the significant role that social support plays in enhancing employees' health, well-being, and job satisfaction. The analysis conducted using artificial neural networks (MLP model) reveals that various forms of social support - whether from colleagues, managers, external sources, or through a sense of belonging to the organization - have a measurable and positive impact on key employee outcomes.

Support from colleagues (SS1) and managers (SS2) emerged as particularly influential, demonstrating that a work environment where employees feel supported by their peers and supervisors leads to improved physical health, psychological well-being, and job satisfaction. This aligns with existing literature, which consistently shows the buffering effect of social support against workplace stress and burnout. The ability to obtain external assistance (SS3) also plays a crucial role, particularly in situations where employees face challenges that extend beyond the internal resources of their organization. Furthermore, the sense of belonging to the organization (SS4) was a critical predictor of well-being, suggesting that employees who feel integrated into the organizational culture experience higher levels of psychological comfort and commitment. Workplace friendships (SS5) significantly contribute to employee satisfaction, indicating that positive interpersonal relationships enhance job enjoyment and foster a more supportive and cohesive work environment.

The study underscores the importance of fostering a workplace culture that promotes social support at multiple levels. Organizations should prioritize initiatives that enhance peer and managerial support, cultivate a sense of belonging, and encourage strong workplace relationships. Such efforts can substantially improve employee health, well-being, and satisfaction, ultimately contributing to higher productivity and organizational success. The results also validate Hypothesis H3, affirming that harmonious social relationships in the workplace, especially those based on mutual support, profoundly affect employee outcomes.

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