

Perceived Organisational Support and Emotional Labour: The Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

Service organisations are facing many challenges because of inadequate management of emotions of employees affecting individual and organisation performance. The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of perceived organisational support (POS) on emotional labour (EL), and to discover whether or not emotional intelligence (EI) influences the association between POS and EL. Convenience sampling technique was used for data collection through questionnaire from 150 respondents of hospitals, hotels, academic institutions, and banks. Multiple regression analysis was applied to check hypotheses. The results revealed that POS and its three dimensions such as rewards, career development, and training have a significant effect on EI, whereas fourth dimension of POS, the supervisory support has insignificant effect on EI. Moreover, it was found that POS significantly affects EL, and EI partially mediates the relationship between POS and EL. The present research extended the conceptual work in EL by probing the effect of POS and emotional EI on EL. Furthermore, this research provided new insight into management of customer services within the academic institutions, hotels, hospitals, and banks by investigating effects of respondents' POS and EI on EL. The study highlighted the need of organisational interventions to develop requisite competence among employees for desirable management of emotions for superior performance.

Keywords: Perceived organisational support, supervisory support, rewards, training, career development, emotional intelligence, emotional labour.

Introduction

The emerging complex business environment offer opportunities and challenges for organisations to remain competitive. Resourced-based view posits employees as strategic assets for sustainable competitive advantage¹⁻⁴ because of continuous value generation for firms⁵. The changing paradigm has necessitated a proactive high performance work practices to nurture, develop, engage, and retain the talent⁶⁻⁹.

Organisations are pursuing employee-focused strategies to attract, develop, and leveraging human resources to contribute positively toward stakeholders' satisfaction and superior performance. In service industries, the roles of employees are most crucial in perpetual recreation of value for customers¹⁰⁻¹¹. Of all the strategies, POS is most critical¹²⁻¹³. Organisational support theory highlights that organisational tangible and intangible actions generate positive attitudinal and behavioural outcomes by the employees' value and respect the organisational norms, policies, and voluntary actions that support employees' wellbeing and development¹⁶⁻¹⁹. The review of literature exhibits that organisational support creates positive behavioural outcomes²⁰⁻²³. Strong evidence exist in literature that POS boosts quality of work life^{22,24-26,28-30}.

EL is a major part of work life within an organisation that is controlled or managed by organisation. Even though emotion is considered as personal matter, EL is one of the key issues interconnected with emotion and has an influential objective. Years ago, feelings of an individual were not believed as essential aspect in study but recently researchers have become conscious about vital role of emotions because emotions are important for individual or organisational performance³¹. According to Martinez-Inigo et al.³², service organisations expect from their employees to display fake display of emotions that they do not possess in reality. As a result, EL is playing key role in prevailing environment. This point of view has revealed that emotions as an exchange relationship between service employees and customers are of central focus 33-34. As for as EI is concerned, it has become crucial to identify how employees meet the considerable emotional challenges they face. EI develops ability in workforce to attain competitive edge³⁵⁻³⁷

Studies have been carried out with regard to POS relationship with organisational commitment³⁸⁻³⁹; POS and perception of organisational politics⁴⁰; POS and organisation -based self-esteem⁴¹⁻³⁹. However, few research studies have been conducted on its relationship with EL. Researchers argued that EI related interventions reduced the effects of EL on employees⁴²⁻³⁴. Besides, less existing research has probed the EI within the context of EL in hospitals, banks, education sector, and hotels⁴³.

Therefore, the relationships of POS and EI, EI, and EL in these organisations is a major contribution in the existing literature on POS. Researchers have also identified the need to explore "expression of genuine emotions⁴⁴ as a third dimension of EL; opportunities for career development as an essential dimension of POS²⁸; and role of EI in lessening the effects of EL⁴²⁻³⁴. Present study aims at filling this academic gap in the literature and focuses on the investigation of impact of POS on EL and to examine the mediating effect of EI on the relationship of POS and EL.

Perceived Organisational Support (POS). POS is defined as perception of employees concerning how much organisation consider their efforts so that they can identify organisations' willingness to give rewards on greater efforts and to fulfill socio emotional necessity¹⁵. According to Eisenberger et al.⁴⁵ POS is defined as "an experience-based attribution pertaining to the generous or malicious intent of the organisation's norms, policies, actions and procedures as they influence the employees" (p. 42). Reciprocity theory has stated that in employee-employer relationship, a positive response from one party is returned from other party⁴⁶. Perryer et al.⁴⁷ suggested that employees benefit the organisation by providing responses in a positive manner only if the organisation has also responded favorably toward them. To increase organisations' performance, POS builds up employees' beliefs of organisational support that create obligation in employees to work harder for achieving organisational goals²⁷. Social support theory stated that employees make a common insight regarding the degree to which firms cares about them, so that they can fulfill their needs and identify what are the advantages of exerting endeavor at workplace ²⁸⁻⁴⁸.

Muse and Stamper⁴⁹ illustrated two forms of POS such as care about employees' outcomes, and care about wellbeing and respect. If organisation focuses only on care about employee outcomes and performance, and neglect the other one it would have an effect on the thought of support offered by firm. The present study focuses on four dimensions such as supervisory support⁵⁰, rewards⁵¹, career development²⁸, and training⁵² representing POS. Supervisory support is employees' feeling of care, support, and value from their supervisors in return of their effort⁵⁰. Rewards are the representation of individuals' desire to gain from work or organisation⁵³. Career development being main HR policy dimension helps the organisation to motivate and retain employees and to achieve organisational goals⁵⁴. Training develops new skills and abilities in employees, and they feel support from organisation and exert positive behaviour that leads toward the improved performance of the organisation⁵⁵. Thus, previous research on POS studied only three dimensions such as fairness, supervisory support, and rewards⁵⁶⁻⁵⁷; however, present study adds value in literature by focusing on two less studied dimensions of career development and training 58-59-60.

Emotional Labour (EL): EL is defined by Hochschild⁶¹ as management of emotions for pay. Moreover, EL is the practice of changing emotions or feelings to meet organisational goals⁶². Hwa⁶³ argued that organisation expects from employees to display positive emotions or expressions even if they have conflict in mind or do not want to regulate their emotions.

According to Mastracci, Newman, and Guy⁶⁴ EL is relational work because it develops relationship between workers and clients. Allen et al. 65 stated that organisations belief that employees engage properly in the process of displaying emotions when some display rules like service with smile are restricted within the organisation. These rules specify that emotions are needed to show to customers. Bono and Vey⁶⁶ presented concluding remarks about EL that it is very difficult to understand the concept of EL because they are involved in performing work tasks. Payne⁶⁷ further argued that previous research described the EL as an important part of individual' working life and organisations expect from their workers to build the ability to manage their emotions and thoughts as an essential component of competitive gain. On the contrary, he claimed that emotional work is skilled work that identifies the progressive rewards for low income service employees⁶⁸.

Deep acting (DA) and surface acting (SA) are two different forms of EL that represent internal and external emotions of workforce while interacting with clients⁶⁹. Beyond that Diefendorff et al.⁷⁰ have confirmed the existence of third dimension of EL, such as expression of genuine emotions that is different from SA and DA. DA is the felt emotions that seek to align expected displays with the internal experience and behaviours by regulating the expressions⁷¹. By regulation of emotions or expressions and leaving internal feelings untouched, the divergence between emotional experience and exhibit rules like fake smile in response of rude behaviour of client is termed as SA³². Emotions that exactly like the displayed emotions expected by organisation are called genuine emotions⁷².

Kim and Han⁷³ determined that management of emotions in service organisations cause negative consequences when it is associated with DA and SA. This means that showing faking behaviour can result in stress and job burnout. On the contrary, expression of genuine emotions results in positive outcomes of EL like happiness and satisfaction with job⁶⁶⁻⁶⁷. Previous research identified EI⁷⁴⁻⁷⁵ and affectivity⁷⁶⁻⁷⁹ as antecedents of EL. Moreover, consequences of EL are emotional exhaustion, well-being ⁸⁰⁻⁸², job satisfaction ⁸³⁻⁸⁴, and service performance ⁸⁵⁻⁸⁶. In addition, previous research is unpredictable about the direct control of organisation exercise over EL process and who will behave with customers in an appropriate manner ⁸⁷. Thus, the present research focuses on direct control of emotions by providing support to their workers so that they can regulate their expressions while performing the job.

Emotional Intelligence (EI): Researchers defined EI as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions"⁸⁸. EI deals with many theories about rather than discussing only about EI area. There are three different models; the ability model, the mixed model, and trait model that have been developed after the mystery of emotional EI concept⁸⁹. EI is related with emotions and awareness of making human interaction better. Wong and Law⁷⁴ identified four dimensions of EI self-emotional appraisal; others' emotional appraisal; regulation of emotion, and use of emotion.

Self emotional appraisal is individual's potential to explore his or her sensations and try to convey these feelings⁹⁰. Others' emotional appraisal is about persons' capability to think and differentiate the others' feelings⁷⁴. Regulation of emotions is the individual capability to control his or her emotions in bad temper⁹¹⁻⁴². Use of emotions is the individual's ability to use his or her emotions toward beneficial tasks and personal performance^{42, 92, 93}. This is individual's ability to use his or her emotions in better way to improve individual's working performance⁷⁴. Johnson and Spector⁹⁶ investigated the relationship between EI and EL strategies. It was illustrated that employees with high EI understand their and other customers' emotions and are better able to deal with EL and show improved performance^{74-79,94}.

Conceptual Model: Hur et al. 44 examined that POS influences EL and concluded that employees with high POS tend to feel a

stronger obligation to put forth greater effort so that they can achieve the expectations of required feelings display. Therefore, POS is expected to influence employee's fulfillment of obligation in terms of EL. Literature exhibit that dimensions of POS have positive influence on EL ^{99-102, 44}. Researchers found that POS moderated employee's EI and affect career success, OCB, and overall behavioural outcomes ¹⁰³⁻¹¹². Karim and Weisz ¹¹³ stated that EI was associated with EL strategies. Thus, previous studies illustrated that EL is affected by EI ^{96-116, 117}.

Research Hypotheses. H1: POS has significant impact on EI. H1a: Supervisory support positively affects EI. H1b: Rewards have significant impact on EI. H1c: Career development significantly predicts EI. H1d: Training significantly affects EI. H2: POS predicts EL significantly. H3: EI significantly influences EL. H4: EI mediates the association between POS and EL.

Methodology

It is a cross sectional causal study. An adapted questionnaire consisting of two sections was used. The first section determined the participants' demographic characteristics, including gender, age, and marital status, job level, and experience. The second section consisted of total 74 items of POS, EI, and EL. A five-point likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (5) to strongly agree (1) was used for measurement, and the questions were closed ended questions.

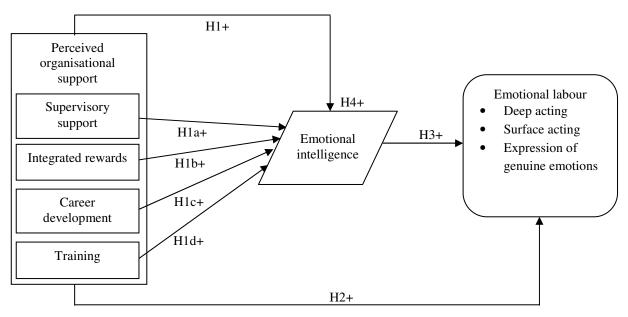


Figure-1 Conceptual Model

POS was measured on the basis of its four dimensions. Supervisory support was assessed using nine items adapted from Greenhaus et al. 118. Rewards variable was measured as intrinsic rewards (8 items) and extrinsic rewards (6 items) and was adapted from Clifford¹¹⁹. Career development was determined by adapting five items from Bola Adekola¹²⁰. Further, five items from Newman, Thanacoody and Hui¹²¹ were adapted to measure training. EI was measured using 30 items scale and adapted from Cooper and Petrides¹²². EL was measured on the basis of three dimensions. Five items of SA and three items of DA were adapted from Naring et al. 123, and expression of genuine emotions was measured using three items scale adapted from Diefendorff et al. 70. Teachers of academic institutions, doctors, and nurses of hospitals, front-line employees of hotels, and front-line employees, credit clerks, and tellers of banks comprised the population of the study. Convenience sampling technique was used for the study. Total 270 questionnaires were distributed and 190 were returned. After checking these questionnaires, 150 were found properly filled and were included in the study for analysis. Thus, the response rate was 56%. To establish the face validity of items, the questionnaire was pretested. Pilot testing had been performed, and instrument was found satisfactory. Besides, factor validity was checked with factor analysis through SPSS 17. For this reason, KMO. and Bartlett's test were used. The values (table 1) indicate that the data is suitable because the values of KMO are greater than 0.5 or close to 1. In Bartlett test the significance level was less than 0.5 that signify the suitability of data.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Analysis: The demographic aspects of respondents were based on gender (64 % male and 36% female); age (19.3% up to 25 years, 38.7% up to 26-30 years, 25.3% up to 31-35 years, and 16.7% above 35 years); marital status included (58.7% married, 41.3% single); job level (14 % top management, 50% middle management, and 36% operational management); experience included (42.7% with up to 2-5 years , 30% up to 6-10 years, 11.3% up to 11-15 years, 7.3% up to 16-20 years, and 8.7% above 20 years); sector included (20.7% from academic, 38.7% from hospital, 25.3% from hotel, 15.3% from bank). The results of descriptive statistics (Table 2) indicate the general agreement of the respondents with the variables of the study.

Reliability analysis was applied to check internal consistency between variables. The results are shown in table 2. Table 2 showed significant correlation among the variables. Highest correlation exists between EI and rewards 0.637. On the other hand, no correlation exists between training and career development.

Hypotheses Results: To test H1a, H1b, H1c, and H1d, four independent variables were regressed on EI; the results are shown in table-3. The value of R square was 0.639 indicating

that independent variables explained 64% variance in EI. H1a hypothesis was rejected because its beta coefficient has insignificant t-value (p > 0.05). This proved that supervisory support has insignificant impact on EI. However, the correlation between supervisory support and EI is 0.412 that showed positive correlation between these variables. Besides, H1b, H1c, and H1d hypotheses were accepted because t-values of beta coefficients of rewards (4.713), career development (7.446), and training (5.902) represent highly significant values (p < 0.05). Thus rewards, career development, and training have significant impact on EI.

In order to check mediation effect, Barron and Kenny's¹²⁴ method was used as shown in Table 4. First, POS was regressed on emotional labour. Second, POS was regressed on EI. Third, EI was regressed on EL. Finally, POS, and EI were regressed on EL. When all four steps were conducted, it was clear that the impact of POS on EI in 2nd step was greater than the influence of EI on EL in third step. Fourth step was significant indicating that t-value of POS with EL (3.182) is greater than t-value of EI with EL (2.273). Thus, EI mediation exists but partial mediation because direct effect is more significant than indirect effect, and beta value of direct effect (0.331) is greater than beta value of indirect effect (0.236).

Table-1 Factor Analysis

Factor	Percent variance	KMO	Bartlett	Significance level
Supervisory support	44.696	0.810	460.282	0.000
Rewards	29.368	0.761	660.352	0.000
Career development	62.324	0.841	294.660	0.000
Training	59.926	0.794	288.615	0.000
Emotional intelligence	31.717	0.874	1822.158	0.000
Emotional labour	42.102	0.857	684.176	0.000

The purpose of the study was to examine empirically the effect of POS on EL, and influence of EI on the relationship between POS and EL. The data was collected from four service organisations and multiple regression analysis was used to test the model.

The results of present study highlighted that POS support EI. Thus, H1 is accepted, and the results are consistent with the previous research that illustrated support from organisation helps in enhancing EI of employees ¹⁰³⁻¹²⁵. On the other hand, supervisory support has insignificant impact on EI. H1a is not accepted. This is in contrast to the earlier research on this relationship ¹²⁶⁻¹²⁷⁻¹⁰⁵⁻¹²⁸.

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Table-2
Average, deviation, reliability, and variable correlation

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Variable	Mean	Deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6	
1. SS	2.34	0.620	(0.842)						
2. Rwd	2.31	0.516	.482**	(0.856)					
3. CD	1.93	0.645	.257**	.300**	(0.846)				
4. T	2.46	0.775	.331**	.536**	.149	(0.831)			
5. EI	2.30	0.520	.412**	.637**	.550**	.590**	(0.914)		
6. EL	2.49	0.632	.372**	.439**	.237**	.383**	.482**	(0.807)	

^{**} Correlation is significant at p< 0.01 level (two-tailed), Numbers in brackets exhibit Cronbach's Alpha, SS: Supervisory Support, Rwd: Reward, CD: Career Development, T: Training, EI: Emotional Intelligence, EL: Emotional Labour.

Table-3 Result of hypotheses test

Hypotheses	Standard β	Significance Level	Test result
Supervisory support→ Emotional intelligence	0.047	0.422	Not Accepted
Rewards→ Emotional intelligence	0.308	0.000**	Accepted
Career development→ Emotional intelligence	0.393	0.000**	Accepted
Training→ Emotional intelligence	0.351	0.000**	Accepted

N = 150, R = .799, R square = .639, adjusted R square = .629; F = (4, 64.063) (p < 0.01); **Significance, p < .

Table-4
Result of hypotheses test for mediation

	result of hypotheses test for mediation							
Steps	Hypotheses	\mathbb{R}^2	F stat	Standard β	Significance Level	Test result		
1	Perceived organisational support→ Emotional labour	0.256	51.01	0.506	0.000**	Accepted		
2	Perceived organisational support→ Emotional intelligence	0.549	179.89	0.741	0.000**	Accepted		
3	Emotional intelligence→ Emotional labour	0.482	44.72	0.482	0.000**	Accepted		
4	Perceived organisational support Emotional intelligence → Emotional labour	0.282	28.80	0.331 0.236	0.000**	Accepted		

^{**}Significance, p < .01

The high EI only contributes to employees' self-success and does not guarantee benefits to others, such as supervisors or organisation¹²⁹. It was argued that in organisations supervisors do not have requisite expertise in promoting EI among employees¹³⁰. Moreover, the collectivistic culture exists in Pakistan and according to Hofstede¹³¹; collectivistic cultures stress interdependent activities and suppressing individual success and aims for the group's welfare. The role of individual in developing EI is important that calls for self evaluation for personal development ¹³²⁻¹³³. Employees lacking in this ability deprive them of this essential competence and experience EL during performance of work 134-136. On the contrary, Westbrook and Simic 137 argued that an employee with high EI in an industry may better deal with various emotions in response to support from supervisors. Thus, hypotheses H1b, H1c, and H1d are accepted because rewards, career development, and training were found to predict the emotional intelligence. Organisations can enhance the EI level of employees through appropriate intervention strategies based on reward, training, career development and quality of work life 138-146.

Managerial Implications: The results indicate organisations need to lessen the effects of EL by promoting POS and EI among employees. Managers should focus on providing supervisory support, rewards on performance, opportunities for career development, and facilitate employees with training to improve employees EI level. As findings of the study indicated that supervisory support has no effect on EI, so managers should focus on supervisors support. This calls for a multipronged strategy for developing requisite expertise among supervisors' to manage their EI. This should also be a part of supervisors' performance appraisal about how they manifest EI and its applications in dealing with employees. Supervisors, as leaders, are role models and their competence and behavioural manifestation is critical to influence employees in managing their emotions. Hence, employees' support programmes enable teachers, doctors, nurses, and frontline employees to offer mutual support provoke them to be engaged in EI and EL. As, Pooya et al. 148 described EI as perceptual feeling that creates emotion. Besides, organisation should probe within-individual dynamics by allowing them to be themselves that develop in them the feeling of personal well-being, and enable them to regulate their emotions 149.

Academic Implications: This was the first study to investigate the mediating role of EI between POS and EL relationship. This study added value through empirical findings that POS develops the ability in employees to understand their emotions and manage their emotional behaviour. Hence, the findings of the study related to mediation relationship made a significant contribution to the existing literature. This opened new insight to the effective application of EI to reduce the effect of EL with regard to the frontline employees. This study gives new insights about effects of POS and its dimensions on EI, and EL with its three dimensions. Hence, this study made major contribution in existing literature because POS with its four dimensions was not studied in EI and EL perspective. Moreover, this research focuses on service management of employees within academic, hotel, hospital, and banking industry by examining teachers, doctors, and nurses, and frontline employees' EI and EL within the context of POS. Therefore, the present study offered new openings for academic institutions and researchers to replicate the conceptual model of this study in different context for the purposes of generalization.

Limitations and Future Research: The present research possesses some limitations. First limitation was time constraint and lack of resources. The second limitation was the lukewarm response of respondents. Last limitation of the study was perceptual biasness due to convenience sampling.

To generalize the results of study, future research should focus on organisations in different services in which employees are most likely subjected to EL. EL is tested as a composite variable by taking three dimensions. Future research can check POS or its different dimensions' effects on DA, SA, and expression of genuine emotions separately. The findings of the study indicated partial mediation of EI. Thus, there is need to replicate this research in future in other service organisation to generalize these results. This study can be replicated to check the effects of demographics on these variables. Furthermore, this is cross sectional study and longitudinal study can be done in future. Besides, findings of this study does not support the established hypothesis of causality between supervisory support and EI that need to be further explored through qualitative studies as well as quantitative studies in other organisational settings.

Conclusion

This study empirically tested that POS and its dimensions significantly affect EI except supervisory support that has insignificant affect. Further, this study concluded partial

mediation of EI between POS and emotional labour relationship. Moreover, this research supports the hypothesis that employee's perception of being valued by organisation develops in them the ability to display favorable emotions while interacting with stakeholders. The research highlights the significance of managerial interventions to provide favorable support to their employees to develop requisite expertise of effective management of emotions during employees'-stakeholders' interface and achieve superior performance enabling organisations to achieve sustainable competitiveness.

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