

DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS, THE EFFICACY OF SUPERVISOR SUPPORT IN REDUCING PERCEIVED UNCERTAINTY AND EMOTIONAL TIREDNESS AMONG UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES: THE RESTRICTING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL STUBBORNNESS

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ABSTRACT:

Despite the severity of the COVID-19 issue, which has impacted enterprises all over the world, there is a scarcity of research on the organizational elements that influence the psychological well-being of employees in crisis-affected firms. The instance of staff at two foreign institutions in Pakistan who were directly affected by the COVID-19 situation is used in this study. This study explores the role of organizational support in explaining the level of psychological uncertainty and emotional tiredness that employees suffer because of the COVID-19 crisis. It is based on social support theory and the employment resources model of workplace stress. The detrimental effect of supervisor assistance on employees' emotional weariness is greatly mitigated by perceived uncertainty. More importantly, the moderating effect analysis reveals that the negative effect of organizational support on executive perceived sources of uncertainty exists only for employees who work in a workplace climate with low intransigence; psychological empowerment does not lower employee perceived uncertainties in an organizational climate with high intransigence.

“Keywords: COVID-19; Crisis; Coronavirus; Organization; Social Support; Stress; Wellbeing”

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION:

Globally, the COVID-19 disaster has had a profound effect on society and business sectors. As far as businesses are concerned, the COVID-19 outbreak has caused chaos across a wide range of sectors. The crisis has an effect on the

long-term viability of businesses, but it also has an impact on the well-being of the employees who are directly affected. The educational system is also feeling the pinch as a result of the current economic situation. The ongoing COVID-19 epidemic, according to UNESCO (2020), is wreaking havoc on educational systems around the world. As a result of the COVID-19 issue, a significant number of private foreign universities have been affected. Since its operations and earnings are highly dependent on external student enrolment. The significant drop in new student enrolment has a financial impact on institutions, but also creates several difficulties for academics and staff. Along with concentrating efforts on online learning, it is anticipated that some schools would be forced to minimize the financial burden caused by the crisis by laying off personnel or merging with other institutions. These developments place a strain on and create uneasiness within the academic workforce. Given the high levels of stress and worry that workers are surely experiencing as a result of the COVID-19 situation, it is critical for this study to examine organizational elements that may mitigate the crisis's influence on employees' psychological stress levels. At this moment, since the COVID-19 crisis is still a relatively new phenomenon, management research attempting to define the crisis's influence on workers' psychological well-being, as well as methods to address this issue in businesses, is still very scarce.

Fig.1

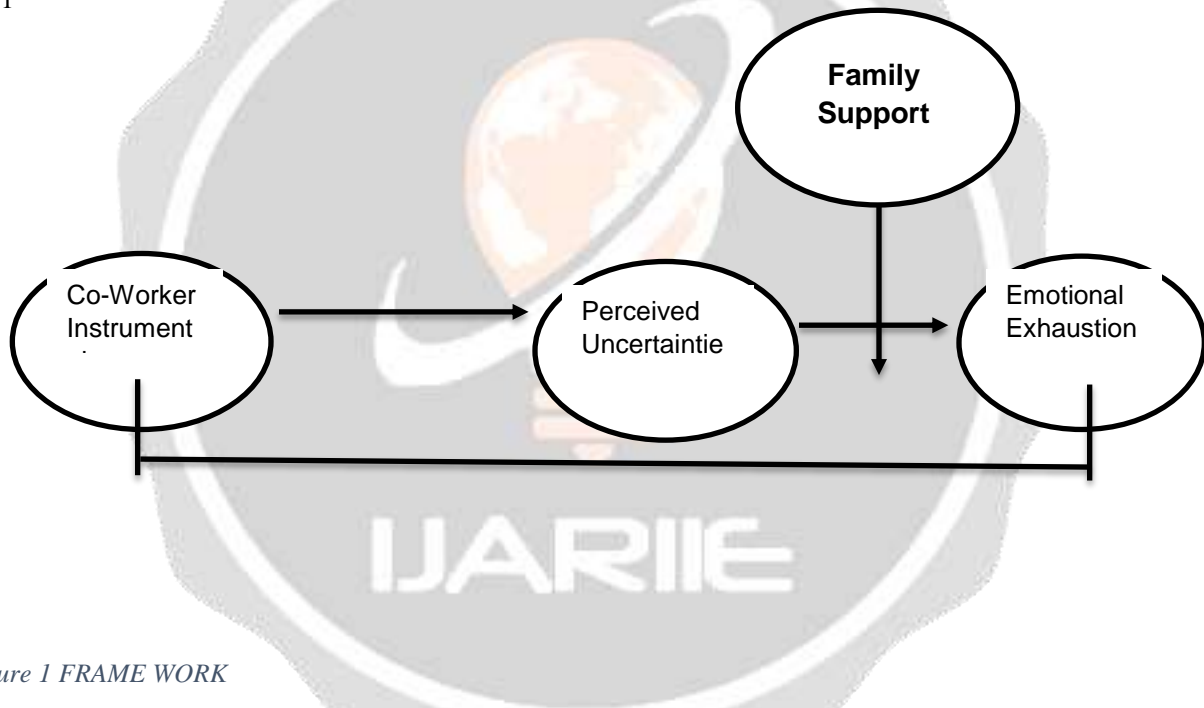


Figure 1 FRAME WORK

Together, these studies add to the body of knowledge on the impact of social support on the health and well-being of workers during the COVID-19 epidemic. The findings of this study can help businesses and the general public better understand the crisis and how to mitigate its negative effects on individuals.

1.1: RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

The COVID-19 issue has disproportionately affected two private international colleges in Thailand, according to the findings of this study. Initial findings from this study will evaluate how university personnel's doubts regarding the COVID-19 problem impact their emotional fatigue. Secondly, the research aims at examining the role of supervisor aid as an organizational variable that may assist workers in coping with their sense of uncertainty. Another goal of this study is to see if the environment of the workplace has a moderating influence on intransigence, making it more difficult for managers to offer support to employees who are struggling with their uncertainties. For the study's last purpose, researchers are looking into how stubbornness is affected by the workplace environment and how it can affect supervisors' ability to help workers overcome their uncertainties. In a dynamic environment, organizations

may find it challenging to deal with change and uncertainty if they operate in an environment marked by an inclination to stick to tradition and established methods of doing things.

1.2: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH:

Overall, this study's findings may help us better understand how corporate culture and social support affected employee stress levels during the COVID-19 crisis. From the perspective of a management, the findings of this study provide critical information about management's strategy and execution decisions. This could help workers deal with the crisis less emotionally.

1.3: RESEARCH GAP:

While the desire to maintain tradition and tried-and-true ways of doing things in a dynamic setting such as the COVID-19 issue may be understandable, it may be counterproductive in dealing with change and uncertainty.

1.4: CPROBLEM STATEMENT:

Certain limitations of the study must be highlighted. Additionally, the data collection sample size is extremely small, which limits the generalizability of the results. Given that this study relied on a cross-sectional data collection technique, it is more probable that the findings will be viewed as associations rather than as causal relationships. It was impossible to conduct a long-term study because of the short time frame in which the COVID-19 incident was needed to instill distrust among university personnel. Third, the results could be skewed by subjectivity due to the use of a self-report questionnaire.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Coombs and Holladay (2005, p. 264) describe a crisis as "an unexpected and abrupt incident that threatens to disrupt an organization's operations and presents a financial and operational risk." Not only does a crisis jeopardize a reputation and damage assets, but it also has a psychological impact on people. The psychological consequences of a crisis are frequently manifested as the uncertainty that people experience while living through a crisis. Uncertainty is defined broadly as "an individual's perceived inability to precisely forecast something." The COVID-19 issue is seen as a catastrophe that jeopardizes businesses' financial viability and workers' psychological well-being in almost every industry worldwide. COVID-19 is a problem in the field of education, and private foreign universities are often the first to be affected.

In a variety of ways, the crisis creates uncertainty for university faculty and staff. To begin with, the crisis has resulted in a precipitous decline in enrolment. Because the enrollment of new overseas students is so crucial to the private international universities' financial health, a sudden drop in enrolment could cause anxiety among university staff members due to the institution's ability to cut its size (that is, reduce the number of staff). One definition of crisis is: "an unexpected or sudden event that threatens to disrupt the normal operations of a company and poses a financial or reputational risk" (Coombs & Holladay, 2005, p. 264). The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020, indicating that it is a disease outbreak that poses a global health danger. There is a rising global problem that affects economies worldwide, but it also affects the well-being of individuals (Shigemura et al., 2020). It is generally accepted that people's reactions to a crisis are characterized by uncertainty, which is described as "an individual's apparent inability to exactly foresee anything" (Charoensukmongkol & Phungsoonthorn, 2020). Workers' psychological well-being may be negatively affected by organizational crises, according to studies. As a result of a crisis, employees may suffer from emotional exhaustion. Work burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion as a result of long periods of stress. As a result of emotional exhaustion, people lose interest in their jobs and believe they have little impact or control over what happens on the job (Seriwatana & Charoensukmongkol, 2020). Employees that are emotionally exhausted may be less motivated, less productive, and more likely to quit their jobs, which can have a negative influence on the company as a whole. Employees across all industries are worried as a result of the current COVID-19 situation. We claim, in particular, that this coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on PSEIs' staff for a variety of reasons. To begin, new admissions were prohibited owing to the severe lockdown, resulting in a dramatic decline in student enrollment. Second, because students are the primary source of revenue for PSEIs, the drop in new admissions has undoubtedly produced a sense of job insecurity among workers as a result of the risk of downsizing (Charoensukmongkol & Phungsoonthorn, 2020). Due to the HEC's lack of support for PSEIs, basic salaries may be reduced or employees may be required to work from home without pay (a form of forced absence) until the crisis subsides. Thirdly,

teachers, administration, and other staff members must develop measures to guarantee that online lessons are delivered on schedule and that students complete all required tasks.

CHAPTER 3:

Organizational stubbornness has a moderating influence.

Although supervisor assistance is hypothesized to lessen workers' perceived uncertainty, it is possible that this advantage is constrained by elements of the organization's work atmosphere. Workers' ability to help their supervisors and raise their level of trust in management may be hindered by organizational stubbornness, which is the topic of this study. When it comes to managing workplace operations, a corporation with a reputation for extreme intransigence is more likely to remain with tried-and-true techniques. Executives in companies like these are less likely to experiment with new ideas and are more likely to stick with tried-and-true methods. Additionally, alterations to the way things are done within a company occur at a glacial pace. Stubborn companies and work units are less able to deal with change and uncertainty in a dynamic environment, according to study. Additionally, the best leaders in this type of firm are more inclined to stick to established and customary workplace norms and processes than experiment with fresh ideas. Moreover, alterations to the way things are done within an organization typically take a very long time. Stubborn companies and work units are less able to deal with change and uncertainty in a dynamic environment, according to study. It is precisely at times of crisis when a company's ability to respond effectively to the inherent uncertainties of a crisis is jeopardized when decision-making freedom and managerial flexibility are required to aid firms in meeting expectations promptly. This study hypothesizes that the benefit of organizational support in reducing employees' perceived uncertainties may be unproductive in workplaces with a change-resistant climate because it constrains supervisors' ability to carry out their work and exercise authority when they depart from organizational tradition. It may be difficult for managers to make decisions that help workers cope with the uncertainty that accompanies a crisis due to the way senior management behaves in a setting that adheres to established and conventional methods of doing things. Organizational change initiatives may be hindered if supervisors' efforts to help workers in times of crisis aren't supported. If you have a low level of organizational stubbornness, it is probable that supervisor support has a negative impact on the perception of uncertainty but not in those with high organizational intransigence. In this way, we come up with the following hypothesis: supervisor support has less of an impact on university workers' sense of uncertainty if the organization is more intransigent.

CHAPTER 4:

METHODOLOGY:

4.1: The context of the research and sample selection technique

This study gathered information from faculty members at two private Pakistani colleges, including lecturers and administrative staff. Because they are among the institutions that have been severely touched by the COVID-19 situation, these two private institutions offered a good framework for assessing its impacts. International students make up a large component of both universities' student bodies. Because of the COVID-19 scenario, which has caused in a precipitous drop in their higher education system enrolment rate, their revenues have also dropped precipitously. This reduction in income, along with the ongoing expenses that institutions must bear, has raised major worries regarding staff job security. Many workers are anxious about their job security because of cost-cutting measures such as reducing critical positions and work divisions. Furthermore, the COVID-19 scenario has raised workloads and generated doubt among academics and staff personnel regarding their work techniques. For most instructors and staff, not knowing how to teach or work online has generated a lot of headaches and misunderstanding. A total of 438 people from both universities were included in the study's sample frame. The survey data was collected by requesting all 438 employees to complete a self-administered survey form. In April 2020, the data gathering began. Because of the researcher physically delivering questionnaire packets to each department during his or her visits, those who completed the questionnaire packets opted to participate in the study project. Because English is the language of teaching and communication among the instructors and employees of the two international companies, the questionnaire was given in English. A cover letter included with each questionnaire packet informed participants of the research's aims and ethical requirements, and they were also assured that their responses would be kept personal and confidential throughout the study. Participants were also given the option of doing the survey online, which they could do by going to a website or scanning a QR code on the cover. A few days later, the researcher physically collected the surveys from the individuals' homes and stored them in a safe container until the next study. The study had gathered 300 completed questionnaires for data analysis by the conclusion of the data collecting period, resulting in a response rate of 68.49 percent overall. (300 questions answered) The demographic data of the respondents is shown in Table 1.

Demographic Factors	Descriptive statistics
Gender	Male: 148 (50%) Female: 154 (52%) Mean: 43.05 S.D: 10.17
Age	Less than 1 year: 16 (5.5%)
Job Tenure	1-2 years: 31 (10.5%) 3-4 years: 57 (21%) 5-6 years: 57 (20%) 7-8 years: 34 (20%) 9-10 years: 31 (11.5%) More than 10 years: 74 (24.8%)
Job Type	Faculty: 210 (75%) Staff: 90 (35%)

4.2: Measures

The COVID-19 dilemma at universities is a new event, and as a result, there is no scale to assess the felt uncertainty in this setting. Accordingly, the current study used an Allen-developed measure of perceived uncertainty to gauge the level of uncertainty felt by hospital employees throughout times of organizational transition. Because of the nature of the COVID-19 situation, university organisations are confronted with challenges that are similar to those experienced by employees in terms of job security, salary, welfare, and working processes. Because it comprises questions that reflect employees' feelings of ambiguity and risk regarding these problems, this scale was selected. Questions from the original scales that didn't make any sense were removed from consideration for COVID-19 and university employees.

Some additional questions were included based on information gathered during informal discussions with university personnel expressing their worries about the unknowns surrounding the COVID-19 incident. The respondents were asked to rate their level of uncertainty on 10 different facets of the crisis. The following things were included: "The probability that the issue will be resolved;" "The probability that the issue will not persist;" "The probability that the issue will be resolved;" "The prospect of resolving the issue;" "Confidence in the problem's scope and duration;" "The efficiency of the university's prevention efforts;" "The worry of contracting COVID-19 infection;" "Whether your job security will be guaranteed;" "Whether your compensation, salary, or promotion prospects may be impacted;" and "how much your employment responsibilities will change."

The Likert scale ranged from 1 (extremely definite) to 5, with 1 being the most certain and 5 being the least certain. (It's a bit of a guess). Supervisor support can be measured using a four-item scale devised by Cole et al. (2006a). Using a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating extreme disapproval and 5 indicating full support, the scale was evaluated (strongly agree). The boss of each department or work unit was given a star rating by the survey takers. My feelings matter to management, and they inform us that if we need support, it's there.

Researchers Maslach and Jackson (1981) devised an emotional fatigue questionnaire that included five questions to measure the level of emotional exhaustion. 5 point Likert scale was used to evaluate the things; the lower the number, the more dissatisfied the respondent was (strongly agree). "I feel emotionally drained by my job" and "I feel burnt out by my work" were two examples.

4.3: Controlled variables

As control variables, the researchers used age, Workers' demographic and occupational features, such as gender, employment tenure, job type, and more. In this experiment, gender and age were measured as two separate variables.

(Male $\frac{1}{4}$ 1; Females $\frac{1}{5}$ 0); job tenure was measured as a ranked variable ($1\frac{1}{5}$ less than 1 year; $2\frac{1}{3}$ 1-2 years; $3\frac{1}{5}$ 3-4 years; $4\frac{1}{4}$ 4-5 years; $6\frac{1}{4}$ 6-7 years; $7\frac{1}{4}$ 8-9 years; $8\frac{1}{4}$ 10 years or more; and job type was measured as a categorical variable (faculty $\frac{1}{5}$ 0; Staff $\frac{1}{4}$ 1).

4.4: Analyses statistical

Calculation of the smallest square with partials that is achievable. Researchers in the field of statistics used Structural Equation Modeling to perform their investigations (PLS-SEM). To arrive at a standardized coefficient of determination for the model's routes and factor loadings for measurement models, PLS-SEM uses a statistical technique that integrates principal component analysis, path analysis and regressions. In the case of models with weaker theoretical foundations, PLSSEM is strongly suggested for exploration. It is more flexible than covariance-based SEM when the data are not normally distributed or the sample is small, because PLS-SEM generates fewer estimates of bias. It was observed that a considerable number of the study's variables were not normally distributed when the Jarque-Bera and Robust Jarque-Bera tests of normality were conducted. Indicating that PLS-SEM was the most suited method for this investigation. Furthermore, considering the limited sample size employed in this study, PLS-SEM is appropriate.

WarpPLS software was used to conduct the PLS-SEM analysis.

Variables	Cronbach's Coefficient	Composite Reliability Coefficient	SP	PU	EMX	OI	AGE	GEN	TEN	TYPE
SP	0.957	0.968	(0.938)	-0.047	-0.025	0.056	0.093	0.146*	-0.033	-0.106
PU	0.905	0.919		(0.725)	0.437**	0.288**	-0.036	0.029	0.134*	-0.004
EMX	0.956	0.966			(0.921)	0.454**	-0.166**	0.149*	0.278*	0.12
OI	0.934	0.956				(0.918)	0.099	0.147*	0.168*	0.069
AGE	N/A	N/A					(1)	-0.037	0.391*	-0.436**
GEN	N/A	N/A						(1)	0.064	0.132*
TEN	N/A	N/A							(1)	-0.205**
TYPE	N/A	N/A								(1)

CHAPTER 5:

RESULT:

Assessment of validity and dependability

After all constructs had been appraised for their psychometric quality, the PLS-SEM method was used to estimate the model's parameters. This was accomplished by calculating the convergent validity of each component using factor loadings, which had to be more than 0 in order to ensure that the convergence validity was sufficient for each factor.

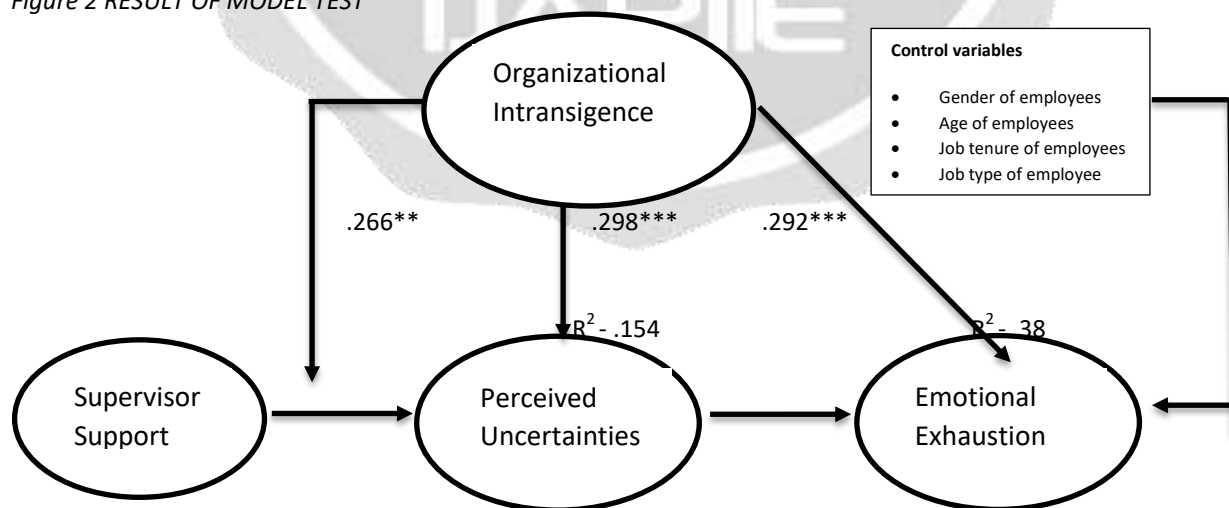
All of the latent construct factor loadings showed satisfactory convergent validity. For the second part of our study, we compared the square root of the variance inflation (AVE) correlation with correlations to other constructs to determine its discriminant validity.

If discriminant validity is to be demonstrated, the square root of the AVE for each construct must be greater than the correlation with any other construct. Table 2 displays the AVE cube roots and the relationships between the variables. There was good discriminant validity in the AVE square roots, as seen in Table 2, which shows the results. Third, the construct's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and a composite reliability coefficient. As a result, all of the structures were found to be dependable.

The evaluation of multicollinearity and methodological bias

It was then applied to the entire variance inflation factor (VIF) data set in order to assess multi-collinearity. The presence of multicollinearity is not a serious issue when the number is less than 3.3. Multicollinearity was not a significant concern in this investigation, as evidenced by the fact that the VIFs with latent variables ranged between 1.078 and 1.759. In the study, an additional technique bias detection tool, Harman's single-factor test, was utilized to detect bias (CMB). In order to conduct a full study utilizing principal component analysis, one factor was selected from the model's outputs and employed. Only 35 of the cases could be explained by a single component, according to the findings. 13 percent of the variation, far short of the 50% requirement.

Figure 2 RESULT OF MODEL TEST



Testing hypotheses

The results of the PLS-SEM estimate are shown in Figure 2. The PLS method was used to compute the latent variable factor scores, which were created by combining the scores from the indicators in an exact linear fashion. Model evaluation results support the hypothesis that university workers' emotional exhaustion is connected to their perceived uncertainty "(b 1/4 0.31; p.001; effect size 1/4 0.135)" in the context of this study. Model evaluation results show a positive correlation between supervisor support and university workers' perceived uncertainties. "(b 1/4 0.096; p 1/4 0.027; Effect size 1/4 0.025)."

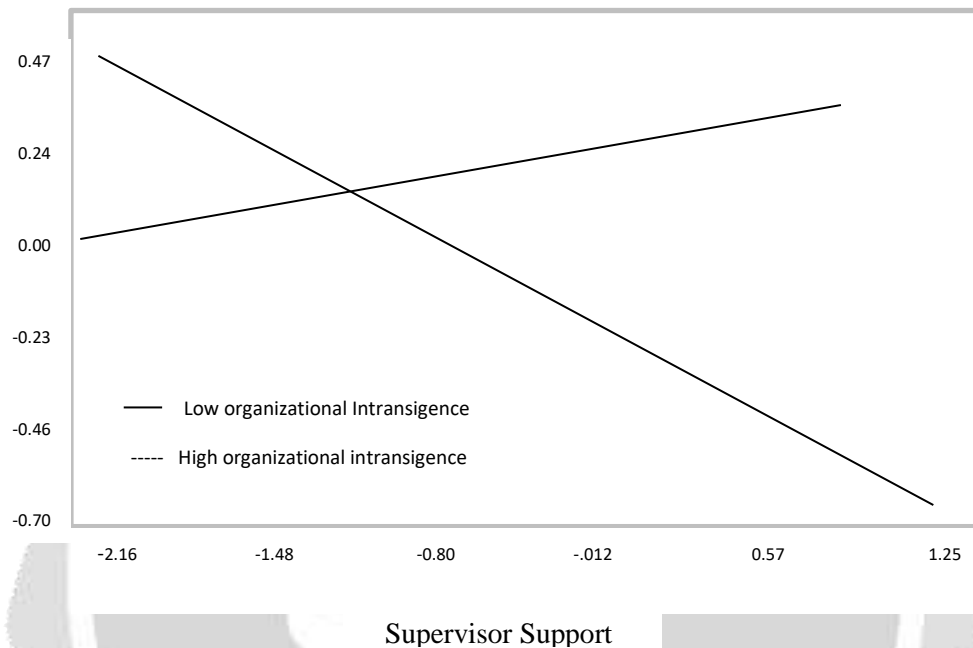


Figure 3 "The association between anxiety about the future and emotional tiredness might be moderated by family support. Organizational stubbornness moderates the influence of supervisor support on perceived uncertainty, according to the beta coefficient of the interaction between supervisor support and perceived uncertainty. According to the results, the interaction's beta coefficient was found to be statistically significant (b 14 0.26; P = 0.002; Effect size 14 0.065) with a positive sign. According to this study, organizational stubbornness may be able to buffer the negative effects of supervisor support on perceived uncertainty. The interaction effect is seen in Figure 2.

CHAPTER 6:

Discussion

Hypothesis testing supports the importance of supervisor assistance in explaining workers' feelings of uncertainty and emotional tiredness because of the COVID-19 issue. To begin with, the findings demonstrate that perceived uncertainties have a detrimental impact on workers' emotional weariness. This finding supports previous studies that found uncertainty during a crisis is a major contributor to workers' suffering psychological discomfort and anxiety. This is also in line with the nature of a crisis, which makes people afraid of losing things and reduces their sense of control, making it harder for them to deal with the unexpected. Second, the findings show that supervisor support has a negative relationship with workers' perceived uncertainty. Additionally, the data demonstrates that perceived uncertainties serve as a strong moderator of the detrimental impact of supervisor assistance on emotional weariness. This finding implies that managers might assist workers in minimizing emotional tiredness by reducing the degree

of perceived uncertainty about the COVID-19 crisis's effect. In general, the findings that show how important it is for supervisors to help workers in times of crisis are in line with previous research and literature that shows that supervisors are important in reducing the psychological effects on workers. Data shows that supervisor support has a detrimental impact on workers' perceptions of uncertainty, although this is reduced by organizational intransigence—the resistance to change in the workplace. For employees who work in low-resistance-to-change conditions, supervisor assistance has a negative impact on their emotional weariness, whereas supervisor support has no negative impact on workers' emotional exhaustion in high-resistant environments. This finding is also consistent with earlier research indicating that supervisors' behaviors that are out of step with the organizational atmosphere may considerably impair their effectiveness.

CHAPTER 7:

Limitations and Future Directions

While our research provides important insights, it does have limits that should be considered when interpreting them. To begin with, our study is solely based on self-reported data. We understand that cross-sectional data makes causal conclusions regarding the links between the variables addressed in the research more difficult. Thus, longitudinal studies will be critical in future research to bolster our confidence in our capacity to draw causal conclusions. Second, although the nature of the present research variables makes self-reported answers appropriate, relying completely on self-reported answers increases the possibility that the results were inflated owing to CMV. Thus, future studies should supplement self-reports that include information gleaned from other sources, such as remarks from a supervisor. The third reason for our small sample size was the fact that we only used samples from two private institutions. This could affect the applicability of our findings. Future research should concentrate on a broader range of industries and larger sample sizes in order to further generalize the findings of this study. Finally, Pakistan is a very collectivist culture, which may influence the amount to which family support serves as a substantial buffer. The same model could be used in a different way in a culture where there is less of a sense of community.

CONCLUSION:

In summary, using the social support perspective, we discovered evidence in this research for the beneficial effect of coworker instrumental support on emotional weariness, as mediated by perceived uncertainty. Additionally, because we included the boundary condition of family support in our study, our results add significant value to the present research. During times of crisis, organizations must create an environment that encourages co-workers to rally around each other. Thereby protecting workers from emotional distress. Additionally, society should step forward in times of need to assist its family members.

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