

The Mediating Effect of Workplace Social Support: Role of Organizational Climate, Co-Worker Support, Supervisory Support, Family Environment, Role Conflict and Life Satisfaction of Indian Expats in Oman

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the mediating effect of workplace social support on other variables like organizational climate, co-worker support, supervisory support, family environment, role conflict, and life satisfaction of Indian expats working in Oman. The research design applied for this study is descriptive in nature. Seven standardized research tools used to collect data. The sample size for the present study consists of 320 Indian expats working in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, represented different occupational groups namely; Labors, Constructions, Information Technology, Educational Field and Health Care professional. They were selected according to the random sampling method. The individual score for all the variables were obtained according to the procedure and were analyzed using SPSS. The study has highlighted the fact that the social supporting factors from the family, organization and from the society's influence on life satisfaction. Social support has found to have a significant influence on one's life satisfaction.

Key Words: Workplace Social Support, Organizational Climate, Co-Worker Support, Supervisory Support, Family Environment, Role Conflict. Life Satisfaction, Indian Expats

INTRODUCTION

People do not exist in a vacuum. They constantly seek and offer social support and this is one of the most important themes in social relevant studies. To have support means to be involved

in social relationships, to be connected with other people. In the presence of support one feel loved, valued, and cared for, and people have clarity about the resources available for them. Friends, relatives, lovers, roommates, co-workers, and spouse all can serve as sources of social support.

The National Cancer Institute (2009) defines social support as a network of family, friends, neighbours, and community members that is available in times of need to give psychological, physical, and financial help. According to Pender, (1996) "Social support is defined as a subjective feeling of belonging, being loved, esteemed, valued, and needed for oneself, not for what one can do for others". Vaux, 1988 best defined Social support as a complex transaction process in which an active interplay between a person and his or her support network is involved. Caplan's Cobb defined social support as information leading the subject to believe that he is cared for and loved, esteemed and valued and belongs to a network of communication and mutual obligation.

Social support as an exchange of resources between at least two individual perceived by the provider or the recipient to be intended to enhance the well-being of the recipient. They view support as an exchange and this has to be perceived by at least two persons as beneficial. Social support serves many different functions. One key function is emotional. Having someone to share problems will allow people to vent their emotions and allows others to offer reassurance and nurturance. People feel better knowing that the people around them will cheer them up when ill or back them up when threatened. A second function is informational, involving the giving and receiving of advice and guidance. A third major function is tangible. Friends can lend money, during crisis, help in academic problems, and help in needed time.

SUPPORT FROM WORK PLACE:

In the context of work, Matthews et al. (2009) loosely define social support as support which helps employees to carry out their job. They also postulate that work, social support may originate from both work and family domains with the latter being limited to support received from family members. Past studies have often found that family-supportive supervisors help in reducing work-family problems even when family-supportive policies were absent in the organization (Muse & Pichler, 2011). According to House (2003), supervisor support is often seen as supervisors willing to provide at least four major supports to their employees: emotional support (esteem, trust, affect, concern, and listening), appraisal support (affirmation, feedback, social comparison), informational support (advice, suggestions,

directives, information), and physical support (aid in-kind, money, labor, time, environmental modification).

SUPERVISORY SUPPORT:

Supervisor support is defined as employees' belief concerning the extent to which supervisors value their contributions and care about their well-being. Employees need motivation to expend greater efforts and more personal resources in innovative tasks when the supervisor exhibit their individual consideration toward followers, followers are likely to perceive the warmth and consideration from their supervisors. Similarly, employees who perceive support from their supervisors often feel obligated to pay back supervisors' favours or kindness by helping supervisors to reach their stated goals (Eisenberger et al. 2002).

CO-WORKER SUPPORTS:

Work in many organizations is beginning to shift from an individual orientation, where tasks are completed alone, to a more team-based orientation, where individuals work with one another to complete projects. This shift in orientation leads to more interaction among co-workers, which can impact organizational outcomes. Co-worker support can be defined as the perception by and from a co-worker assisting another co-worker in their task when needed, by sharing knowledge and or expertise as well as providing encouragement and support (Bateman, 2009).

ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE:

Organizational climate forms a significant determinant of human behaviour in organizations. It connects the objective aspects of the organization, such as technology, leadership, etc., with the motivation and behaviour of the human resources. Organizational climate reflects a person's perception of the organization to which he belongs. It is a set of characteristics and factors that are perceived by the employees about their organizations that serve as a major force in influencing their behaviour. These factors may include job descriptions, organizational structural format, performance and evaluation standards, leadership style, challenges and innovations, organizational values and culture and so on. Richard M. Hodgetts has classified organizational climate into two major categories. He has given an analogy with an iceberg where there is a part of the iceberg that can be seen above the surface and another part that is underwater and is not invisible. The visible part that can be observed or measured include the structure of hierarchy, goals and objectives of the organization, performance standards and evaluations, technological state of the operations and so on. The second category contains factors that are not visible and quantifiable and include such subjective

areas as supports, employee's feelings and attitudes, values, morale, personal and social interaction with peers, subordinates and superiors and a sense of satisfaction with the job.

FAMILY ENVIRONMENT:

Since people are in the social fabric which include friends and relations and sometimes social and familial relationship cause conflicts, pressure and frustration also. Major life events which often involve social beginnings and endings like marriage, divorce or death have been identified as an important source of dissatisfaction with life and give stress. There are also the minor social/familial hassles experienced regularly- for instance, social obligations, poor health of a family member, unexpected company, loneliness, worth mentioning all these are correlated to psychological and somatic health status. Serious illness and disability of a family member can act as stressors which need major adjustments of a long term nature. As illness and disability restrict the caregiver's freedom and time available for other activities, which can induce pressure and frustration.

LIFE SATISFACTION

Satisfaction is a Latin word that means to make or do enough. Satisfaction with one's life implies contentment with our acceptance of one's life circumstances, or the fulfillment of one's wants and needs of one's life as a whole. In essence, life satisfaction is a subjective assessment of the quality of one's life because it is inherently an evaluation; judgments of life satisfaction have a large cognitive component. Life satisfaction is one of the most well established indicators of general wellness and, moreover, positive functioning (Suldo, Huebner, Friedrich, & Gilman, 2009).

ROLE CONFLICT:

The concept of conflict, being an outcome of behaviours, is an integral part of human life. Wherever there is interaction, there is conflict. Conflict can be defined in many ways and can be considered as an expression of hostility, negative attitudes, antagonism, aggression, rivalry, and misunderstanding. It is also associated with situations that involve contradictory or irreconcilable interests between two opposing groups. It can be defined as a disagreement between two or more individuals or groups, with each individual or group trying to gain acceptance of its view or objectives over others. A role conflict is when a person is expected to fulfil the duties of two contradictory positions. There are two types of role conflicts. The term *role conflict* refers to a clash between two or more of a person's roles or incompatible

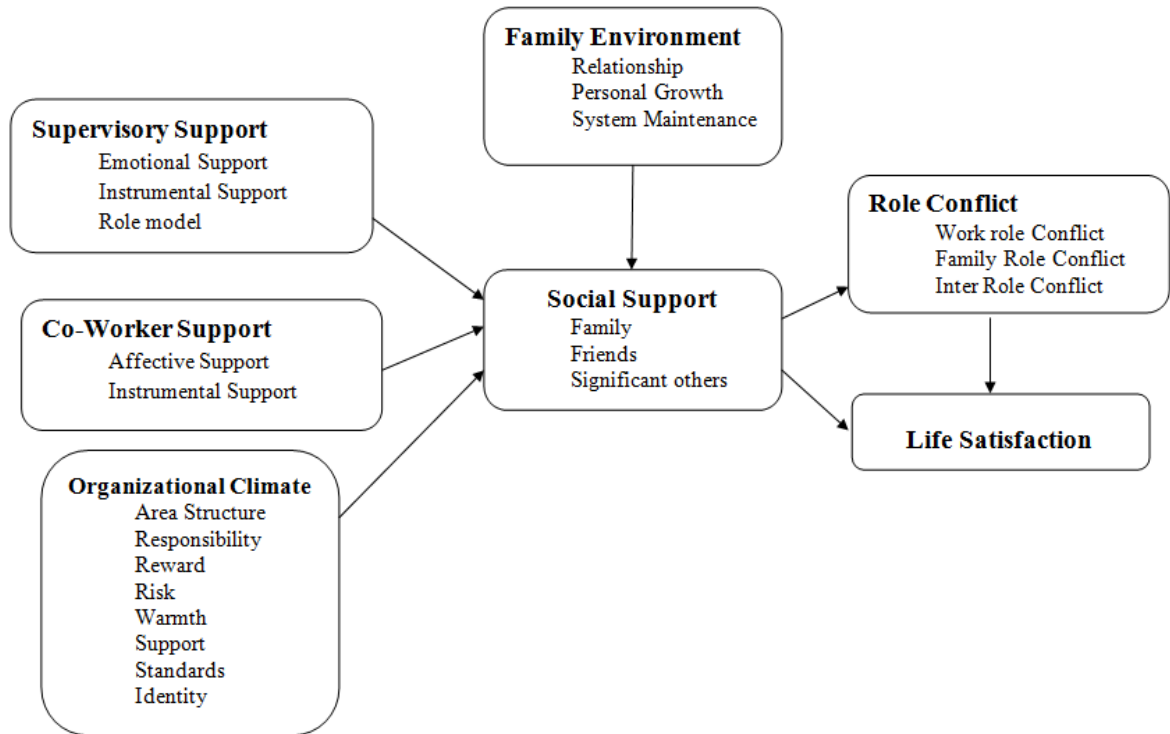
features within the same role. These incompatibilities can consist of differing expectations, requirements, beliefs, and/or attitudes.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Numerous studies indicate social support is essential for maintaining physical and psychological health. The harmful consequences of poor social support and the protective effects of good social support of mental illness have been well documented. Social support may moderate genetic and environmental vulnerabilities and confer resilience to stress; The National Study of Changing Workforce (NSCW) has reported that only 20% of US employees have the necessary workplace flexibility to manage their work and family roles (Tang & Wadsworth, 2008). Ministry of Manpower, Sultanate of Oman recently reported that the majority of expatriates leaves their jobs frequently without any formal procedure and or communication. As the majority of the studies on social support is concentrating more on the perceived support people receive from their families and their impact on health. The support they receive from the work place is not well addressed. The causes of social support need to be analysed in details. The growth of Indian expatriate population in Muscat and their increasing presence in professional settings accentuate the need for this study.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

Based on literature review, a conceptual framework for the study has been developed. Social support has been conceptualized to be made up of emotional support, tangible support, informational support and companionship support.



REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This comprehensive review of the literature addresses conceptual and empirical issues related to social support.

Jaime et al., (2009) examined the effect of social support and conflict on parenting among homeless mothers. Two demographic variables were found to be statistically significantly and positively related to social support: being Hispanic and having a high school diploma or GED degree or more education. Specifically, Hispanic participants scored higher on social support than others; and participants who had a high school equivalency diploma or more education scored higher on social support than the others did. Parenting practices scale was significantly and negatively correlated with conflict. It is also observed that total social support and instrumental support were significantly and positively associated with parenting practices. The two ways interaction model revealed statistically significant effect of instrumental social support on parenting consistency over time.

Aminah (1997) studied among female secretaries in Malaysia between the relationship between work family conflict and social support. The role of role conflict was well analyzed in the study. Out of the selected sample 19% have reported high intensity of conflict and 18% have reported low intensity of conflict. It is also observed that women received social support from four resources namely supervisor, co-workers, husband and friends and relatives. Among the four sources of support women reported high support from their husband and

received least support from their supervisor. The mean for supervisor support differed significantly from that of co-workers and husband. Correlation between work family conflict and two sources of support namely, husband and supervisors were found to be negatively significant.

Social support can be derived from sources at the workplace and outside the workplace. At the workplace, the sources of social support include the supervisor and co-workers, while sources of extra-organizational support include family and friends. Both supervisors and co-workers are in optimal positions to provide support because of their understanding of the stresses inherent in the workplace. A number of studies found that support from family and friends can have positive effects on a wide range of psychological outcomes.(Anbazhagan & Rajan, 2013; Anbazhagan & Gurumoorthy 2019; Anbazhagan and Gurumoorthy 2015; Dr. R. Sivakumaret.al. 2020; Caplan *et. al.* (1975).

Marjo (2011) analysed social factors at work and the health of employees. Social support at work place, social support in private life and team climate are the variables chosen for the study. Mental disorders sleep problems, occupational health, depression, anxiety and well-being at work are the other variables chosen for the study. Low and intermediate social support at work from both supervisors and co-workers and low social support in private life were related to a higher probability of having a depressive or anxiety disorder (or both). A statistically significant interaction was seen between gender and social support from co-workers. Social support in private life was examined with a reference group of no support holders. These people have reported low spousal support. No statistically significant interaction effect between gender or age and team climate was found regarding mental disorders. When compared with high social support, low social support from the supervisor was related to tiredness.

Shelley et al., (2004) researched about who seeks culture and social support. The cultural differences among Korean college students and American college students and the influence of social support was well analyzed in the work. There was a significant cultural difference in Using Social Support. Specifically, European Americans (57.1%) were more likely to mention Using Social Support as a coping strategy than Koreans. It was also observed that there was no significant cultural difference in organizing, emotional relief, entertainment, and self care. The results suggest that people from the interdependent Korean culture rely on social support for coping with stress less than people from the more independent U.S. culture. Sally and Arlene (1984) did a detailed analysis toward a theory of social support to close the conceptual gaps. Two implications can be drawn from the reciprocity model. First, if people

feel they will not be able to return a benefit, they may be less likely to seek assistance or accept it when offered. In situations where help is needed over an extended period of time (for example, in cases of chronic disease), the recipient's inability to reciprocate fully may become increasingly apparent and asking for help may become especially difficult. Second, if reciprocity is prevented, then the relationship between providers and recipients may diminish. Recipients, for example, may derogate providers or the resources received to reduce feelings of discomfort. Over time this can cause social ties to disintegrate, and make recipients more vulnerable to stressors.

Richenda and Bernadette (2010) measured work family conflict among nurses in Eastern Cape. Two supports namely organizational support and non-work social support was chosen for this study. Support received from work and family domain has a buffering effect for conflict in both family and work. The dependent variable of the study was work family conflict, demographic variables are considered as independent variables and social support and gender role ideologies are taken as mediating variables. Social support provided by family members accounted for 11.97% of variance, and those participants that were currently studying received .22 times more support from their families. The less the participants believed that their work is not related to their family obligations the greater their behavior-based conflict from family to work ($t = -2.20, \alpha = .03$). Likewise, the less the participants viewed that giving up family time for work as a form of self-sacrifice of a mother, the greater the behavior-based family interfering with work. Although this profession is satisfied with the social support it receives, they largely depend on their family for social support.

OBJECTIVES:

To understand the Mediating Effect of Workplace Social Support on the Role of Organizational Climate, Co-Worker Support, Supervisory Support, Family Environment, Role Conflict and Life Satisfaction of Indian Expats in Oman, the researcher developed the following sub objectives based on review result;

- To find out the level of social support perceived by Indian expatriates' in Muscat.
- To study the influence of selected organizational variables namely supervisory support, co-workers support, organizational climate on social support.
- To find out the influence of family environment on social support.
- To study the relationship between selected demographic factors and social support.
- To analyse the influence of social support on role conflict and life satisfaction.

SAMPLE SIZE DETERMINATION:

Around 3,00,000 Indian expatriates are working in and around Muscat. Al khuwair, Rusayl, Shati Al-Qurm, Bousher, Al Seeb, Muttrah and Al-Ghubra are the places where Indian expatriates are more. Out of these the three places namely Al Khuwair, Bousher and Al Seeb are chosen on the basis of people working in diverse fields. In this present research work the formula $n=[(\sigma*1.96)/(\mu*0.05)]^2$ has been used to calculate the appropriate sample for the study. The sample size for the present study consists of 320 Indians working in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, represented different occupational groups namely; Labours, Constructions, Information Technology, Educational Field and Health Care professional. They were selected according to the random sampling method.

SOURCES OF DATA COLLECTION

The researcher used both primary and secondary sources for data collection. The primary data were collected with the help of Questionnaire by directly meeting the respondents in person. A significant amount of secondary data was collected from various sources such as books, journals, articles, magazines, reports, published data and e-materials.

PROCEDURE:

The data were collected individually from the subjects either at their residences or offices. Before administering the tools, the investigator established rapport with the subjects and assured them that the data will be used for research purpose. Then the tools were administered to them. The investigator helped those subjects who faced difficulty in understanding some of the items in the scales. Scoring was done in accordance with the instructions suggested by the test developers.

TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION:

1. Multidimensional scale of perceived social support (zimet, dahlem, zimet&farley, 1988)
2. Organizational climate questionnaire developed by litwin and stringer (1968).
3. Co-worker support scale developed by ducharme and martin (2000).
4. Supervisor support questionnaire developed by hammer et al. (2009).
5. Family environment scale (fes), by – dr. Harpretbhatia and dr. N. K. Chadha
6. Role conflict questionnaire designed by kopelman, greenhaus and connolly (1983).
7. Life satisfaction scale developed and standardized by havighurst (1971).

The researcher adopted Questionnaire method to collect the data which consists of eight parts. The reliability was tested for the present study. The Chronbach's alpha was found to be 0.689.

PRE-TEST

The structured questionnaires were administered to fifty respondents randomly in order to see the suitability of the questionnaire for the study. While analyzing the responses, the researcher found that certain modifications need to be made in the questions regarding the personal profile of the respondents. With the discussion and consent of the research supervisor, few modifications were made in the questionnaire. The researcher tested the reliability for the present study to check the suitability for the population. The reliability of the selected variables are as follows;

RELIABILITY STATISTICS

Variables	Reliability co-efficient
Supervisory support	0.613
Co-worker support	0.539
Organizational climate	0.856
Social support	0.850
Family environment	0.702
Work family conflict	0.721
Life satisfaction	0.748

The above table displays the values of cronbach's α co-efficient. The above factors are associated with the selected dimensions of social support. The cronbach's α is considered as reliable when it is at least 0.5 for the above chosen variables namely Supervisory Support, Co-Worker Support, Organizational Climate, Social Support, Family Environment, Work Family Conflict and Life Satisfaction.

DATA ANALYSIS:

The individual score for all the variables were obtained according to the procedure. These scores were analysed with the help of SPSS. One-way ANOVA, cluster analysis, correspondence analysis, correlation and regression analysis are used in this study.

Row and Column Points

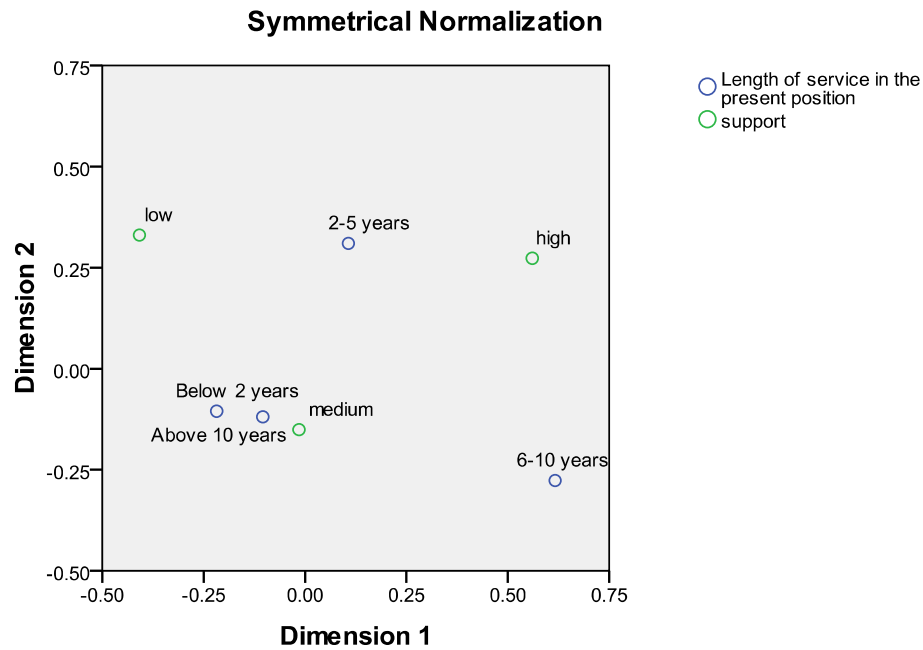


Figure portrays the results of Correspondence Analysis to explore the association between the level of support and Length of service in the present position. The Figure displays that employees those who are having less than years of service and more than 10 years of service are closely associated with “Low level of Support”, while employees who are Having 2-5 years of service are closely associated “Moderate level of support”. Employees who are Having 6-10 years of service are closely associated with the “High level of Support”. From the above picture it is inferred that if the Length of service in the present position increases the level of support increases.

Table1 Correlation between Selected Variables and social support

	Social Support	Supervisory Support	Co-worker Support	Organizational Climate	Family Environment
Supervisory Support	.522**				
Co Worker Support	.572**	.539**			

Organizational Climate	.654**	.720**	.738**		
Family Environment	.637**	.535**	.725**	.633**	
Role Conflict	.377**	.658**	.558**	.774**	.444**

Source: Primary Data

Positive significant correlation is observed between organizational climate-co-worker support ($r = 0.738$). Significant correlation is observed between family environment and co-worker support ($r = 0.725$). Positive significant correlation is observed between role conflict and co-worker support ($r = 0.774$). Significant correlation is observed between role conflict and family environment ($r = 0.444$). Significant correlation is observed between family environment and organizational climate ($r = 0.633$). Positive significant correlation is observed between role conflict and organizational climate ($r = 0.558$).

It is observed from the table the regression model's F value is 75.573 and it is significant at 1% level. The regression model's coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.807 (80.7% of variability) and its adjusted R^2 is 0.795, which is a healthy coefficient. One-unit increase in Emotional Support increases social Support by 0.444 units. Role model decreases social support by 0.371 units. This shows that role model seems to be an important predictor for social supports in work life. One unit increases in reward increases social support 0.246 units significantly. Standards, Identity, Relationship Personal Growth System maintenance serves as significant predictors for Social support life by 0.307, 0.194 0.098, .182, and .228units respectively. Warmth, Area Support, Instrumental Support are not serving as significant predictors for Social Support. Social supports = 75.573 - 0.444 (Emotional Support) + 0.246 (Responsibility) + 0.569 (Reward) + 0.006 (Warmth) + 0.307 (Standards) + 0.194 (Identity) + 0.098(Relationship) + 0.182(personal growth) + 0.228(system Maintenance).

Table 2 Regression among Selected Variables and Social Support

	Beta	FStatistics	t Value
Emotional Support	.444	75.573**	11.696**
Instrumental Support	-.061		-1.528
Role Model	-.371		-6.070**
Affective Support	-.171		-3.529**
Instrumental Support Co-Worker	-.239		-4.531**
Area Support	-.041		-.804
Responsibility	.246		6.629**
Reward	.569		9.221**
Risk	-.086		-2.255**
Warmth	.006		.128
Support	-.209		-4.062**
Standards	.307		7.220**
Identity	.194		3.987**
Relationship	.098		2.129**
Personal Growth	.182		3.388**
System Maintenance	.228	3.307**	

$R^2 = 0.807$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.795$

Hence Emotional Support, Responsibility, Reward, Warmth, Standards, Identity, Relationship, personal growth, system Maintenance serves as significant predictors for Social Support among employees working in Muscat.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

Social support perceived by Indian expatriates are categorized into three items namely support from family, friends and significant others. Most of the respondents ranked number one for the support of Significant others, support from family members stand next and support from friends ranked third. Indian expatriates working in Muscat feels significant others support is more when compare with other forms of supports. Respondents' feel that they have someone who is around when they need support. There is a special person with whom they can share their joys and sorrows apart from friends and family members. Since most of the expatriates are away from family and friends they feel significant others support is more supportive. The result of this test is inferred that there is no statistical significant association between selected demographic variables and level of social support. Most of the respondents feels that they were received moderate social support in the work place. For the better understand of association between various demographic variables and social support

the correspondent analysis is used. The regression model's coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.816 (81.6% of variability) and its adjusted R^2 is 0.813, which is a healthy coefficient. One-unit increase in work role conflict decreases Social Support by 0.137 units. Family Role conflict decreases social support by 0.013 units. Inter role conflict decreases social support by 0.474 units. This shows that Inter role conflict seems to be an important predictor for social supports in work life. Hence work role conflict, family role conflict and inter role conflict serves as significant predictors for Social Support among employees working in Muscat. It is observed from the table the regression model's F value is 36.606 and it is significant at 1% level. The regression model's coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.255 (25.5% of variability) and its adjusted R^2 is 0.244. One-unit increase in work life conflict decreases life satisfaction by 0.216 units. Family role conflict decreases life satisfaction by 0.337 units. This shows that family role conflict seems to be an important predictor for life satisfaction. Hence work life conflict, family role conflict serves as significant predictors for life satisfaction among employees working in Muscat.

CONCLUSIONS:

Social support has been conceptualized as a static variable. Social support can have a direct effect on life satisfaction and negative effect on role conflict. The study has highlighted the fact that the social supporting factors from the family, organization and from the society's influence on life satisfaction. Social support has found to have a significant influence on one's life satisfaction. This finding also supported and extended the organizational support research literature mostly published in Western countries. The results of this study reminded organizations to incorporate supervisor support and co-worker support as key elements of workplace harmony and goal attainment. This study further suggested that the willingness of supervisors and co-workers to adequately provide material and moral support would strongly reduce the intrusion on work problems in employees' family lives and enhance their capabilities to decrease work-family conflict. Consequently, these positive outcomes may help improve employee well-being and thus lead to the achievement of organizational strategic mission and goals. The results will be able to indicate whether there are varying levels of social support prevailing or expected in the work settings. This study will be helpful to strengthen the role of social support and creation of more dynamic mechanisms to enhance workplace harmony and productivity. The results of the present study implicate that greater attention is needed to design work settings in organizations for providing effective support system to increase the comfortability of the employees for their better life.

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