

## Military Officers Rank; Determining their Job Satisfaction, Perceived Stress and Perceived Social Support

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### Abstract

*In this study, three research variables job satisfaction, perceived stress, and perceived social support among military officers were examined by using three scales, perceived stress scale, multidimensional scale of perceived social support, and job satisfaction survey. Officers from Pakistani armed forces were approached in different cities of Pakistan. For this purpose, convenient-sampling technique was used for selection of the 230 participants. They were matched on demographic variables as; ranks, age, marital status, education, social status and length of service. Three t-test were used to compare two groups of military personnel on the basis of their length of service, education and rank. Results indicated that Army Lieutenants scored differently from Majors, on the three scales. Army Captains have different levels of perceived stress, perceived social support and job satisfaction because of their education. Moreover, Army Captains and Flight Lieutenants of Air force having an equivalent rank but they are not same in perceiving stress, social support and job satisfaction.*

**Key words:** Perceived Social Support, Perceived Stress, Job Satisfaction, Military Officers Rank

### Introduction

Job satisfaction shows an employee's response toward job, reflecting how he can enjoy comforts of job and the work environment (Smither, 1994). However, satisfaction on job can viewed as a reflector of an employee's interpersonal and psychological health and well being which would be helpful for organizations to progress. This type of employee satisfaction measurement is an essential feature in organizational psychology researches (Smither, 1994). According to Syptak, Marsland, and Ulmer (1999), job satisfaction is an emotional state for a persons' work-role, including perceived and received job performance.

Social support refers to an informal social networking which allows people to express their emotional feelings and empathy, practical help, information aid and appraisal. Work-place social support emphasizes on collaborative problem solving and sharing information, judging situation and obtaining advice from a variety of personnel as from a colleague, supervisor or manager which is a major source of social support (Etzion, 1984).

Perceived Social support is the extent to which a person feels cared and valued by people around him (Gurung, 2006). This would include a person's family, friends, teachers and society. Several researchers think that family is more effective social support provider than non familial sort of support (Cutrona, 1986). Some others think close friendship is the most significant source of social support (Berndt, 2004).

Social support is a type of social emotional help that involve effective coping strategies. Social support is a factor which helps people to minimize their stress. Previous researches revealed that social support has a negative relationship with psychiatric disorders like stress and depression. On the other hand it is positively correlated with physical and mental health. Nahid and Sarkis (1994) have studied that in major life crisis social support helps individuals to cope effectively and also enhance their well being. Other researches emphasis on the quality of the perceived social support rather than the quantity of perceived or received social support which is positively correlated with mental health (Holahan, Valentiner & Moos, 1995). Some other studies cannot find out the moderating effect

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supervisor's support and its relationship with occupational stressful consequences (Beehr & McGrath 1992).

Social support has two aspects that promotes health and well being and reduced stressful events experienced by an individual (Dollete, Steese, Phillips, & Matthews, 2004). Firstly, social support is a very important factor in people's life. Lack of social support has been proven to be associated with different psychological difficulties like loneliness, stress, depression, and anxiety (Eskin, 2003). Elliot and Gramling (1990) investigated that social support facilitates college-students to minimize their stress, depression, and anxiety. They also concluded that social support would be helpful for students to cope their stress, depression, and anxiety. Therefore, it is an attempt to understand how social support can be helpful to lessen different other psychological problems. The term, stress refers to a bodily reaction to some physical and mental demands. It may be defined as a transaction between different environmental forces or events named as stress-precipitators that seem to be a threat to an individual's well being (Rogers, Li & Shani, 1987).

Occupational stress can be defined as a situation in which a person perceives his environment and nature of work being stressful (Rohany, 2003). It can also be affect from work-design, job performance, job qualifications, and organizational structure (Rogers, et al., 1987). Moreover, it has also been found that work over-load may lead to stress (Pflanz & Ogle, 2006; Rogers, et al., 1987). The stress-buffering effects of social support were apparent in a study that found strong social support to be a key factor reducing the likelihood of post traumatic stress disorder among Vietnam veterans (Weiten & Lloyd, 2003).

Several occupations as military concern the empowerment of their man. As it has been seen in previous researches conducted among military, more than 80% of the studies have used the male as respondents (Limbert, 2004; Fairbrother & Warn, 2003). It appears that males are still seen as dominant there and make up most of the military-workforce. A career opportunity in military is one that requires both mental and physical training. This is in order for the recruited to be continuously ready to serve the nation. The probability in military for human performance and mental and physical ability are high and training provided is enough. Thus, understanding human nature and capacities would never be overlooked. Military personnel also receive some difficulties during performing their job, issues to keep staff motivation levels, maintaining job satisfaction, sound psychological health, refrain burn out, and other occupational stress. Therefore, it is essential that military personnels' well being would never be under emphasized or overlooked and their rights be treated as a normal respected human-being, instead that they are creditworthy for defending our country in any type of conditions either safe or unsafe. The motto of Royal Malaysian Navy's (RMN) is 'Ready to sacrifice' which reflects that military personnel or troops are always be prepare for any condition to serve their country, people or nation at any-time.

All RMN officers take this responsibility since they are recruited to join the armed forces as a military organization. This difficult and heavy responsibility may produce psychological issues owing to clash between human psycho social needs and expectations that are related to the duty to serve their nation.

Among military studies, various facets of job satisfaction are described as compared to the civilian type of work force. Many of the facets of job satisfaction are related to work environment, nature of given task, military-operations and other organizational customs like obedience, other military policies and disciplines). Thus, military would never be considered as a typical and traditional working corporation (Blair & Phillips, 1983). Many researchers concluded that military personnel and officers have low in their perception of satisfaction on job (Alpass, Long, Chamberlain & MacDonald, 1997; Sanchez, Bray, Vincus & Bann, 2004; Blair & Phillips, 1983) and they tend to have more high occupational stress (Pflanz & Sonneks, 2002) as compare to their civilian counter-parts.

## Hypotheses

1. Lieutenant and Major are different in their scores on the three scales (perceived stress, perceived social support and job satisfaction) scores.
2. Army Captains will have score differently on the basis of their education on their three scale scores.
3. Army Captains are different from Flight Lieutenants of Air force on the three scales score.

## Results

The hypotheses were tested by using SPSS 17 and the Pearson product-moment correlation was used to find relationship among the variables.

**Table 1**  
**Mean, Standard deviation, t-value and p-value of Lieutenant and Major on three scales**

|                          | Ranks      | N  | Mean   | SD    | <i>t</i> | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|--------------------------|------------|----|--------|-------|----------|-----------------|
| Perceived stress         | Lieutenant | 30 | 14.40  | 9.65  | 3.909*   | .000            |
|                          | Major      | 30 | 23.50  | 7.94  |          |                 |
| Perceived social support | Lieutenant | 30 | 42.63  | 12.15 | 7.550*   | .000            |
|                          | Major      | 30 | 62.83  | 8.20  |          |                 |
| Job satisfaction         | Lieutenant | 30 | 115.33 | 24.87 | 3.917*   | .000            |
|                          | Major      | 30 | 136.67 | 16.48 |          |                 |

\* $p < 0.05$

**Table 2**  
**Mean, Standard deviation, t-value and p-value of education (BE and BSc) among Captains**

|                          | Education | N  | Mean   | SD    | <i>t</i> | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|--------------------------|-----------|----|--------|-------|----------|-----------------|
| Perceived stress         | BSc       | 70 | 15.59  | 5.93  | -1.562*  | .121            |
|                          | BE        | 70 | 17.27  | 6.81  |          |                 |
| Perceived social support | BSc       | 70 | 53.79  | 13.55 | 6.542*   | .000            |
|                          | BE        | 70 | 37.94  | 15.07 |          |                 |
| Job satisfaction         | BSc       | 70 | 125.54 | 14.51 | 5.100*   | .000            |
|                          | BE        | 70 | 111.29 | 18.35 |          |                 |

\* $p < 0.05$

The results in Table 1, shows the three *t*-values for two independent sample groups. All the three *t*-values are significant that means both groups are different at their score of perceived social support, perceived stress and job satisfaction.

The results in Table 2, shows the three *t*-values are significant that shows that both groups are different at their score of perceived social support, perceived stress and job satisfaction.

**Table 3**  
**Mean, Standard deviation, t-value and p-value of Captains Engineers and Flight Lieutenants on the three scales**

|                          | Ranks              | N  | Mean   | SD    | <i>T</i> | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|--------------------------|--------------------|----|--------|-------|----------|-----------------|
| Perceived stress         | Captains Engr.     | 30 | 16.90  | 4.11  | -2.387*  | .021            |
|                          | Flight Lieutenants | 30 | 13.73  | 5.99  |          |                 |
| Perceived social support | Captains Engr.     | 30 | 49.23  | 18.24 | 2.296*   | .025            |
|                          | Flight Lieutenants | 30 | 57.47  | 7.30  |          |                 |
| Job satisfaction         | Captains Engr.     | 30 | 128.27 | 15.25 | .035     | .972            |
|                          | Flight Lieutenants | 30 | 128.40 | 14.46 |          |                 |

\* $p < 0.05$

The results in Table 3, shows that all the two *t*-values are significant that shows that both groups are different at their score of perceived social support and perceived stress. But Captains Engineers and Flight Lieutenants are same on their job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1 described that within the ranks of Army Lieutenant and Major were different in their scores on the three scales scores. The Table 1 showed that the levels of perceived social support, perceived stress and job satisfaction were different and significant in comparing these two ranks. Thus, hypothesis 4 was supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that the rank of Army Captains on the basis of education, Captain Engr. and Captains with B.Sc. were different in their scores on the three scales scores. The Table 2 showed that all the three levels were different and significant in comparing these two groups. Therefore, hypothesis 5 is supported.

Hypothesis 3 described that within the ranks of Army and Air Force, Captains were different from Flight Lieutenants on the three scales. The results in Table 3 showed that all the three variable levels were different and significant in comparing these two groups. Therefore, hypothesis 6 could be supported.

## Conclusion

The results conclude that Army and Air force officers are different at their perceived social support, perceived stress and job satisfaction scale scores. In the above discussion and hypotheses testing, it is clearly mentioned that well-educated officers have more perceived social support, perceived stress and job satisfaction levels as compare to those who are less educated. Similarly, officers of higher ranks get higher levels of perceived social support, perceived stress and job satisfaction.

## Limitations and Suggestions

In this study, firstly, there would be a chance for response tendency may be shown by officers to answer certain questions. Secondly, officers' familial background was not asked to them, which may also determine their responses. So, a useful suggestion for future researchers is that familial background of military officers should be kept in view. This study is a contribution to military psychology particularly in Pakistani armed force context.

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