



Multi-dimensional Individual Work Performance: Predictors and Mediators

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ABSTRACT

Objective - Individual work performance (IWP) has been researched time and time again in the past few decades. Interestingly enough, existing research on IWP focuses mainly on the area of work production and lacks an in-depth holistic understanding of IWP and other interrelated work behaviours. In this study, IWP is explored in the context of a multidimensional construct that includes the dimensions of task, contextual, and counterproductive behaviours. The purpose of this research is to investigate whether the three variables of work engagement (WE), psychological empowerment (PE), and subjective well-being (SWB) mediate and correlate with the relationship between perceived organisational support (POS) and IWP.

Methodology/Technique – 780 employees from 4 organisations in Jakarta were selected to participate in this study. The respondents were tasked with responding to five questionnaires including (1) IWP of Koopmans, (2) POS of Eisenberger, (3) SWB of Diener, (4) WE of Baker and Schaufeli, (5) PE of Spreitzer. The data was analysed using structural equation modelling.

Findings – The results show that the proposed structural model aligns with the empirical data [$X^2(0, N = 780) = 0, p = 1.000; RMSEA = .000$]. This research concludes that the relationship between POS and IWP is best mediated by either WE, PE or SWB. Among the three mediators, WE plays the greatest role in mediating the relationship between POS and IWP.

Novelty – These findings expand on previous research on the weak relationship between POS and IWP.

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JEL Classification: L20, L25, L29.

Keywords: Individual Work Performance; Perceived Organizational Support; Psychological Empowerment; Subjective Well-being; Work Engagement.

1. Introduction

Individual work performance (IWP) is constantly seen as a key factor in predicting organisational growth, success and sustainability (Bakker, Demerouti, & Verbeke, 2004; Sonnentag & Frese, 2002). Much research surrounding organisational psychology has been conducted with the aim of understanding factors that influence and enhance IWP, including both organisational and individual factors.

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Perceived organisational support (POS) is one such organisational factor. POS refers to an employee's perception that the organisation he or she works for values his or her work contributions (Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo & Lynch, 1998). The influence of POS to IWP is explained by the social exchange theory which focuses on the norm of reciprocity (Armeli et al., 1998). When an employee believes that he or she is well-recognised and valued by their organisation, this creates an obligation for that employee to reciprocate that appreciation with greater work effort. This obligation to repay organisational support with performance is considered the driving force behind the enhancement of IWP (Armeli et al., 1998). However, current knowledge on the effect of POS on IWP is inconsistent. For instance, some research suggests that POS has a positive impact on IWP (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch & Rhoades, 2001) whilst other research suggest that POS has no significant impact (Stamper & Johlke, 2003). In addition, research supporting Eisenberger et al.'s (2001) findings, propose that the correlation between POS and IWP is weak (Guan, Sun, Hou, Zhao, Luan & Fan, 2014). Given the ambiguity of these findings, research on the relationship between POS and IWP is required to further investigate the relationship between the two facts, whether it is direct or indirect (the latter of which is where a mediator is required).

Some studies suggest the relationship between POS and IWP is indirect and is mediated by positive affect and an employee's organisational commitment (Guan et al., 2004). Harter, Schmidt, Agrawal and Plowman (2012) conclude that work engagement (WE) is a strong predictor to IWP and can be predicted by POS (Saks, 2006). This raises the question as to whether WE mediates the relationship between POS and IWP.

Moreover, research by Lyubomirsky, King and Diener (2005) demonstrates that IWP is influenced by positive affect; this is consistent with findings by Guan's et al. (2004). According to Diener, Oishi and Lucas (2003), positive affect is a dimension of subjective well-being (SWB). Research in recent years shows that SWB has a significant effect on IWP (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). Therefore, one may ask whether SWB does indeed mediate the relationship between POS and IWP.

In addition to WE and SWB, psychological empowerment (PE) may potentially mediate the relationship between POS and IWP. Many studies demonstrate that IWP is affected by PE (Chun & Tsung, 2012; Hechanova, Alampay & Franco, 2006). Therefore, it is also worth investigating whether PE mediates the relationship between POS and IWP.

Based on existing research, it is considered that WE, SWB or PE may mediate the relationship between POS and IWP. Hence, its structural model is illustrated as follows:

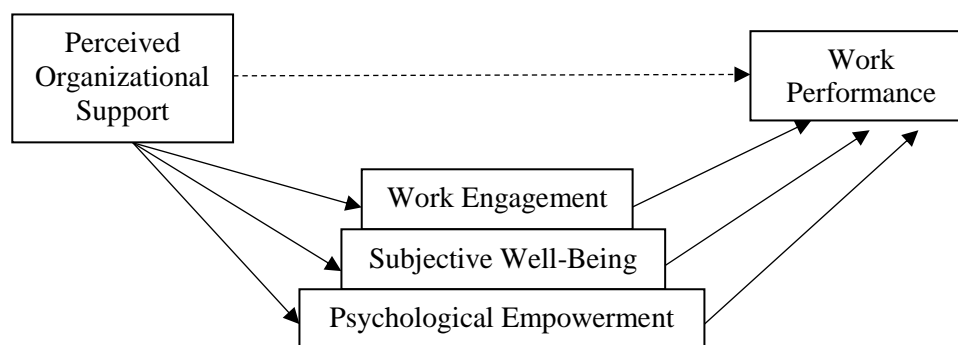


Figure 1. Structural Model of POS to IWP With Three Individual Variables as Mediator

Based on Figure 1, two questions arise: (1) can WE, SWB and PE act as a mediator between POS and IWP? (2) if the 3 variables are found to be mediators, which one plays the greatest role in mediating the relationship between POS and IWP?

1.1 WE as a Mediator Between POS and IWP.

Sonnentag and Frese (2002) state that IWP is a multi-dimensional variable, covering both task and contextual performance. Task performance constitutes in-role behavior and is directly correlated with tasks. Meanwhile, contextual performance refers to extra-role behavior and is frequently referred to as organisational citizenship behavior (OCB). Koopmans et al., (2011) suggests counterproductive behavior (CWB – negative behaviour) should be measured in IWP. One outcome of POS is WE (Gillet, Huart, Colombat & Fouquereau, 2013) and it is believed that WE optimizes IWP (Bakker, 2001; Schaufeli, Tarris & Bakker, 2006). Therefore, WE affects IWP both in the context of intra-role and extra-role behaviour. Hence, the first hypothesis (H1) of this study proposes that WE mediates the relationship between POS and IWP.

1.2 PE as a Mediator Between POS and IWP

Spreitzer (1995) states that PE should be interpreted in the work context. PE is manifested in 4 cognitive aspects, namely: (1) meaning, attaining one's goal or passion and feeling a sense of purpose; (2) competence, a person's belief to perform tasks successfully; (3) self-determination, a sense of continuation in work tasks; and (4) impact, progress continuously being made in order to fulfill some purpose. Liden, Wayne and Sparrowe (2000) found that PE can act as a mediator between tasks, interpersonal relationships and IWP. Since PE is a motivational variable, the process of affecting IWP requires reinforcement. In this context, PE usually increases in the workplace if employees receive reinforcement from their organisation, including support in completing their given tasks. Seibert, Wang and Courtright (2011) state that employees perceive PE when they receive POS. Consequently, these employees feel more competent and perceive their work as being more meaningful; as a result, their IWP is optimized. As such, the second hypothesis (H2) of this study suggests the relationship between POS and IWP is mediated by PE.

1.3 SBW as a Mediator Between POS and IWP

SWB plays a significant role in a person's life. In general, positive emotions enhance IWP (Bryson, Forth & Stokes, 2015; Lyubormirsky, King & Diener, 2005). The effect of POS towards IWP is greater when SWB is involved. POS can be established through innovative management that causes employees to feel secure and comfortable with their work (Caesens, Stinglhamber & Ohana, 2016; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). This feeling is called positive emotion and is a part of SWB. In short, POS encourages SWB among employees and in turn SWB enhances IWP. Thus, the third hypothesis (H3) proposes that SWB mediates the relationship between POS and IWP.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

The sample consists of 780 employees ($M = 33.66$ years) from 4 organisations in Jakarta. The participants consisted of females (57.9%) and married people (73.3%). 50.6% of the respondents hold an undergraduate qualification and 37.3% have reached high school education only. The mean duration of employment of the respondents is 9.25 years.

2.2 Measures

This research uses 5 measures: (1) IWP of Koopmans ($\alpha = .670 - .898$); (2) POS of Eisenberger ($\alpha = .658$); (3) SWB of Diener ($\alpha = .828 - .863$); (4) WE of Baker and Schaufeli ($\alpha = .809 - .851$); (5) PE of Spreitzer ($\alpha = .722 - .895$). The scales use a 5-item Likert-scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neither disagree nor agree, agree, strongly agree).

3. Results

Table 1 evidently shows that all variables correlate with one another. The correlation between WE and IWP is the highest ($r = .561, p < 0.01$) among all of the relationships. Meanwhile, the relationship between POS and IWP demonstrates the smallest correlation, although it is still significant ($r = .131, p < 0.01$).

Table 1. Mean Standard Deviation and Correlations Among the Variables

Variable	Mean	Std Dev	Correlations							
			POS	WP	PE	WE	SWB	Age	Tenure	
POS	4.1040	.5373	1	.131**						
IWP	3.7034	.4774	.131**	1						
PE	3.8285	.5067	.131**	.465**	1					
WE	4.9138	.7779	.151**	.561**	.445**	1				
SWB	3.3996	.4674	.135**	.427**	.343**	.387**	1			
Age	33.65	8.779	.000	.135**	-.064	.108**	.220**	1		
Tenure	9.23	7.491	-.0021	.044	.044	.045	.117**	.804**	1	

Notes: POS = Perceived Organizational Support; IWP = Individual Work Performance; PE = Psychological Empowerment; WE = Work Engagement; SWB = Subjective Well Being

The hypothesis test is conducted based on SEM and calculated using LISREL. The results are as follows:

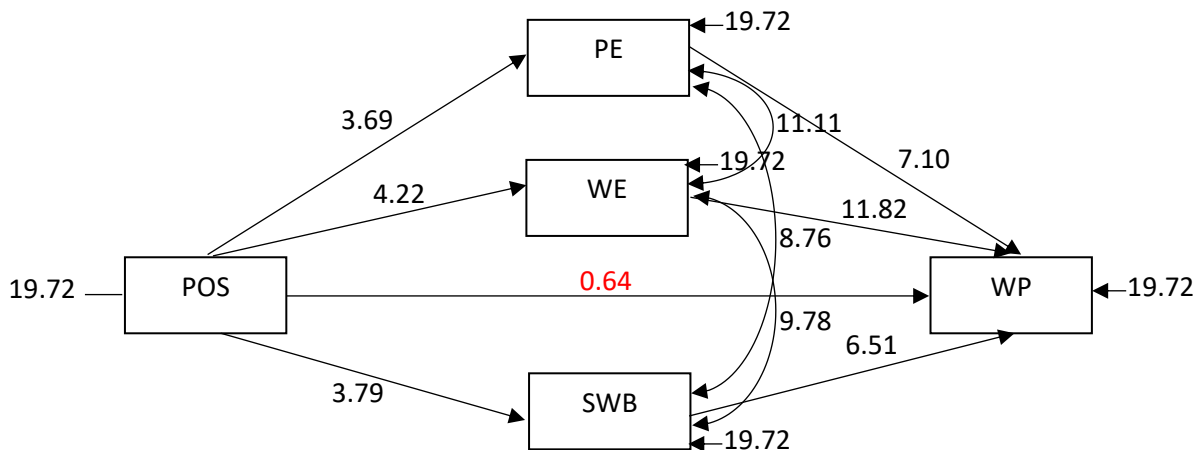


Figure 2. PE, WE and SWB as Mediators between POS and IWP

Figure 2 demonstrates that the assumed structural model aligns with current empirical data and even produces a perfect fit score [$\chi^2 (0, N = 780) = 0, p = 1.000; RMSEA = .000$]. In this model the 3 hypotheses are acceptable; WE, PE and SWB are all potential mediators between POS and IWP. It is evident that, where the role of POS to IWP is mediated by PE, WE and SWB, the role of POS towards IWP becomes insignificant ($t = 0.64 < 1.96$). Based on the value t or β of the 3 mediators, it is clear that WE is a more significant mediator ($t = 10.51$ or $\beta = 0.35$) compared to PE ($t = 7.49$ or $\beta = 0.23$) or SWB ($t = 6.88$ or $\beta = 0.22$). Thus, POS is arguably a reliable predictor of IWP when using WE, PE or SWB.

When the measurement is aimed at each dimension of IWP, the results show that PE, WE and SWB remain significant mediators in the context of task performance [$\chi^2(0, N = 780) = 0, p = 1.000; RMSEA = .000$]. In this instance, these 3 variables are all partial mediators (t between POS – task performance = $3.22 > 1.96$) and WE is the most significant partial mediator between POS and task performance ($t = 7.67$ or $\beta = 0.28$) compared to PE ($t = 3.74$ or $\beta = 0.14$) or SWB ($t = 3.52$ or $\beta = 0.12$). Furthermore, the 3 variables also align as mediators [$\chi^2(0, N = 780) = 0, p = 1.000; RMSEA = .000$] and all of the variables are potential mediators (score t between POS – contextual performance dimension = $1.99 > 1.96$) toward contextual performance (OCB). In this case, PE is the most significant mediator ($t = 8.82$ or $\beta = 0.29$) compared to WE ($t = 8.20$ or $\beta = 0.28$) or SWB ($t = 4.57$ or $\beta = 0.15$). When measured against counter-production performance, the structural model is consistent with the empirical data and the 3 variables act as partial mediators (t between POS – IWP = $3.73 > 1.96$, with negative direction). Consequently, when PE fails to function as a mediator (score $t = 0.93$ or $\beta = 0.03$), WE ($t = 8.41$ or $\beta = 0.32$) and SWB ($t = 4.37$ or $\beta = 0.20$) play significant roles as partial mediators.

4. Discussion

This research demonstrates that there is an indirect relationship between POS and IWP. This finding builds upon the results presented by Guan et al. (2004) whereby POS needs individual variables (WE, PE and SWB) in order to enhance IWP. Hence, this supports Guan et al.'s (2004) finding that the direct relationship between POS and IWP is weak. Further, these findings support the meta-analysis of Eisenberger et al., (2001) and Harter et al., (2012). Moreover, this research supports the social exchange theory which states that the obligation to repay organisational support with performance creates a positive emotion (as in SBW) and motivation (as in WE and PE). Positive emotion and motivation are inevitably driving forces of IWP.

In addition, this research concludes that WE is a predictor or mediator between POS and IWP. The results of this research also underline more significant contributions of the role of WE as a mediator than the mediatory capacity of PE or SWB toward IWP. It is also interesting to discover that WE is a more significant mediator of IWP as compared to PE (except against OCB). In light of these results, PE measures 4 aspects with more fundamental characters (meaning, competence, self-determination and impact). Meanwhile, WE analyzes 3 aspects (vigor, dedication absorption), which are directly correlated with IWP. Hence, the aspects that are related with task performance play a more significant role towards IWP. Nonetheless, this disparity is trivial as the dimensions of PE are indirectly covered by the measurements for vigor and absorption.

On the other hand, the least significant mediator is SWB. The aspects assessed in SWB include life satisfaction, positive and negative emotion, and work satisfaction which all have no direct relationship with the IWP of employees. SWB reflects a general assessment, which is an important contribution to working atmosphere. Positive working environment enhances WE and consequently stimulates IWP.

5. Conclusion

This research demonstrates that the role of POS to IWP is indirect. Such a relationship will become more meaningful when mediated by 3 individual variables (WE, PE and SWB). These 3 variables act as full mediators. WE is the most significant mediator. In addition, IWP is enhanced by organizational variables (in this study POS) which then stimulates WE, PE and SWB. Thus, managers should take individual aspects into account during the selection process. Moreover, managers should also consider both organisational and individual aspects in managing the IWP of their employees.

One limitation of this research is the self-reporting system of IWP measurement. This method may result in bias of the results. Future research should adopt superior assessment criteria since the superiors apprehend their subordinates' IWP. In addition, it is recommended that a more specific demographic such as the millennial generation be selected for future examination. Millennials have unique characteristics (more relaxed, enthusiastic about switching jobs so as to attain self-improvement and eager to materialize their

goals in the fastest way) and hence their IWP might be challenging to manage. Notably, it would be worthwhile to further review and investigate these assumptions and their impacts on IWP. Moreover, as organisational variables are not limited to POS, exploring IWP in relation to other variables is strongly recommended. Reviewing factors such as quality of work life, the role of superiors, remuneration systems, and social relationships within the organization may be considered in future research.

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