



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i6/13941>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i6/13941

**Received:** 14 April 2022, **Revised:** 16 May 2022, **Accepted:** 30 May 2022

**Published Online:** 11 June 2022

**In-Text Citation:** (Tatt et al., 2022)

**To Cite this Article:** Tatt, W. C., Hoo, W. C., & Krishnan, S. (2022). A Proposed Serial Multiple Mediation Model for Perceived Organizational Support and Organizational Commitment among Klang Valley Blue-Collar Manufacturing Employees. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*. 12(6), 1528 – 1541.

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Vol. 12, No. 6, 2022, Pg. 1528 – 1541

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[www.hrmars.com](http://www.hrmars.com)

ISSN: 2222-6990

## A Proposed Serial Multiple Mediation Model for Perceived Organizational Support and Organizational Commitment among Klang Valley Blue-Collar Manufacturing Employees

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### Abstract

Due to misperceptions about blue-collar jobs and increasing demand for blue-collar personnel, the manufacturing sector has the greatest turnover rate. Malaysia's manufacturing sector is likewise declining. Manufacturers face significant turnover expenses, including recruiting and training of blue-collar manufacturing personnel, due to high turnover intention and poor performance. The COVID-19 epidemic is exacerbating these long-standing issues. High organizational commitment is a requirement for keeping and boosting employee performance, therefore the present researcher may investigate it. Perceived organizational support influences organizational commitment, according to study.

There aren't many studies on how perceived organizational support leads to organizational commitment, therefore the serial mediator is the key contribution of this study. There is a missing link in a causal connection if a researcher utilizes just one mediator, work-related stress or job satisfaction, to mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment when work-related stress is a requirement of job satisfaction. This study examines organizational commitment using perceived organizational support as a predictor and work-related stress and job satisfaction as sequential mediators.

This research uses the Job Demands-Resources Model as the underlying theory and the Person-Environmental Fit Model, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, Herzberg's Two Factors Theory, Social Exchange Theory, Personality Traits, and the Three Component Model of Commitment as supporting theories to justify serial mediating and moderating. Quantitative research was used. 385 manufacturing workers were chosen using multi-stage cluster sampling. Surveys gather data. This study uses Hayes Process Macros for SPSS to accept or reject hypotheses. This study contributes to the literature on characteristics that might increase organizational commitment to improve employee performance and reduce turnover intention. Researchers anticipate this research would assist firms develop good HR and commitment strategies.

**Keywords:** Perceived Organizational Support, Organizational Commitment, Work-Related Stress, Job Satisfaction, Job Demands-Resources Model

## Introduction

As published in Statista, for the past ten years from 1999 to 2020, Malaysia's unemployment rate has been relatively low and consistent at around 3%, except for 2020 at approximately 4.55 percent during the COVID-19 pandemic (O'Neill, 2021). At the same period, the number of people employed in the manufacturing industry in Malaysia only having a slight drop by approximately one thousand. With the unemployment of the one thousand manufacturing employees, Malaysia's manufacturing output was declined by 3.96% from 2019 to 2020, showing that manufacturing employees are important to contribute in the performance of manufacturing industry (Macrotrends, 2021).

Although the employability of the manufacturing employee is relatively high and is not much affected by the pandemic, but the manufacturing industry suffered the highest job losses of all industries in Malaysia, which is 11883 in 2021 (Ministry of Human Resource, 2021). In this case, voluntary turnover is one of the top ten reasons of job losses in manufacturing industry (Ministry of Human Resource, 2021). The turnover rate of manufacturing employees is high due to the human misperception about blue collar work is dirty, physically demanding, low skilled, low paid and easy to be replaced, but in fact, there is a high demand of blue collar workers required in the manufacturing industry. Thus, the manufacturing employees have many alternatives and low leaving costs to resign from one manufacturing company to another.

According to Ali *et al* (2018), high employee turnover is one of the crucial consequences of low organizational commitment. In Malaysia, the manufacturing industry is the most affected by significant staff turnover (Mahadi *et al.*, 2020). It is seen that there is a growing academic's attention on employee turnover research focused on white collar workers instead of blue collar workers (Kaymakçı *et al.*, 2022). However, due to the training required to build skilled and competent blue collar workers is costly and time-consuming, it is also necessary to identify variables that caused blue collar workers' intention to leave (Bujang *et al.*, 2019).

Meanwhile, according to Ayu *et al* (2018), low employee performance is another crucial consequence of low organizational commitment. Under the Movement Control Order (MCO) policy to stop the COVID-19 epidemic from spreading, it is reported that the manufacturing sector has a negative growth, affected by a downward performance in 2020 (Department of Statistics Malaysia Official Portal, 2021). Therefore, it is important to focus on the variables to predict organizational commitment in order to address the problems of employee turnover and employee performance in manufacturing industry in Malaysia.

In short, the high turnover rate and the poor employee performance which results in high turnover costs including the costs of recruiting and training in Malaysia's manufacturing industry are two serious problems to be concerned. In order to address the problems, several studies suggest that high organizational commitment can reduce turnover intention and improve employee performance. In order to achieve high organizational commitment, the purpose of this research is to review the available literature on the impact of perceived organizational support, work-related stress, personality traits, and job satisfaction on organizational commitment, as well as to offer a conceptual framework that integrates several fundamental hypotheses. The newly developed framework is then examined, with research contributions and managerial implications being drawn forth.

This study attempted to achieve the following research objectives(RO):

RO1: To examine the influence of Perceived organizational support and organizational commitment are positively related.

RO2: To determine whether positive relationships between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment are mediated by both work-related stress and job satisfaction, such that the relationship is serially mediated.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Organizational Commitment***

Organizational commitment is defined as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization”, which is to characterize an employee's level of commitment to the company, as well as their identification with the company's values and objectives (Mowday et al., 1979). Organizational commitment is classified into affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment under Mayer’s three component model of commitment (Singh & Gupta, 2015).

Organizational commitment is not a new concept and it has been a prominent research topic especially in healthcare and higher education sectors over the years because of the significant motivational consequences of commitment (Berberoglu, 2018; Dahmardeh & Nastiezaie, 2019; Deressa et al., 2022). The concept of organizational commitment has been widely used by managers in general in many organizations to increase staff retention and productivity (Idris, 2014). However, there are surprisingly limited researches on organizational commitment in manufacturing industry, particularly in Malaysia. In this case, it creates a literature gap to research on organizational commitment in order to address high turnover intention and low employee performance in manufacturing industry.

### ***Perceived Organizational Support***

Perceived organizational support is defined as “employees' perception concerning the extent to which the organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being”(Caesens et al., 2019). It is the combination of organizational support theory and social exchange theory. Perceived organizational support is heavily reliant on employees' interpretations of the organization's motivations for giving them favorable or bad treatment based on the organizational support theory (Allen et al., 2003; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Ramadoss & Lape, 2014; Wayne et al., 2017). As a result, perceived organizational support triggers a social exchange process in which employees feel bound to assist the organization in achieving its aims and objectives, with the expectation that more efforts on behalf of the organization will result in bigger benefits (Dugan & Peinovich, 2006). Perceived organizational support also meets socioemotional requirements, leading in higher organizational identification and commitment, a stronger desire to help the organization flourish, and improved psychological well-being (Kurtessis, 2015).

### ***Work-Related Stress***

Work-related stress is a reaction that people experience when they are confronted with work demands and pressures that are out of proportion to their knowledge and talents, and which put their ability to cope to the test (World Health Organization, 2020). Work-related stress theories include person-environment fit model, demand-control-support model, equity theory and transactional model of stress and coping (Rippon et al., 2020). Work-related stress is a famous research topic in recent years, especially in nursing industry during the COVID-19

pandemic (Bednall et al., 2022; Gavin et al., 2020; Hong et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2020; Mattila et al., 2020). It is because nursing and hospitality are directly impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. However, it is not only nursing industry get affected by the pandemic, but other industries as well. Work-related stress always has been discussed with employee turnover (Avey et al., 2009). As discussed earlier, manufacturing industry in Malaysia has a high turnover rate. Therefore, there is a need to fill up the literature gap of work-related stress in manufacturing industry in Malaysia.

### **Job Satisfaction**

Employee satisfaction has long been a focus of industrial and organizational psychologists' research. Some people enjoy working and consider it to be a vital aspect of their lives, while the others work unpleasantly only because they have to. Job satisfaction theories include two-factor theory, theory of hierarchy of needs, existence, relatedness, growth theory, and learned needs theory (Valaei & Rezaei, 2016). The most researched area of organizational behavior is job satisfaction over the years (Ćulibrk et al., 2018; Jamal & Anwar, 2021; Loan, 2020; Scanlan & Still, 2019; Subarto et al., 2021). It's crucial to know how satisfied employees are at work for a variety of reasons, and the results of job satisfaction surveys have an impact on both employees and employers. From the perspective of the workers, it is self-evident that people prefer to be treated properly. It could be a reflection of good treatment if employees feel respected and satisfied at work. In the eyes of the firm, good job satisfaction can lead to better worker performance, which affects the company's results (Smith et al., 2020). Job satisfaction is commonly seen as a key factor in employee retention and productivity. In this case, job satisfaction is a prerequisite to enhance organizational commitment for productivity, responsiveness, quality, and service recognition (Jamal & Anwar, 2021).

### **Hypothesis Development**

#### **Perceived Organizational Support and Organizational Commitment**

Perceived organizational support is widely used as a mediator (Asgari et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2018; Zheng & Wu, 2018), as a moderator (Baranchenko et al., 2020; Getachew & Zhou, 2018; Wen et al., 2019), or as an independent variable (Arshadi, 2011; Wang & Wang, 2020; Wu & Wang, 2017) in organizational behavior studies. In this research, perceived organizational support is used as an independent variable to predict organizational commitment of blue collar manufacturing employees in Klang Valley as a dependent variable.

There are some previous researches support the positive relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment. For instance, according to Ezeanya, (2019), there is strong evidence of a significant positive relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment, particularly in Bangladeshi culture. It is also supported by Pattnaik, Mishra and Tripathy (2020) who provided an empirical evidence to Indian manufacturing companies to adopt procedures that support employees' attitudes and increase their commitment, and Canboy *et al* (2022) in who contributed to literature by showing that even with a limited quantity of workplace resources, healthy work behaviors can be increased. Hence, the first hypothesis in this research is formed as below.

H<sub>1</sub>: Perceived organizational support and organizational commitment are positively related.

#### **Perceived Organizational Support relation with Organizational Commitment through Work-Related Stress and Job Satisfaction**

Work-related stress and job satisfaction were also used to assess the mediation mechanism between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment in this research. It

is supported by previous researches about perceived organizational support not only can influence organizational commitment in a direct way, but also in an indirect way as well. For instance, Donald, Hlanganipai and Richard, (2016) found that a significant positive relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment (affective commitment and continuance commitment only) is mediated by job satisfaction. On the other hand, Saadeh and Suifan (2020) found that work-related stress has a significant negative effect on perceived organizational support and organizational commitment.

It is realized that most of the previous researches study on the mediating effect of the relationship between perceived organizational support are using only one mediator, either work-related stress or job satisfaction. It could be argued that the causality among variables are remained incomplete when using only one mediator since work-related stress could be the precondition of job satisfaction because the linear relationship between work-related stress and job satisfaction has been widely researched. For instance, Ramly (2019) found that stress negatively affects job satisfaction but positively affects turnover intention. However, Trisnawati and Andriani (2021) found that stress had no significant effect on job satisfaction nor turnover intention, showing a completely different result. In this case, it provides the current researcher an insight to introduce two mediators to test the indirect relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment. Hence, the second hypothesis in this research is formed as below.

H<sub>2</sub>: Perceived organizational support and organizational commitment positive relations are mediated by both work-related stress and job satisfaction such that the relation is in serial mediation.

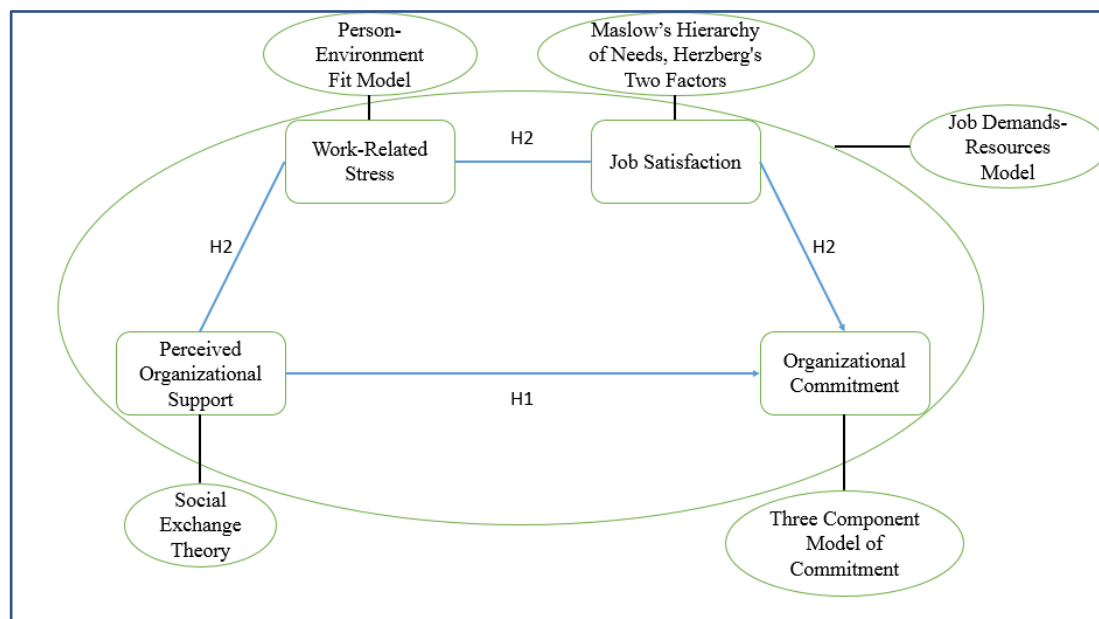
### ***Gaps in Current Studies***

The following are the literature gaps to be filled in this research: -

- 1) Although organizational commitment is common in education, hospitality and nursing researches, but there is less attention given to manufacturing industry, not to mention blue collar manufacturing employees.
- 2) Although there are sufficient researches on the linear relationship between work-related stress and job satisfaction, but this research is one of the pioneer to examine their serial-mediating effect, which is important in understanding the domino effects of perceived organizational support that leads to organizational commitment, which establishes a more comprehensive causal-relationship with chain reactions.

### ***Conceptual Framework***

By applying JD-R model as the underlying theory, and Person-Environmental Fit Model, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, Herzberg's Two Factors Theory, Social Exchange Theory and Three Component Model of Commitment as the supporting theories. The proposed conceptual framework is shown in the figure below.



Proposed Conceptual Framework

## Methodology

### *Method and Research Philosophy*

This research is using positivism as the research philosophy. It is assumed to be aligned with realist ontology about manufacturing employees as the researched objects and their high employability triggers their high turnover rate as the social reality. It is also assumed to be aligned with scientific method under epistemology by illustrating a hypothesized conceptual framework. In axiology assumptions, this research is assumed to be aligned with value-free research, which refers to the researcher maintains objective stance.

### *Research Design*

As the result of systematic literature review, a proposed conceptual framework is illustrated. By applying positivism as the research philosophy, this research is a quantitative research to test the relationship of the variables in the conceptual framework by examining data gathered at a certain point in time as a cross-sectional analysis. The multistage cluster sampling and simply random sampling are used as the sampling methods and the online surveying method is used as the data collection method. After that, both descriptive and inferential data will be analysed in the data analysis procedures to test for the hypotheses.

### *Population*

At the collection stage, the unit of analysis will be covered with who or what data will be used in the analysis and calculation (Zikmund et al., 2013). In this thesis, the blue collar manufacturing employees including both production supervisors and production workers will be considered as the analysis unit to get involved to answer the online and physical questionnaires distributed for this research. In this case, the main focus area of this research is the blue collar manufacturing employees who are working in Klang Valley, Malaysia. There are a total of 2,241,048 manufacturing employees, and eighty-seven percent of them are either semi-skilled or skilled employees as of October 2021 in Malaysia (Department of Statistics Malaysia Official Portal, 2021). Thus, it provides a statistical evidence for the

researcher to set the population size as 2,241,048 manufacturing employees for the sampling purpose.

### **Sample Selection**

There are 385 samples required for this research as the sample size (*Sample Size Calculator by Raosoft, Inc., 2022*). Probability sampling enables the researcher to extrapolate the sample's findings to the entire population (Acharya et al., 2013). By using probability sampling method, this study adopted multi-stage cluster sampling and simple random sampling under probability sampling. The population is divided into five stage. The researcher chooses Klang Valley in the first stage, chooses manufacturing industry in the second stage, chooses manufacturing division in the third stage, chooses blue collar employees in the fourth stage, and uses simple random sampling to randomly choose 385 employees as the respondents in the last stage for this research.

### **Instruments**

The questionnaire is designed in English language and it is divided into six sections from Section A to Section F, totaling 106 questions. The structure of the questionnaire is summarized into the table below. The questionnaires are distributed via online using Google Forms.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Information</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Adapted from:</b>
A	Demographic Profile	6	Self-developed
B	Employee Perception	20	(Lewis et al., 2007)
C	Work-Related Stress	20	(Tan & Mohamed, 2011)
D	Personality Traits	20	(Sabahattin, 2020)
E	Job Satisfaction	20	(Weiss et al., 1967)
F	Organizational Commitment	20	(Allen & Meyer, 1990)
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>106</b>	

### **Data Analysis**

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) is the statistical tool to be used in this research to analyze both descriptive and inferential data, and Haye's Process Macro is the statistical method to be used in analysing both direct relationship and indirect relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment. Model 6 is selected to determine the correlations between the variables, as well as the impacts of serial mediation, as indicated at the outset of this research.

### **Descriptive Analysis**

The socio-demographic profile of the participants in this research, is described using descriptive statistics such as cross-tabulation and charts to understand the background of the respondents includes gender, age, marital status, ethnicity, education level and employment category.

### **Reliability Analysis**

Due to all five measuring instruments, with the exception of the socio-demographics, use a Five Point Likert scale, a Cronbach Alpha reliability analysis is conducted to ensure that all items in the measuring instruments are internally consistent. The consistency of the



questionnaires is assessed using Cronbach's alpha values, which refers to the closer the value to 1, the higher the level of inter-item correlations of the items of the particular constructs.

### Recommendation

This research makes the following recommendations for future research based on the literature. Further research such as a cross-industry comparison, a cross-country comparison, or a longitudinal study, might be done to empirically evaluate this proposed framework by increasing the sample size to make it more plausible. Furthermore, because organizational commitment is a multi-dimensional construct, future research could look at the impact of organizational commitment by measuring employee performance across its many aspects to make it more practicable. On the other hand, a qualitative research can also be conducted to come out with more in-depth findings.

### Conclusion

Manufacturing businesses are slow to recognize the value of blue collar employees' perceptions of organizational support and organizational commitment. One of the main reasons is that the public view of blue collar employment is filthy, physically hard, low-skilled, low-paid, and easily replaceable. Despite the fact that blue collar employees are becoming increasingly crucial in the manufacturing business, the researcher discovers a paucity of studies on how perceived organizational support influences blue collar manufacturing employees' organizational commitment. This paper examines the framework at a conceptual level of perceived organizational support on organizational commitment and the serial mediating effect of work-related stress and job satisfaction using the existing literature as a guide.

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