

# THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PERCEIVED JOB SATISFACTION IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY AND EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE

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## ABSTRACT

Previous evidence suggests that Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) is linked with Employee Performance (EP), whereas according to other studies EP is based on Job Satisfaction (JS). This study attempts to explore whether independent variable (OHS) predicts the dependent variable (EP) directly or through mediating variable (JS) indirectly. Besides what is the role of demographic attributes of the respondents in this framework of relationships. OHS (variable X) has three attributes; legislative, medical & engineering measures. Dependent variable (variable Y) has been expressed into four attributes; effectiveness, efficiency, responsiveness & innovativeness. JS as mediating variable (M) has pay, promotion, supervision, colleagues, work & work environment as attributes. The objective of the study was to investigate existing literature in order to explore the relationship between perceptions of OHS, EP & JS in the workplace, thereby extracting a conceptual framework regarding the topic for future application in the upcoming empirical study. This review study was conducted at Department of Community Medicine, Gomal Medical College, Dera Ismail Khan from October, 2016 to November, 2016. Data collection method was literature search. Data type was qualitative & secondary. We searched the databases of MEDLINE (PubMed), Google scholar, Pakmedinet, Cochrane reviews and relevant web sites, over the period 2006-2017, using keywords as searching mechanism. Data was organized, summarized, analyzed and interpreted.

**KEY WORDS:** Job Satisfaction; Effectiveness; Efficiency; Responsiveness; Innovativeness.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is not uncommon to see deaths, disabilities and diseases among the industrial workers due to poor state of Occupational Health & Safety (OHS). Besides Job Satisfaction (JS) and Employee Performance (EP) are the other main issues of all occupations. The literature is almost silent about the impact of OHS on EP and JS as well as regarding

the role of demographics here. Previous evidence suggests that OHS is the predictor of EP. However, it is not clear whether OHS has a direct cause and effect relationship with EP or it has an indirect effect through JS, having mediating role. OHS means elimination of all behaviors and conditions hazardous to human health and safety at work.<sup>1</sup> EP refers to the quality and quantity of work accomplished by employees in accordance with responsibility given to them, over a period. JS is the level of contentment employees feel about their work. This review study was conducted at Department of Community Medicine, Gomal Medical College, Dera Ismail Khan from October, 2016 to November, 2016. This study was guided by the research questions; Does OHS significantly predict the performance of the employees? does OHS significantly predict the employee's JS & does the JS of employees significantly predict the performance of employees? A lot of literature is present about the topic globally.

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Yet within the context of Pakistan, a limited amount of research is available on this subject. The significance of the study will be for workers' awareness about hazards, management better handling issues of OHS, JS and EP in a better way. Besides public health physicians' and legislating/ implementing machinery of the Government will benefit from the results. New knowledge generation will serve as spade work for the future researchers. Data collection method was literature search. Data type was qualitative & secondary. We searched the databases of MEDLINE (PubMed), Google scholar, Pakmedinet, Cochrane reviews and relevant web sites, over the period 2006-2017, using keywords as searching mechanism. Data was organized, summarized, analyzed and interpreted. The objective of the study was to investigate existing literature and theory in order to explore the relationship between perceptions of OHS, EP & JS in the workplace, thereby extracting a conceptual framework regarding the topic for future application in the upcoming empirical study.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Occupational Health & Safety:** OHS refers to a state of complete physical, mental, social, spiritual and economic well-being of a worker who is free from illnesses and injuries resulting from different types of occupational hazards. Industries especially in developing countries are dark, dusty, hot, slippery and noisy. Personal protective equipment are not used. Poor ventilation, congestion, dangerous electric wires, improper tools, exposures to toxic chemicals are common. Personal hygiene & life style habits of the workers are unhealthy.<sup>2</sup> OHS is a gravely critical issue for certain work settings where men and machines work together under several medical risks for the workers. To provide a comprehensive OHS, the management has to undertake legislative, medical & engineering measures.<sup>3</sup>

**Employee Performance:** Performance is the result obtained by a person or a group within an organization, in the form of what is done or not done by them. Employees' behaviors or actions in terms of both non-financial as well as financial outcomes that determine the success of the organization make the EP. EP, being an important issue of every organization has remained a debatable issue between workers and the management who constructs the measuring rods for its evaluation. EP has both financial as well as non-financial aspects. Non-financial indicators include teamwork, motivation, productivity, competence, creativity, quality, quantity, time, costs, discipline and accountability, turnover & absenteeism whereas profit, market share, earnings & growth rate are the main financial indicators. These attributes operating in the political, socioeconomic and cultural environment of an organization, are

interrelated. Effectiveness, efficiency, responsiveness & innovativeness complement each other as the four pillars of EP accommodating all the indicators mentioned above.<sup>4</sup>

**a. Effectiveness:** Effectiveness is the ability to produce desired output by making effective decisions. Employee effectiveness is a measure of the degree to which an employee achieves his/ her set objectives and goals. Effectiveness has been measured by accomplishment of targets. Effectiveness also means satisfaction of all stakeholders including owners, employees, customers, suppliers, community and government. Workers must have in mind a clear picture of goal they are to achieve. Without this picture they cannot tell if they are making progress or when they have completed the task or assignment. Effectiveness means best use of resources in terms of input output ratio.<sup>5</sup>

**b. Efficiency:** Efficiency is a measure of the extent to which input is well used for an intended output. It is the ability to avoid wasting materials, energy, efforts, money and time in producing a desired result. Employees perceive efficiency as a ratio of outputs over inputs, thereby providing their employers their value for money. Efficiency has to do with the employee clear about his/ her objectives or set goals with a proportionally few resources.<sup>6</sup>

**c. Responsiveness:** Responsiveness refers to treating the demands, requirements and expectations of their customers appropriately after need analysis.<sup>7</sup>

**d. Innovation:** Innovation is derived from the Latin word novus, meaning new. It is defined as "introduction of something new" or a new idea, method or adopting new technologies. World is changing very fast, new technologies are being invented requiring changed structures, methods, technologies or ideas. Innovation is the application of better solutions that meet new requirements, unarticulated needs, or existing market needs. Those who do not innovate ultimately fail.<sup>8</sup>

**Job satisfaction:** JS has been defined verily by an array of scholars. However, there are identifiable common threads which help in constructing the main stream definition of JS. It describes the extent to which employees like their work, based on the net result of weighing up their positive and negative experiences.<sup>9</sup> JS is a psychological state of personnel in a workplace, when their needs and aspirations are fulfilled and they are contented and happy with their job. JS may vary according to expectations of an employee from the job, however, it is a fairly stable evaluation of how the job meets the employee's needs, wants, or expectations. JS is a significant issue in running of institutions. JS is frequently measured by organizations where employees report their reactions to their jobs. Happy-productive worker hypothesis is

the basis of many theories of performance. Factors that can influence a person's level of JS include the level of pay and benefits, fairness of the promotion system within a company, the quality of the working conditions, work responsibilities, variety of tasks, leadership and social relationships, co-worker behavior, supervisor behavior, the job itself, job security, management style and culture, employee involvement and empowerment of workgroups. The absence of these factors can impact poorly on the worker's JS.<sup>10</sup>

**Occupational Health & Safety impacts on Employee Performance:** The integration of OHS to improve the EP is increasingly recognized worldwide & becoming strategically important with time. Organizations that integrate OHS in their policies, guide both management and employees in positive workplace culture that ultimately increases productivity and profitability for the organization. Neglecting safety in the workplace can cause a lot of damage and injury to the workforce which will not only lead to the financial losses, but also to the loss of valuable human resources, thereby affecting the job performance of the employees. Nevertheless some organizations especially in poor countries aim at increasing productivity and profitability at the expense of employee health and safety thereby reducing EP ultimately. Therefore, much more attention needs to be paid to OHS than before. Employees feel valued, confident & secure from hazards and accidents, demonstrate more productivity, both directly (reduced compensation claims) and indirectly (reduced absenteeism, improved corporate reputation and reduced staff turnover). Employer's obligation to provide a safe working environment for the workers & to display accident statistics on notice boards as well as introduction of new, appropriate machinery to reduce physical strain of the work are extremely important for performance.<sup>11</sup>

**Occupational Health & Safety impacts on Job Satisfaction:** The study of JS is a topic of wide interest to organizations as well as researchers. A low level of JS decreases service quality. Dissatisfied employees through constant nagging will spread their odd feeling contagiously to their workmates and ultimately harm the organization. Hence the need to obtain & address their feedbacks in the development of business strategies and decisions can't be overemphasized.

**Job Satisfaction impacts on Employee Performance:** JS drives employee morale, discipline, loyalty, motivation and work performance. It reduces unexplained absence, stress leave and turnover. Many employers are now recognizing their social obligation to their workforce. Therefore, an organization itself plays an important role by increasing

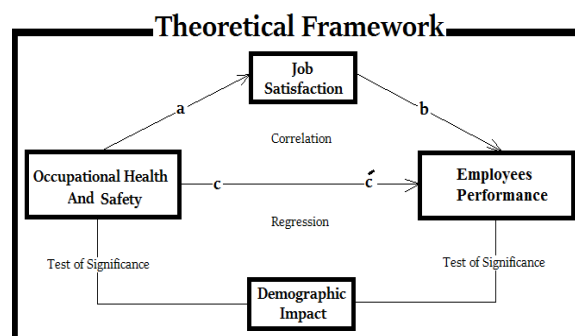
the employees' performance through enhancing JS. Organizations attach great importance to the JS issue as development of an organization without exploring the staff's JS is not possible.

**Demographic Impacts:** According to a research thesis, motivation positively determines performance until some stage of experience, beyond which performance declines with experience. Similarly performance increases with age until some point and beyond that it declines with an increasing age.<sup>21</sup> According to another research thesis, stress and working environment were found to dominate over workload and pay in EP.<sup>21,22</sup>

**Philosophy of research:** Philosophy of research means researcher's belief about understanding of knowledge development about a topic. Out of the three philosophies that is Positivism (quantitative research), Interpretivism (qualitative) and Realism (mixed), this study will test the former approach. Positivism is based on a singular, objective concept which is tangible, measurable or countable (Ontology). Besides structured methodology and empirical testing is used for systemic and logical acquisition of knowledge (Epistemology). The Axiological position has been adopted.

## THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

The mediating role of JS in the relationship between OHS & EP could be described in the conceptual framework as shown in Figure 1 below:



## DISCUSSION

Organizations are increasingly becoming aware of the fact that JS is the essential bridge between OHS and EP. A lot of attention has been focused on workers' perceptions of workplace safety as a determinant of EP but relatively little research has been done on the bridging role between these two variables. This study investigated this relationship.

As suggested by a study by kasturo et al., 2010 that OHS related problems negatively affect worker output directly, resulting in high rate of injuries.<sup>13</sup> Similarly in another study, the higher the level of industrial health, the higher the level of employee

job performance in terms of productivity, employee/customer, subordinate/management relationship and the lower the level of employee turnover.<sup>14</sup> Likewise OHS related problems due to negative attitude of management negatively affect workers' output as well as high accident rate at work through developing illnesses & injuries, resentment and low morale towards work among workforce known as presenteeism.<sup>15</sup> There was a significant relationship between the safety and the attributes of staff performance including quality, cost, accountability, discipline and quantity.<sup>16</sup>

However, there is clear evidence that OSH is positively associated with JS, and JS in turn is positively associated with performance.<sup>17</sup> Good salary and good compensations are key factors in JS and in this way one can increase the performance.<sup>18,19</sup> There is clear evidence that training is positively associated with JS, and JS in turn is positively associated with most measures of performance.<sup>20-22</sup> The involvement and meaningful participation of employees in implementation and maintenance of OHS services is fundamental to improve EP directly as well as indirectly through improving JS of the employees.<sup>23</sup>

## CONCLUSION

JS plays a vital role in strengthening the relationship between OHS and EP. Workers not satisfied with their jobs can underperform despite well-established OHS practices at the workplace.

## RECOMMENDATION

Organizations should develop strategies for promoting JS through fulfilling employees' needs besides strengthening the OHS practices.

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