

# Organizational support perceived in Mexican workers in the service sector

## Apoyo organizacional percibido en trabajadores mexicanos del sector de servicios

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### Abstract

Perceived Organizational Support refers to workers evaluating their workplaces and creating a general perception on whether their contributions are considered worthy by the organization. Employees who consider that the organization values what they contribute and ideas exchanging, also showing concern for their well-being, are people with better job performance, less absenteeism and higher expectations about rewards for their work. Perceived Organizational Support is increasingly recognized as an important factor in worker's performance and research has shown that it could be related to various sociodemographic and economic variables. The objective of this study was to analyze the relationship between Perceived Organizational Support with sociodemographic variables such as age, gender, educational level, suffering from chronic illness and paternity / maternity; and also economic variables such as years of work,

salary, type of economic activity, organization size and hierarchical level in Mexican workers of the service sector. Sample included 294 workers from 27 different organizations, who answered Perceived Organizational Support and sociodemographic and economic characteristics surveys. Results show that only organization size obtained significant differences, being organizations with many employees where more support is perceived compared to small companies or institutions. The rest of the variables did not show significant differences, which represents that Perceived Organizational Support is not related to age, gender, educational level, suffering from chronic illness and paternity / maternity, years of work, salary, economic activity or the hierarchical level. Obtained evidence is discussed and recommendations for future research are proposed.

*Keywords:* Perceived organizational support, sociodemographic characteristics, economic characteristics, Mexican workers, services sector.

## Resumen

El Apoyo Organizacional Percibido refiere a la percepción general que los trabajadores crean sobre el aprecio a sus contribuciones en la organización en la que se encuentran.

Los empleados que consideran que en su trabajo valoran sus aportaciones, sus ideas y su bienestar son personas con un mejor rendimiento laboral, menor ausentismo y mayores expectativas sobre la recompensa de su desempeño. Los estudios han mostrado que podría estar relacionado con diversas variables sociodemográficas y económicas de una población, por lo que el objetivo de esta investigación fue analizar la relación de los diferentes niveles de apoyo organizacional percibido con las variables sociodemográficas –edad, género, nivel educativo, padecer enfermedad crónica y paternidad / maternidad– y con las variables económicas –años de trabajo, salario, tipo de actividad económica, tamaño de la organización y nivel jerárquico– de trabajadores mexicanos del sector de servicios. Estudiar esta variable con este tipo de organizaciones (actividades asociadas a la venta y entrega de servicios) es relevante, puesto que es un área económica importante y que, además, contiene a la mayor fuerza de trabajo en el mundo, y en México estos datos no son la excepción. Esta investigación tiene un diseño transversal, descriptivo y correlacional. El estudio se llevó a cabo con 294 trabajadores de 27 organizaciones de la ciudad de Colima, México. La clasificación de los lugares de trabajo se realizó acorde a las actividades económicas establecidas en el Directorio Estadístico Nacional de Unidades Económicas (DENUE), las cuales quedaron conformadas por ventas, educación, salud, alojamiento temporal, no gubernamentales y organizaciones de gobierno. Los trabajadores respondieron el cuestionario de apoyo organizacional percibido, conformado por dos dimensiones: (1) satisfacción de necesidades socioafectivas; y (2) sensación de reconocimiento. Además, contestaron otro instrumento para medir las características sociodemográficas

y económicas elaborado por los autores de este estudio basados en la Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo (ENOE). El análisis de datos se llevó a cabo mediante descriptivos y pruebas no paramétricas (Spearman, U de Mann-Whitney y H de Kruskal-Wallis). Los resultados de las puntuaciones del cuestionario señalaron que existe una distribución asimétrica en la dimensión de satisfacción de necesidades socioafectivas, con un sesgo positivo, mientras que la dimensión de sensación de reconocimiento mostró simetría en la distribución de las respuestas. Respecto al análisis de las correlaciones realizadas sobre las variables de edad, antigüedad y salario respecto al apoyo organizacional percibido y sus dimensiones, no mostraron ser significativos. En cuanto a los análisis de diferencias muestrales, solo el tamaño de la organización obtuvo diferencias significativas e indicó que en los grandes lugares de trabajo se percibe más apoyo de la organización en comparación con las empresas o instituciones pequeñas. El resto de las características no mostraron diferencias significativas, lo que representa que el apoyo organizacional percibido no está relacionado con la edad, el género, el nivel educativo, el padecer enfermedad crónica, la paternidad / maternidad, los años de trabajo, el salario, el tipo de actividad económica ni el nivel jerárquico. Algunos sesgos presentes en esta investigación están relacionados con la representatividad de la muestra puesto que los grupos no fueron homogéneos: había un mayor número de trabajadores pertenecientes a las organizaciones de salud y educación. Futuras investigaciones podrían explorar en mayor medida la interacción de las variables de estudios con otras para una mejor comprensión. Sería interesante analizar las políticas y los aspectos sociales entre los tamaños de las organizaciones para establecer conclusiones más profundas respecto a las diferencias encontradas en este estudio.

*Palabras clave: apoyo organizacional percibido, características sociodemográficas, características económicas, trabajadores mexicanos, sector de servicios*

## Introduction

Constant personnel rotation is a well-known consequence of worker dissatisfaction and it's very expensive for organizations (Abualrub & Alghamdi, 2012; Parasuraman, 1982). In México, according to the Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (INEGI, 2020), 18 % of worker population who quit their job wanted to continue studying, 17 % had family responsibilities and 16 % wanted to earn more money or overcome themselves. So, if organizations had shown more support to the worker's needs, maybe they wouldn't have quit.

Service sector (also known as third sector) is an important economic area that contains the majority of workers in the world (International Labour Organization, 2019), and Mexico is not the exception. Economic activities included in the third sector are associated to organizations that do not process any product, only sell them or give services (INEGI, n.d.); about 63 % of the Mexican workforce (34 646 072 people) belongs to this sector. Out of these 34 million workers, 52 % are catalogued within the middle-low income range, which means they make between one and two minimum wages a day. Moreover, 48 % of them work from 35 to 48 hours a week, while another 28 % have a longer working week. In addition, just over half of this population (52 %) have an educational background that goes up to high school or less. Moreover, it should be noted that only 40 % of this sector has access to health services (INEGI, 2020), which puts workers in a vulnerable state. In conclusion, research about Perceived Organization Support in services sector is undoubtedly relevant.

### Perceived Organizational Support

Workers perception about how much the organization values their contributions, exchange of ideas, and cares for their well-being is known as Perceived Organizational Support (POS) (Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Lynch, 1998; Eisenberger, Stinglhamber,

Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002). Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa proposed the Perceived Organizational Support theory in 1986. Their conclusions showed that workers with high support perception levels had better performance.

Reciprocity principle is the basis of Perceived Organizational Support (Gouldner, 1960). It means that, if the people feel valued by the organization where they work, they generate an obligation to return a favorable treatment as the one they received (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, D. Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001). Perceived Organizational Support has been an important variable to understand how to generate more stimulating workplaces for employees.

In their research, Lupano Perugini & Castro Solano (2018) recognize organizational support as a virtue, which mitigates labor stress and influences on satisfaction, commitment, and performance of the workers. Likewise García-González, Torrano, & García-González (2020) about psychosocial risks in university teachers: they mention the importance of the institution supporting their workers through better structuring the workload, the spaces of coexistence, the training plans in professional and personal competences.

### Perceived organizational support and the services sector

Research about perceived organizational support in the services sector has been diverse. Li, Zhang, Yan, Wen, & Zhang (2020) with China's nursing population, they identify the influence of POS on job control, job satisfaction and intention to stay. About the last variable, Aria, Jafari, & Behifar (2019) also found a strong effect of POS but with high school teachers from Iran. Other studies have shown influences on other variables, for example Indrawiani, Anggraeni, & Indrayanto (2018) point out in Civil Service Police Units in Indonesia that POS impacts on organizational

citizenship behavior. For their part, Coskuner et al. (2017) identified a negative correlation with mobbing and a positive association with organizational identification.

Other studies in the services sector have found relationships with health status. POS is a mitigator of aversive effects of chronic pain on performance (Byrne & Hochwarter, 2006), which may be related to the culture of care that is formed from support, as determined by Payne, Cluff, Lang, Matson-Koffman, & Morgan-Lopez (2018) with a wide American sample. Pan, Shen, Liu, Yang, & Wang (2015) point out in their research with university professors the influence of the POS on work satisfaction.

In Mexico, there are also some POS studies focused on the services sector. Camacho & Arias (2012), with a teachers sample in Veracruz, indicated a positive correlation with work satisfaction. Ojeda, Talavera, & Berreleza (2016, 2017) have found in a couple of studies a statistically significant relationship between the POS and the organizational commitment in the population of the education and hotel sectors. Salazar-Estrada (2018), with a population mostly of the services sector, points out that POS predicts subjective well-being through stress reduction.

On the other hand, it is possible to identify differences between POS levels and personal conditions in research. For example, Angeleluci, Parra, & Peñuela (2017), in a study with supermarket workers in Venezuela, identified that men, older workers, and those with lower academic levels tend to perceive that the company is willing to support them when they have problems. Yu (2011) said that the POS had a positive correlation with the educational level and could also predict professional success (subjective) in knowledge employees.

In addition to this, some studies have identified the relevance of POS in family conditions such as Nasurdin & O'Driscoll (2011), who with university teachers point to the negative correlation with family-work conflicts, and Fitria & Roza (2019), who identified a posi-

tive relationship with work life-balance in banking workers.

Job seniority is another variable that influences POS levels as shown by Wnuk (2017) with IT employees. Salary is another aspect that has become involved as a predictor of POS: according to paper by Zin, Othman, & Pangil (2012), money determines the positive effect to support in IT workers too.

Finally, hotel workers from Mexico participated in the research of García, Banda, & Juárez (2020). They did a descriptive analysis about demographic variables and the POS levels. Their results show that the people that perceived lower support are workers from 36 to 40 years old, free union civil status, an educational level high school or less, and job seniority between one to three years.

As can be seen from researches above, POS is crucial in the service sector because it influences many variables in the workplaces. It is important to know the factors that determine organizational support, as well as identify the personal conditions that influence its perception.

## Method

### Design

This research has a cross-sectional, descriptive and correlation design. Convenience sampling was used in the study.

### Sample

The study sample has 294 workers from 27 organizations from Colima, México. Workplaces were distributed in the services sector according to the activities established in Mexican Directorio Estadístico Nacional de Unidades Económicas (DENUE) (INEGI, 2018), which include trade, education, health, temporary accommodation, non-profit and government organizations.

## Instruments

Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS): This survey was created by Eisenberger et al., (1986) in USA, where they established a short version. Later, Marbeti (2001; cited by Ellenberg & Rojas, 2007; Flores & Gómez, 2018) translated to Spanish in Venezuela. This survey was validated in Mexico for this study. It is composed of 15 items in a Likert scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The SPOS has two dimensions: (1) satisfaction of socio-affective needs (items: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 11, 12, 13 and 15); and (2) sense of recognition (6, 8, 9, 10 and 14). Their Cronbach's alpha levels were 0.92 and 0.85 respectively.

Sociodemographic and economic characteristics questionnaire: The survey was based in the Mexican Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo (ENOE) (INEGI, 2020). Sociodemographic characteristics included six items: age, gender, education level, civil status, paternity or maternity, and state of health. Economic characteristics were composed by five items: economic activities, organization size, hierarchy, job seniority and salary.

## Procedure

In this study, 122 services sector organizations were invited to participate, 35 of which agreed but due to administrative changes in some of them only 27 participated. Data collection was carried out in person between March and May 2019. Workers who agreed

to participate did so voluntarily, each person gave its informed consent.

## Data analysis

To analyze the data the 19th version of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used. Firstly, descriptive statistics were applied to describe groups generated for the sociodemographic and economic characteristics. Then, Spearman correlation was applied between scalar variables (age, job seniority and salary) and POS. Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis H test were performed to identify differences between groups conformed in POS levels.

## Results

### Descriptive analysis

Sample age average was 38.63 (ED = 9.93), from 20 to 66 years old range. Regarding years of work, 245 workers filled out the item and the average was 16.5 (ED = 10.17). The salary distribution was made up of workers with an income of \$ 1 000 to \$ 42 000 Mexican pesos. Average was \$10 043.75 (ED = 6.217). The data included 233 people of the sample; the rest did not reply.

Table 1 includes more characteristics that correspond to the sample; it shows how the groups are formed by their contrast between them. Sample distribution in education levels, civil status, economic activities and organization size were omitted in certain groups in subsequent analysis-

**Table 1**

*Descriptive analysis of sociodemographic and economics characteristics.*

<b>Sociodemographic characteristics</b>			<b>Economics characteristics</b>		
	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>		<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<b><i>Gender</i></b>			<b><i>Economic activity</i></b>		
Male	163	55.4	Trade	37	12.6
Female	129	43.9	Education	116	39.5
<b><i>Education</i></b>			Health	48	16.3
Elementary school	2	.7	Temporary Accommodation	15	5.1
Secondary school	26	8.8	Non-profit organization	5	1.7
High school	36	12.2	Government	73	24.8
Technical school	35	11.9	<b><i>Size</i></b>		
Bachelor's degree	139	47.3	Small	199	67.7
Postgraduate	56	19	Medium	15	5.1
<b><i>Civil status</i></b>			Large	80	27.2
Single	84	28.6	<b><i>Hierarchical</i></b>		
Married	149	50.7	Supervisor	53	18
Free union	41	13.9	Subordinate	239	81.3
Divorced	18	6.1			
Widower	1	.3			
<b><i>Paternity or maternity</i></b>					
Children	211	71.8			
Not children	82	27.9			
<b><i>State of health</i></b>					
Sick	47	16			
Healthy	245	83.3			

Obtained score distribution on SPOS are shown in figure 1. The boxplot shows that satisfaction of socio-affective needs has an asymmetric distribution with a positive bias. Dimension called sense of recognition has a

symmetric distribution in their scores with respect to the previous one. Finally, the SPOS in general has a distribution inclined towards the higher scores in the survey.

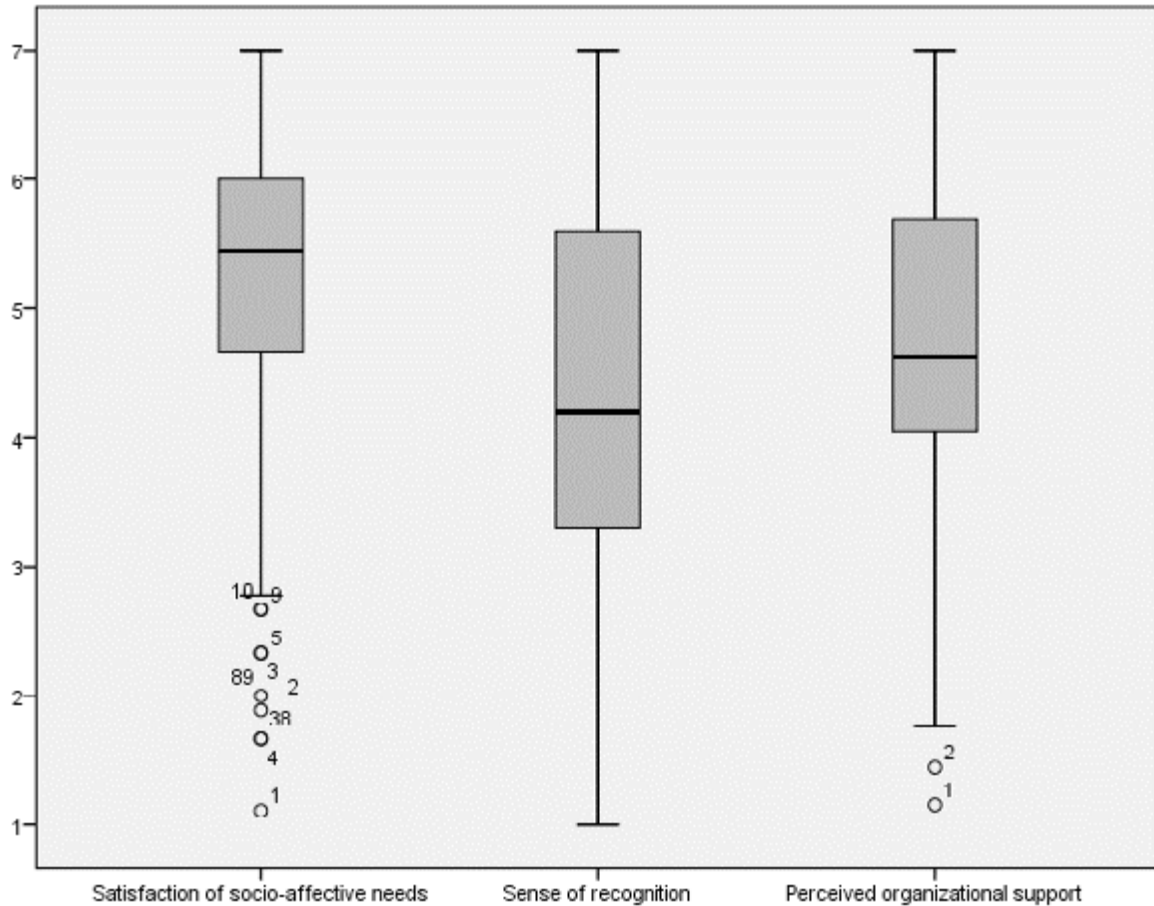


Figure 1. Scores distributions of POS and their dimensions.

**Correlation analysis**

Spearman correlation between age, job seniority and salary with the POS and their

dimensions did not show significant results. These variables have a null relationship, as the p value was .05 (see table 2).

**Table 2**

Correlation analyses of age, job seniority and salary with POS and their dimensions.

	Age	Seniority	Salary
Satisfaction of socio-affective needs	.007	-.051	-.073
Sense of recognition	-.033	-.017	.004
Perceived organizational Support	-.009	-.024	-.034

**Comparative analysis**

Comparative analysis between categorical variables are shown in table 3. Results showed that there weren't significant differ-

ences. Gender, education level, civil status, paternity or maternity and health state have a p value higher to .05.

**Table 3**

*Differences analysis of sociodemographic characteristics on the POS and their dimensions.*

	Satisfaction of socio-affective needs		Sense of recognition		Perceived organizational support	
	Average range	p	Average range	p	Average range	p
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	146.32	.87	148.53	.72	148.01	.82
Female	147.85		145.08		145.74	
<b>Education</b>						
Elementary school	-	.78	-	.46	-	.78
Secondary school	141.20		133.06		128.96	
High school	151.49		159.93		157.35	
Technical school	161.88		129.90		144.76	
Bachelor's Degree	145.79		147.04		147.75	
Postgraduate	140.25		155.65		147.96	
<b>Civil status</b>						
Single	151.01	.36	137.78	.24	143.38	.22
Married	148.62		155.07		153.51	
Free union	126.46		130.76		124.40	
Divorced	161.83		157.86		160	
Widower	-		-		-	
<b>Paternity or maternity</b>						
Children	147.56	.98	149.06	.61	148.61	.71
Not children	147.33		143.33		144.54	
<b>State of health</b>						
Sick	134.11	.25	146.73	.98	137.73	.41
Healthy	149.46		147.05		148.77	

Note: The spaces without values refer to the groups not included because the sample size implies risks of making type I or II statistical errors.

Same analysis was done to economic variables (see table 4). These results were not significant between economic activities groups ( $p > .05$ ) and the hierarchical level ( $p$

$> .05$ ). But size of organization analysis found differences in sense of recognition dimension ( $U = 6704$ ;  $Z = 2.239$ ;  $p = .02$ ).



**Table 4**

*Different analyses of economic characteristics on the POS and their dimensions.*

	Satisfaction of socio-affective needs		Sense of recognition		Perceived organizational support	
	Average range	p	Average range	p	Average range	p
<b><i>Economic activity</i></b>						
Trade	138.70		122.56		125.26	
Education	143.95		143.04		144.02	
Health	144.36		145.96		144.39	
Temporary accommodation	-	.28	-	.39	-	.33
Non-profit organization	-		-		-	
Government	121.98		130.11		126.52	
<b><i>Size</i></b>						
Small	137.65		133.03		134.82	
Medium	-	.45	-	<b>.02</b>	-	.09
Large	145.63		156.74		152.45	
<b>Hierarchical</b>						
Supervisor	145.17		149.89		148.71	
Subordinate	147.41	.86	146.35	.78	146.61	.86

Note: The spaces without values refer to the groups not included because the sample size implies risks of making type I or II statistical errors.

## Discussion

Perceived organizational support relationships with sociodemographic and economic variables are important to organizational studies. This research contributes with never explored data in a Mexican context.

About distribution scores, this study found a trend toward scale higher points. This means that most workers perceived support for their organizations where they work. These results are like the previous Mexican studies, where the scores pass to the middle point of the scale (Camacho & Arias, 2012; García, Banda, & Juárez, 2020; Salazar-Estrada, 2018).

Organization size was the only variable that had differences in the sense recognition. Larger organizations had better levels than small

workplaces, differing with Valencia (2013) and Rhoades & Eisenberger (2002). These findings may reflect that larger organizations have better feedback systems, Hutchison & Garstka (1996) showed in a model that the goal setting and feedback have influence on the POS and it, in turn, is a mediator for commitment. In addition, the social networks have an important role: Hayton, Carnabuci, & Eisenberger (2012) indicate a positive relation with size, density and quality network with the POS in a large manufacturing firm. These aspects may be involved in higher levels of sense of recognition in large companies, so future research may consider making these comparatives analysis between different organization sizes about social networks' feedback systems and quality, as well as their influence on the POS.

Regarding sociodemographic characteristics, the evidence did not produce significant results. It implied that the age did not have relationship with POS. This result is like other studies (Bjørnstad, Patil, & Raanaas, 2016; Ingusci, Callea, Chirumbolo, & Urbini, 2016; Zhong, Wayne, & Liden, 2016).

The differences in groups of gender, civil status, paternity or maternity and state of health perceived the same support between them. This is different from what was expected in the study, however, there is evidence with similar results like these, for example Robaee et al. (2018) did not identify relation with gender, marital status and education level in a nurses sample. Referent to parents status, Flores & Gómez (2018) and Witt & Carlson (2006) did not find relation with the number of children and POS in their research. Finally, an investigation carried out by Liu, Wen, Xu, & Wang (2014) did not obtain a relationship with health status, but when performing multiple regression analysis with POS, psychological capital, and chronic disease on depressive and anxious symptoms, it indicated that chronic disease has a negative, weak but significant relationship with them.

On another hand, the remaining economic characteristics didn't have significant associations with POS. The results differ from what was expected in the project, there is similar evidence of other studies done in reference to job seniority (Angelucci et al., 2017; Tejada & Arias, 2004). Regarding salary, some studied coincidence with this one, for example Lynch, Eisenberger, & Armeli (1999): in a sample from United States, they did not find relation between both variables.

The economics activities and hierarchical status did not have significant differences between their groups. Both variables are different to what was theorized at the beginning. The analysis of Valencia (2013) precisely indicates contrarious results to what was obtained in this research. She points out that organizations of health and education has the lowest levels of support. Also, she

mentions that the supervisors had better levels than the subordinates.

POS is a variable involved in a broad economic sector; its levels, as results show, may depend on business aspects that determine perception of support. Therefore, it's important that involved parties consider POS within their strategies for organizational development.

Future research could explore POS effects on programs and interventions within the company. Deeper research about organizational and personal conditions that influence the perception of support should also be done. Finally, it is proposed to explore more about the interactions between demographic and economic characteristics and POS with other variables to get a better understanding about how they interact.

The bias in this paper were related with the sample. The research did not have a representative sample for each organization and the characteristics were not homogenous between their workers. They implied that groups were staying out of the performed analysis. The other principal aspect was that most people were in an education and health sector.

In short, the perceived organization support in workers from Mexican organizations of the services sector was different in relation with the size of the organization, where large workplaces had better results compared to the small ones. The others sociodemographic and economic characteristics did not have relationships or differences with perceived support.

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