

# **Networks Perceptions and Job Satisfaction: The Mediating Role of Perceived Organizational Support for Women's Work Contribution**

Dr. Ashly H. Pinnington  
Associate Professor in Organisational Behaviour and Human Resources Management  
Organisational Behaviour and Human Resource Management Department  
Nottingham University Business School  
Jubilee Campus  
University of Nottingham  
Nottingham NG8 1BB.  
United Kingdom.  
Email: [ashly.pinnington@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:ashly.pinnington@nottingham.ac.uk)  
Orcid ID: 0000-0002-4814-6960

Dr. Hazem Aldabbas  
Visiting Assistant Professor of Management  
College of Business Administration,  
University of Science and Technology of Fujairah,  
Fujairah United Arab Emirates.  
Orcid ID: 0000-0002-0632-1732

Dr. Fatemeh Mirshahi  
PhD in Education Graduate  
The British University in Dubai  
Faculty of Education,  
PO Box 345015 | Block 11,  
Dubai International Academic City  
Dubai  
United Arab Emirates.  
Orcid ID: 0000-0003-1713-3259

Dr. Mary Brown  
Proof Reader and Education Consultant  
Kemnay, Inverurie, Scotland  
United Kingdom.  
Orcid ID: 0009-0007-1440-4400

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose-** This study investigates the relationship between women's networks perceptions and job satisfaction. It also examines the mediating effects of perceived organizational support for women's work contribution on the relationship between networks perceptions and job satisfaction.

**Design/methodology/approach-** The participants are female employees working in Scotland (n = 247). The data were collected using a survey questionnaire. PROCESS macro (model 4, Hayes, 2018) was used to test the proposed model.

**Findings-** The results revealed that (controlling for work time, age, and sector) there is a significant relationship between women's networks perceptions and job satisfaction. In addition, POS for women's work contribution mediates the relationship between networks perceptions and job satisfaction. These findings show the significant effects of networks perceptions on employees' job satisfaction directly and through POS for women's work contribution. Therefore, understanding the networks perceptions of employees and organizational factors will assist in improving job satisfaction.

**Originality/value-** This study is unique for examining the role of POS for women's work contribution in the relationship between employees' networks perceptions and job satisfaction. It addresses gender inequality in the workplace in terms of women's career advancement and job satisfaction. In addition, this research offers insight into the development of a 7-items measurement scale related to networks perceptions.

**Funding Statement:** This reported study was unfunded.

**Ethical Compliance:** All procedures performed in this research involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the university institutional ethics committee.

**Keywords-** Networks perceptions, Job satisfaction, Perceived organizational support, Work contribution, Gender

## 1. Introduction

Networking activities and their relationships are essential for individual and organizational success (Gray *et al.*, 2020; Morgan and Martin, 2006; Van Den Brink and Benschop, 2014). The stronger the social support network, the more women and men cope with environmental stressors and achieve their goals (Wang and Lei, 2023). Networking activities yield material and professional benefits to participants and disadvantage non-participants (Gregory, 2009). However, the literature indicates potential differences between how women and men network and how they benefit from networking behaviour (Forret and Dougherty, 2004; Van Emmerik *et al.*, 2006). Networking practices are also recognized as contributors to the perpetuation of gender inequities in organizations (Benschop, 2009).

Women frequently encounter more barriers to networking than men. For example, a recent study of networking practices and gender inequities found that women were often excluded from networking activities dominated by men; participation in networking activities yielded professional advantages, and women made efforts to counteract their exclusion, but identified limits to their efforts (Murphy *et al.*, 2022). In addition, across different streams of research, such as gender stereotype theory (Fiske *et al.*, 2002; Glick and Fiske, 2001), and status characteristics theory (Ridgeway, 1991; Wagner and Berger, 1997), all else being equal, women often find themselves viewed as lower status than men (Brands *et al.*, 2022). These obstacles and differences limit the degree to which women can build social networks and become satisfied with their jobs. Managers and human resource management (HRM) specialists are responsible for addressing issues of equality and discrimination among employees. Policy initiatives for skill growth and employment, specifically in Scotland, consistently acknowledge that equality requires attention to specific needs and individual differences, including gender differences (Scottish Government, 2007, 2010, 2017, 2021).

Forret (2006) argued that women tend to have less influential and less well-developed social networks, leading to fewer opportunities within their organizations and the external labour market. Several previous studies have proposed that networking functions differently for men and women (Chen *et al.*, 2012; O'Neil *et al.*, 2011; Shortland, 2011); and men receive more career satisfaction from networking, even when they engage in it less often than females (Van Emmerik *et al.*, 2006). Attention to specific needs and individual differences improves employees' opportunities for individual development and career progress, which can lead to higher job satisfaction. Several studies have focused on networking behaviors and outcomes such as career success (Langford, 2000; Wolff and Moser, 2009) and job satisfaction (Kock and Moqbel, 2021). Social support networks within organizations are central to employees' job satisfaction (Ferguson *et al.*, 2012). Given that gender can affect the form and function of social networks, this study investigated the influence of women's networks perceptions on their job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction is one of the most critical employee outcomes (Harter *et al.*, 2002) and fostering job satisfaction among employees is a key challenge for organizations. Job satisfaction is a research concept based on employees' overall evaluation of their personal work experiences and is one of the key factors in organizational behaviour and occupational health (Kuo *et al.*, 2019). Recent research shows that employees who are satisfied with various factors, such as supervisor cooperation, communication style, working conditions (Sabuhari *et al.*, 2020), work duties (Ocen

*et al.*, 2017), and HRM practices (Mira *et al.*, 2019), tend to exhibit high levels of employee commitment (Ocen *et al.*, 2017), engage in extra roles (Riyanto *et al.*, 2021), show employee engagement (Djoemadi *et al.*, 2019), and achieve high levels of performance and productivity (Al-Ali *et al.*, 2019; Sabuhari *et al.*, 2020).

Job satisfaction contributes to a sustainable working environment (Heimerl *et al.*, 2020), helps reduce employee turnover, and improves employee loyalty (Strenitzerová and Achimsk, 2019). Therefore, it is of theoretical and practical significance to examine antecedents of job satisfaction, including the relationship between networks perceptions and job satisfaction for female employees.

A likely factor in the relationship between women's networks perception and job satisfaction is the extent to which they perceive that their organization values their individual contributions. Employees develop different perceptions regarding the extent to which they consider their employing organization to value their work contributions and care for their well-being. When employees perceive that they are treated favorably, they work harder to attain organizational goals and objectives. Researchers view perceived social support as a key resource that must be considered when predicting job satisfaction (Zhang *et al.*, 2015). Several studies have examined outcomes as a consequence of networks perceptions, attitudes and behaviours (Flap and Völker, 2001; Wolff and Moser, 2010) and as antecedents to job satisfaction (Bano *et al.*, 2017; Cullen *et al.*, 2014; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Therefore, we investigate the mediating role of perceived organizational support (POS) in individuals' work contribution. POS refers to employees' perceptions of the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about well-being. This study focused on only one of the two main dimensions of POS (valuation of employees' contributions and care about employees' well-being). Survey participants were asked, 'To what extent your organization values your contribution?'

This study investigated the relationship between networks perceptions and job satisfaction. It also investigates the mediating effects of POS for work contribution on the relationship between networks perceptions and job satisfaction among female employees in Scotland. This empirical study addressed two research questions.

RQ1: What is the influence of women's networks perceptions on their job satisfaction?

RQ2: Does perceived organizational support for women's' work contribution mediate the relationship between networks perceptions and job satisfaction?

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study that investigates the mediating role of POS for work contribution on the relationship between networks perceptions and job satisfaction. This study fills a gap in the literature on networks and job satisfaction by introducing and testing the effects of a mediator, POS for women's work contribution. This is a unique characteristic of this study. The results of this study may assist organizations with relevant ideas and information in making organizational changes that create a supportive environment, which would yield positive attitudinal consequences and ultimately elevate employees' job satisfaction. Understanding job satisfaction is key to preventing high turnover, low retention rates, and loss of skilled employees. Additionally, it helps in problem-solving, developing a better workplace, and improving the quality of an organization. This study also contributes to debates on gender inequality in the

workplace by examining how improved status and networks and increased job satisfaction might contribute to women's advancement and career success. This is a response to calls for more research on the under-studied topics of women's networks (Bierema, 2005) and women's careers (Pinnington *et al.*, 2022; Sullivan and Baruch, 2009), in particular. Our research offers insight into the development of a new 7-items survey construct on networks perceptions. This study has important theoretical and practical implications for organizations. To accomplish our objectives, the paper commences by reviewing and discussing each term, including networks perceptions, job satisfaction, and POS for women's work contributions and their associations according to the literature. The theoretical background is then presented, followed by the methodology, findings, discussion, limitations, implications, and conclusions.

## **2. Literature review**

### ***Definition of terms***

*Networks perceptions.* Networking has been defined as “a form of goal-directed behaviour, both inside and outside of an organization, focused on creating, cultivating, and utilizing interpersonal relationships” (Gibson *et al.*, 2014, p.150). Based on social exchange theory involving exchanges between two or more parties of either tangible or intangible resources that are more or less rewarding or costly (Holmans, 1961; Blau, 1964), we examine women's networks perceptions in the context of employed work in organizations. Our study of women's networking assesses their perceptions of their networks inside and outside their organizations. We examine ‘networks perceptions rather than specifically behaviours. So, in addition to considering networks inside and outside the organisation (Gibson *et al.*, 2014), we investigate women's “.. network perception as defined by the depth and width of relationships ..” (Czakoń and Kawa, 2018, p. 122). Networking is thought to facilitate the development of personal and professional opportunities (Baker, 1994) and to contribute to organizational functioning by supporting greater organizational communication and access to resources (Forret and Dougherty, 2004). In addition, networking has been found to lead to greater visibility and power, which, in turn, facilitates greater career success; networking increases opportunities for advancement, power, and salary (Wolff and Moser, 2009). It is assumed that well-connected individuals experience more advantages in their careers. How women perceive and understand their networks plays a significant role in how they create, grow, maintain, and dissolve various networks and associations.

*Job satisfaction.* According to Spector (1997), job satisfaction is an attitudinal variable that captures how individuals feel about their jobs. Job satisfaction is “a pleasurable or emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences” (Locke, 1976, p. 1304). Fostering job satisfaction among employees is a key challenge for organizations, as it directly relates to a myriad of important quantifiable outcomes, such as job performance, discretionary work effort, employee turnover, employee health and well-being, as well as customer satisfaction and organizational profitability (Guest, 2017). Job satisfaction has been argued to promote sustainable work environments (Heimerl *et al.*, 2020), reduce turnover rates, and improve employee loyalty (Strenitzzerová and Achimsk, 2019). Job satisfaction is regarded as a comprehensive indicator of positive work experiences and also explains essential work outcomes such as proactive work

behaviour, job performance, career and job satisfaction, and career success (Kuo *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, exploring the antecedents of job satisfaction among employees is of theoretical and practical significance. Building on many of the tenets of social exchange theory, organizational support theory (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986) argues that when employees perceive support from their managers or organization this will reflect positively on their amount of job satisfaction. In this study on networks perceptions, we concentrate on women's job satisfaction situated in the context of POS.

*Perceived organizational support for women's work contribution.* It is important to know to what extent an employing organization values employees' work efforts and is concerned about their well-being (Eisenberger, 2002; Kurtessis *et al.*, 2017). It is equally important to know the extent to which individuals perceive that their organizations value their contributions. Eisenberger *et al.*, (1986, p. 501) defined POS based on the fact that "employees in an organization form global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being." Such beliefs in aggregate arguably represent the commitment level of an organization towards the well-being of its employees. POS is positively associated with organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and job performance, and negatively related to intention to leave (Riggle *et al.*, 2009).

Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002, p. 711) argue that organizational support theory proposes that "employees personify the organization, infer the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being, and reciprocate such perceived support with increased commitment, loyalty, and performance". Organizational support theory is built upon the employee-employer relationship; therefore, researchers have concentrated on the social relations that improve the relationship between individuals and their organisation (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002).

In this study, we did not adopt all of Eisenberger *et al.*'s scale items for POS. The majority of POS studies that have adopted Eisenberger *et al.*'s (1986) scale (Survey of Perceived Organizational Support; SPOS) used either its original 36-item form or shorter versions (Bano *et al.*, 2017; Cullen *et al.*, 2014; Eisenberger *et al.*, 1997; Rhoades *et al.*, 2001; Wen *et al.*, 2019, Yakut and Ergun, 2022; Zagenczyk *et al.*, 2010). We concentrate in this paper on just one of the two main dimensions of POS: the extent to which the organization is perceived by the employee to value their individual work contribution. Whereas Eisenberger summarizes POS by referring to employees' perception of the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being, there is no single item in the POS study specifically for organizational values and individual work contribution. The closest POS scale item on valuing individual contribution is "The organization values my contribution to its well-being," which appears in both Eisenberger *et al.*'s long 36-item and short 8-item scales. POS has been found to have important consequences for employee performance and well-being; in this research, we concentrate exclusively on women in our assessment of POS for individuals' work contribution.

### ***Conceptual relationships and statement of hypotheses***

*Networks Perceptions and Job Satisfaction.* Granovetter (1973) has been influential in social network research by articulating the value that relationships and weak network ties can bring to an

individual. Many studies have focused on networking behaviours and outcomes, including career success (Langford, 2000; Wolff and Moser, 2009), and gender differences (Knouse and Webb, 2001; O'Neil *et al.*, 2011; Rasdi *et al.*, 2013; Van Emmerik *et al.*, 2006).

Job satisfaction is positively associated with job performance (Kock and Moqbel 2021). Several scholars have reported social support networks as positive predictors of job satisfaction (Brough and Pears, 2004; Ferguson *et al.*, 2012, Zhang *et al.*, 2015). Recent studies have shown a positive correlation between social support networks and job satisfaction in individuals from various workplaces (Kim *et al.*, 2019; Sunardi and Putri, 2020). Several studies have found that employees' work-related use of public social networks improves job satisfaction and reduces employees' turnover intention by enhancing their engagement and organizational commitment (Olfat *et al.*, 2023; Tabarsa *et al.*, 2018, 2019; Zhang *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, in light of the above theoretical foundations and empirical findings, it is important to analyze women's networks perceptions and their effects on job satisfaction. The evidence mentioned above from empirical studies on men and women's social networks perceptions, POS (Thompson, Bergeron, and Bolino, 2020) and job satisfaction is that gender differences may occur such that the perception is lower level for women. Therefore, our first hypothesis is as follows:

**H1:** Women's networks perceptions will have a positive significant effect on job satisfaction

*Networks perceptions and perceived organizational support for work contribution.* Flap and Völker (2001) posited that work-related ties promote employee satisfaction with the instrumental aspects of the job, such as income, security, and career opportunities, and closed networks of identity-based solidarity ties improve employee satisfaction with the social aspects of the job. Organizations can influence and be influenced by networking, and aspects of the culture of an organization and the industry affect employees' opportunities for networking (Gibson *et al.*, 2014). Zagenczyk *et al.* (2010) argued that social influence affects employees' perceptions of their exchange relationships with organizations. A common example of a favourable networking culture would be an organization that encourages employees to ask questions, solicit feedback and interact with coworkers. Employees who feel safe communicating with others inside and outside the organization, are more likely to engage in networking. Thus, Giao *et al.* (2020) emphasized that POS may decrease work-family conflict. Therefore, in light of the above theoretical argument on networks perceptions, social exchange and POS, combined with the findings from empirical research, our second hypothesis is as follows:

**H2:** Women's networks perceptions have a positive and significant effect on perceived organizational support for women's work contribution.

*Perceived Organizational Support and Job Satisfaction.* Many studies related to the antecedents of job satisfaction have been conducted; however, organizational support is one of the most important predictors of job satisfaction is organizational support (Stamper and Johlke, 2003). A meta-analysis by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) revealed a strong positive relationship between

POS and job satisfaction, and a positive relationship between POS and job performance. Employees who perceive higher levels of organizational support report higher levels of job satisfaction and demonstrate higher levels of performance (Cullen *et al.*, 2014). Several studies have investigated the relationship between POS with job satisfaction (Alrawadieh and Alrawadieh, 2022; Ayuningtias *et al.*, 2019; Eisenberger *et al.*, 1997; Kurtessis *et al.*, 2017; Mann *et al.*, 2020; Riggle *et al.*, 2009; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002; Yakut and Ergün, 2022). These studies concluded that POS and job satisfaction are positively associated.

Thus, considering social exchange theory which is a foundation for organizational support theory and POS, combined with evidence from empirical research, our third hypothesis is as follows:

**H3:** Perceived organizational support for women's work contributions will have a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction.

*Perceived Organizational Support for Work Contribution as a Mediator.* In previous studies, POS for individuals' work contribution appears to be a consequence of networks perceptions and behaviours (Gibson *et al.*, 2014;) and an antecedent of job satisfaction (Bano *et al.*, 2017; Cullen *et al.*, 2014; Mann *et al.*, 2020; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Organizations can be influenced by employees' networking, and there is likely a relationship between POS for individuals' work contributions and employees' networks perceptions. Tan (2008) reported that POS has a positive mediating effect on the relationship between HRM practices and employees' emotional commitment. Shantz *et al.* (2016) argued that POS has a negative mediating effect on the relationship between employee loyalty and turnover intention. Adresi and Darun (2017) found that POS has a positive mediating effect on the relationship between strategic HRM and employee trust. Hence, given the above empirical findings from past research informed by organizational support theory, it is important to assess to what degree POS explains women's networks perceptions and their level of job satisfaction. We assume POS for women's work contribution could mediate the relationship between networks perceptions and job satisfaction (See Figure 1). So, we assert:

**H4:** Perceived organizational support for women's work contribution mediates the relationship between networks perceptions and job satisfaction.

<Insert Figure 1 about here>

### **3. Research methodology**

#### ***3.1 Survey sample and procedures***

We selected a sample of organizations across the whole of Scotland, including the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors. The contacts for this survey were obtained by contacting several businesswomen gateways across Scotland, each of whom contributed a list of contacts in their

geographical areas and were accessible. Thus, an invitation asking organizations to participate in the survey was then sent to a convenience sample of Scottish organizations in these lists; however, participants were not chosen at random, which is a limitation (Etikan *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, it is critical to carefully consider the potential costs and benefits rather than apply sampling rules (Dickinson *et al.*, 2012). The invitation letter for women to participate in the survey was issued to the organizations during the last week of January 2017. These were sent out via post to named contacts in the organizations wherever possible. Where these details could not be obtained, the letter was addressed to the managing director or to a senior member of the HRM department. This was followed by other reminder letters, which included a copy of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was made available online. Just over 500 invitations were sent to organizations, a total of 250 surveys were returned, and three respondents were considered outliers and were eliminated. The response rate was 49.4% for 247 fully completed questionnaires. The 247 completed responses were from women in managerial (n=18, 7.29% senior management; n=53, 21.46% middle management; n=56, 22.67% junior management) and non-managerial positions (n=120, 48.58%).

### 3.2 Measures

*Independent variable.* Networks perceptions. As was mentioned earlier, women's perceptions of their networks extend inside and outside of their employing organization and are related to their networks' depth and breadth (Czakon and Kawa in 2018). We developed a new networks perceptions 20-item scale for this study which was subsequently reduced to 7-items. The final set of item measures can be found in the last paragraph of the discussion section. We asked the respondents "to what extent do you perceive networks most accurately describe your views and experience?" (e.g., I believe networks are an essential part of my job.) The Cronbach's alpha for the full scale 20-item was .835. A 5-point Likert scale was used, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

*Mediator variable.* POS for women's work contributions. We asked one straightforward question: "To what extent does your organization value your contribution?" Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. We do not report internal consistency reliability since a single-item question does not have a Cronbach's alpha result (Gliem and Gliem, 2003).

*Dependent variable.* Job Satisfaction. We asked one straightforward question: "To what extent do your networks provide you with better job satisfaction?" Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. A limitation of the single-item question is its lower predictive power than that of multiple items (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2016); however, we employed a single question because it is directly related to our study objectives. Furthermore, some researchers have argued that "the use of single-item measures should not be considered fatal flaws in the review process" (Wanous *et al.*, 1997, p. 251).

*Control variables.* Work time (Full-time versus part-time), age, and sector. We coded full-time =1 and part-time=0. Age coded under 25=1, [25-34] =2, [35-44] =3, [45-54] =4, 55 and above=5. The sector coded general services=1, health and social work=2, education=3, manufacturing and construction=4, public administration=5, and others=6.

## 4. Preliminary analysis

The preliminary analysis was divided into five sections: outliers, normality, multicollinearity, exploratory factor analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Three outliers were removed leaving 247/250 respondents. The data are normally distributed and multicollinearity is not an issue (see Table 1). Varimax rotation (.60 cut-off) produced 7 items. Measurements were acceptable levels of fit:  $X^2$  [35] = 833.641,  $p < 0.001$ , CFI=0.969; TLI=0.957; SRMR=0.033; RMSEA=0.063. Likewise, the hypothesized model:  $X^2$  [36] = 881.411,  $p < 0.001$ , CFI=0.971; TLI=0.958; SRMR=0.033; RMSEA=0.063.

### 4.1 Exploratory factor analysis

We developed new items for measuring networks perceptions, and so principal component analysis (PCA) and varimax rotation (using Kaiser Normalization) were applied to inspect the item loadings. Varimax rotation is considered the most common orthogonal method of rotation (Browne, 2001), although quartimax and equamax are frequently used (Costello and Osborne, 2005).

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was used to measure the adequacy of the sample. If KMO is above .70, the sample is adequate (a common cut-off score is  $\geq 0.70$ ), since closeness to 1 means the items are adequately related to their respective factors. To assess the correlation for factor analysis, Bartlett's test of sphericity was applied, which should be significant at least at the 5% level. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant at 0.001, with a KMO of .824 which means that the sample is adequate.

We used PCA and varimax rotation with a cutoff of .60, and found that seven items loaded in one factor, and the cumulative variance explained by these items was 28.656%. Moreover, the two items were loaded into two different factors; therefore, they were excluded from further analysis. As a result, 7-items remaining from our developed scale of networks perceptions were used for further analysis.

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Descriptive statistics

We computed the mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis, and Pearson's correlation ( $r$ ) between the variables, as shown in Table 1. The highest of the correlations was between networks perceptions and job satisfaction, which was positive and significant ( $r = 0.561$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), followed by organizational values of women's POS for work contribution and job satisfaction, which was positive and significant ( $r = 0.419$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and finally, between networks perceptions and POS for work contribution ( $r = 0.280$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

<Insert Table 1 here>

### **5.2 Common method variance**

Common method variance (CMV) is important to ensure reliable results are obtained (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003) and is mandatory in most academic journals (Hair *et al.*, 2017). Since the sample was collected from the same source, it could cause CMV; therefore, Harman's Single-Factor Test (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003) was conducted. Following Harman's Single-Factor Test, the total variance was extracted with an unrotated factor method, with the first factor accounting for 48.579 of the variance, which is below the 50% cut-off, confirming that CMV is not an issue in our study.

### **5.3 Hypotheses testing**

PROCESS macro, model (4) Hayes (2018), was used to test the hypotheses (H1–H4). After controlling for demographic information (e.g., work time, age, and sector) to investigate the effect of networks perceptions on the other two variables, all variables were tested simultaneously. First, the direct relationship between women's networks perceptions and job satisfaction is positive and significant ( $B = 0.460$ ,  $t=8.863$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting Hypothesis 1. Second, the relationship between women's networks perceptions and POS for women's work contribution is positive and significant ( $B = 0.247$ ,  $t=3.846$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting Hypothesis 2. Third, the relationship between POS for women's work contribution and job satisfaction is positive and significant ( $B= 0.292$ ,  $t=5.774$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting Hypothesis 3. To test the mediator (hypothesis 4), we found that the indirect relationship was positive and significant for women ( $B= 0.072$ ,  $SE=0.024$ ). Since zero does not fall within the confidence interval range [.031, .125], we conclude that  $p < 0.05$ ; thus, POS for women's work contribution mediates the relationship between networks perceptions and job satisfaction; consequently, H4 is supported. We conclude that all four hypotheses are supported (Table 2). Further, the total effect of networks perceptions on job satisfaction was positive and significant ( $B = 0.532$ ,  $t = 9.916$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

<Insert Table 2 here>

## **6. Discussion**

This study examined how networks perceptions impact employees' job satisfaction through POS for women's work contributions. Drawing on social exchange theory and recent organizational support theory, we examined the influence of networks perceptions on job satisfaction. Moreover, we examined the mediation effect of POS for women's work contribution in the relationship between networks perceptions and job satisfaction.

The first hypothesis assessed the influence of women's networks perceptions on job satisfaction. The results revealed a significant link between networks perceptions and POS for work contribution. This key finding is consistent with recent studies on the relationship between networks perceptions and job satisfaction (Kim, 2019; Wu *et al.*, 2021), however, these important

issues are rarely discussed in the literature (Xiong *et al.*, 2017). Setting this finding on networks perceptions and job satisfaction in the overall organizational context of employed work, individuals' social networks have been found to have a substantial impact on employees' performance capability and well-being. Consistent with the principles and assumptions of social exchange theory, women's positive attitudes about networks are important therefore not least because they can enhance job satisfaction.

Second, we hypothesized that women's networks perceptions will have a positive and significant effect on POS for their work contribution. Our findings are consistent with those of Hayton *et al.*'s. (2012) argued that social networks are an essential resource for valuing employees' contributions and caring about their well-being (e.g., POS). We interpret this result to be resonant with Gibson *et al.*'s. (2014) claim that networking attitudes have the potential to lead to many positive personal and professional outcomes. According to organizational support theory, social networks can spread attitudes and feelings of POS within organizations (Neves and Eisenberger, 2014; Zagenczyk *et al.*, 2010) and, in general, employees with more intra-organizational network resources will feel better supported by their employers (Newman *et al.*, 2012).

Thirdly, we hypothesized that POS for a women's work contribution has a positive significant effect on job satisfaction. The positive findings from this survey are similar to those of several other studies examining social exchange theory and different organizational programmes and forms of support related to social relationships within organizations (Aldabbas *et al.*, 2021; Eisenberger *et al.*, 1997; Pinnington *et al.*, 2022). Valuing employees' task contributions in the workplace is often a powerful predictor of job satisfaction (Kollmann *et al.*, 2020). To increase the mutual outcome efficacy of such relationships for employees and employers, Wen *et al.*, (2019) recommend that managers in organizations should develop appropriate policies and reward systems that recognize employees' efforts and care for their well-being. Future research could examine these individual-organization relationships in connection with informal and formal reward systems.

Finally, we hypothesized that POS for a women's work contribution mediates the relationship between networks perceptions and job satisfaction. This hypothetical test applies organizational support theory to empirical investigation of the relationship between women's networks perceptions and job satisfaction. The results show a positive significant relationship between networks perceptions and job satisfaction through organizational values of employee contribution. This is consistent with previous studies that have found that social networks serve as a social resource that increases job satisfaction through the role of supportiveness (Yang *et al.*, 2009). In our study, 40% of the variance in job satisfaction came from women's networking perceptions, and their POS. Given that women and job seekers pursuing prominent occupations have been found to gain more from their use of networks (Xiong *et al.*, 2017) managers should ensure that their organizations are perceived by employees to value their contributions equally. Future research on this topic could examine whether employees exhibiting relatively high levels of networks perceptions and job satisfaction have higher levels of in-role and extra-role performance, together with other individuals in their work groups and organization-based advice networks (Sparrowe *et al.*, 2001). It would also be worthwhile analyzing in different types of organizations whether those employees who actively seek assistance from their networks and have well-defined

work and career objectives are more likely to achieve desirable outcomes (Pinnington *et al.*, 2022; Wang and Lei, 2023).

There are also repeated calls for more research on the social effects exerted by family members, which could provide additional insights into how employees develop and maintain their perceptions of support (Zagenczyk *et al.*, 2010). The continuing need for more studies on individuals' family and extra-organizational relationships is partly related to Gibson *et al.*'s (2014) argument that individual and organizational networking antecedents and consequences have not kept up with the rate at which more dispersed forms of social networking have grown in popularity through social media use and open customs and practices in everyday interpersonal communication.

To our knowledge, this is the first study using social exchange theory and organizational support theory to examine the role of POS for women's work contribution in the relationship between networks perceptions and job satisfaction. Our research offers insight into the development of a 7-item scale on networks perceptions: "I believe networks are an essential part of my job; I rely more on my networks now than I did in the past; I use my networks to obtain psychological support (e.g., encouragement from others); My work networks have helped me most for my individual and career development; I use networks to get contacts for new business; I use networks for individual development; and I use networks for career development". This 7-item scale achieved reliable results in terms of Cronbach's alpha of .865. Moreover, networks perceptions revealed good confirmatory factor results ( $X^2= 707.402$ ,  $df= 21$ ,  $CFI= 0.999$ ,  $TLI= 0.998$ ,  $SRMR= 0.021$ ,  $RMSEA= 0.015$ ).

## ***7. Limitations and future studies***

The current study was a cross-sectional survey, which means that all data were collected and measured at the same time. Since our study is cross-sectional, we were not able to perform a test-retest of reliability; thus, future studies could examine the newly developed scale through a longitudinal study. In addition, the convenience sampling used in the survey limits the generalizability of the main findings. Furthermore, because the study was non-experimental, causal relationships among the three factors addressed in this study could not be established. Thus, longitudinal designs should be used to study these factors and issues over time and assess their effects on employees and organizations to reduce ambiguity regarding causality. Case studies and interviews, among other qualitative research methodologies, can aid in the exploration of subjective phenomena related to networks perceptions and job satisfaction. Finally, because our sample concentrates on the assessment of women's networks perceptions and their effects on job satisfaction, future research designs should include men to understand more deeply the reasons behind and implications of any significant gender differences.

Future studies could examine the 7-item scale for networking in different contexts and in some studies, include samples of both women and men. This study is limited to women employees in organizations, but it could also be used more widely outside the context of paid work employment. Therefore, we encourage more gender studies on networking, which is a complex and dynamic concept; operationalizing and measuring it can be difficult (Gibson *et al.*, 2014).

Future research on networks perceptions should analyse individual differences in combination with gender. In practical terms, new management and HRM policies should be created in public, private, and not-for-profit sector organizations to support the individual development of women and men and recognition of their work contributions. Our study found that networks perceptions and POS for women's work contributions enhanced job satisfaction.

## **8. Implications**

The results of this study may assist managers in making organizational changes that could elevate employees' job satisfaction, develop a better workplace, and improve the organization's quality and performance. In terms of theoretical contributions, this study is in line with existing research that assesses POS as a moderator (Asghar et al., 2021; Cheng & Yi, 2018) or mediator variable (Ahmad & Zafar, 2018), and adds to knowledge. By employing POS as a mediator for women's work contribution, this study contributes to POS and job satisfaction research studies by drawing attention to the work contribution of women employees. This extends our understanding of the consequences of POS on employees' job satisfaction within a specific framework.

This study has several managerial implications for organizations. These findings demonstrate that organizations can effectively improve women employees' job satisfaction by increasing their POS for women's work contributions. This improvement could result in greater organizational commitment amongst women and lower employee turnover intentions. Providing support should be carefully targeted to ensure that organizational resources are not wasted and that employee commitment is maximized. Broadly, organizations should provide employees with immediate feedback, acknowledge their contributions by rewarding them, organize teambuilding activities regularly to cultivate employees' sense of belonging, encourage supervisors to be more active in promoting themselves as a major source of support in the organization, improve co-worker support schemes in the workplace, and promote mutual cooperation among colleagues, such as encouraging informal mentoring, which enables women and men to build up their network resources. In addition, organizations can offer childcare, recreation facilities, and flexible working arrangements.

There are a several important implications for managers on how to enhance the benefits of women's networks perceptions. First, managers should acknowledge that women's networks play a vital role in their job satisfaction and performance. Managers should encourage women employees to develop and maintain effective networks leading to improved collaboration, knowledge sharing, and problem-solving in the organization. Second, managers should facilitate opportunities for women to utilize their networks for career development and growth. This might include orientation workshops, mentoring programmes, cross-functional projects and job promotions that allow employees to grow both individually and professionally. Third, managers can emphasize the value of women's networks in growing the business. For example, encouraging women to utilize their networks for acquiring new business contacts and partnerships can result in new commercial opportunities. Implementing these implications likely will increase women's job satisfaction and individual performance.

## **9. Conclusion**

Our study is unique for examining the role of POS for women's work contribution in the relationship between women's networks perceptions and job satisfaction. When considering research problems on women's networks perceptions and issues, such as the organization valuing individual contribution, employee job satisfaction, and individual career development, we recommend further analysis of the 7-item scale proposed in this study. As organizational employees, women's proactive attitudes and utilization of their networks are likely to be linked to perceptions and attitudes about their job, need for psychological support, finding new businesses, and individual and career development. Our study further contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how factors such as networks perceptions and POS, individually and collectively, influence women's job satisfaction. Women's individual networks perceptions and POS can be considered as enabling variables, since they facilitate seeking support and encouragement from organizational managers and others, ultimately leading to increased sense of psychological support. This, in turn, should result in enhanced job satisfaction.

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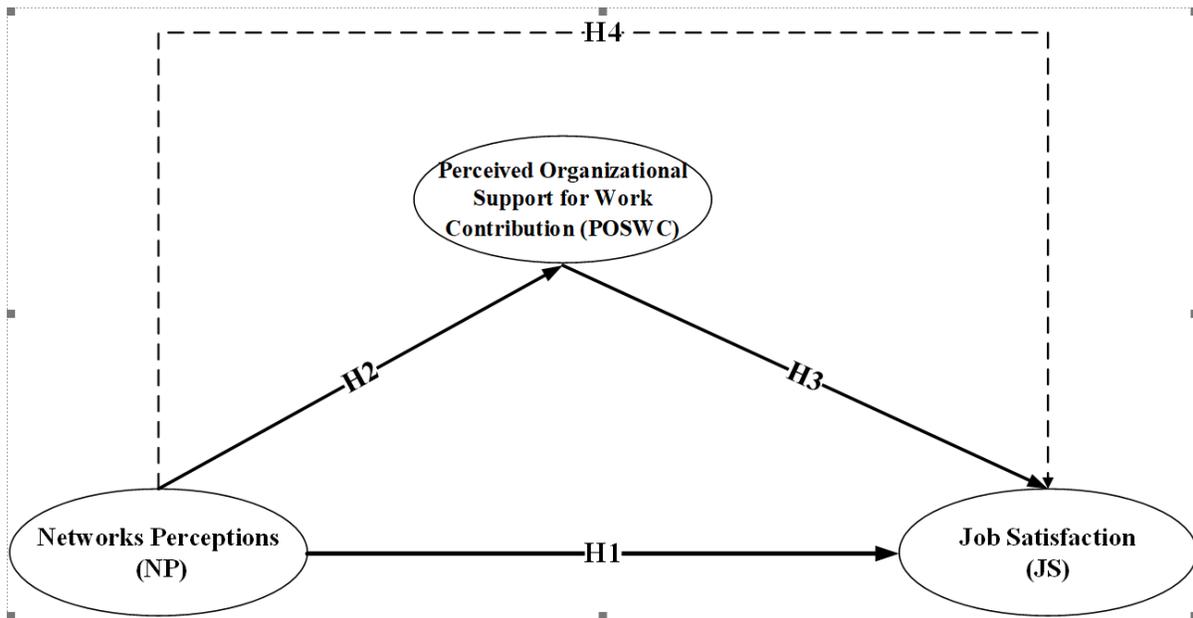
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**Figure 1.** Hypothesized framework  
(Figure 1 created by authors)

**Table 1.** Means, standard deviations, skewness, kurtosis, and correlations  
(Table 1 created by authors)

Variables	NP	POSWC	JS	Work time	Age	Sector	Skewness	Kurtosis
NP	1						0.001	0.66
POSWC	.280**	1					-0.633	-0.043
JS	.561**	.419**	1				-0.373	0.038
Work time	0.104	0.09	0.112	1			-	-
Age	-.183**	-0.044	-.181**	-.146*	1		-	-
Sector	0.006	0.007	0.003	0.006	-0.017	1	-	-
Mean	3.21	3.56	3.3	0.69	2.89	2.64	-	-
Std. Dev.	0.476	1.006	0.972	0.464	1.124	1.705	-	-

**Notes:** \*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01. NP= networks perceptions; POSWC= perceived organizational support for work contribution; JS= job satisfaction

**Table 2.** Regression coefficients, standard errors and model summary information  
(Table 2 created by the authors)

Main Variables	Perceived organizational support for work contribution (POSWC)					Job Satisfaction (JS)				
	(Mediator)					(Dependent Variable)				
	Coeff	se	t	p	[LLCI- ULCI]	Coeff	se	t	p	[LLCI- ULCI]
NP	0.247	0.064	3.846	0.000	[0.12,0.373]	0.460	0.052	8.863	0.000	[0.358,0.563]
POSWC	–	–	–	–	–	0.292	0.051	5.774	0.000	[0.192,0.391]
<i>Control variables</i>										
Worktime	0.121	0.137	0.882	0.378	[-0.149,0.391]	0.011	0.108	0.106	0.916	[-0.201,0.224]
Age	0.011	0.057	0.196	0.845	[-0.101,0.124]	-0.065	0.045	-1.456	0.147	[-0.154,0.023]
Sector	0.003	0.037	0.069	0.945	[-0.070,0.075]	-0.004	0.029	-0.130	0.897	[-0.060,0.053]
Constant	-0.123	0.231	-0.534	0.594	[-0.578,0.332]	0.211	0.182	1.160	0.247	[-0.147,0.569]
R <sup>2</sup> =0.066					R <sup>2</sup> =0.400					
F (4,242) = 4.287, p <0.01					F (5,241) = 32.174, p <0.001					

**Notes:** n=247; SE= Standard Error; CI=Confidence Interval; LLCI=lower limit confidence interval; ULCI=upper limit confidence interval NP= networks perceptions; POSWC= perceived organizational support for work contribution; JS= job satisfaction