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The Effect of Perceived Organizational Support during COVID-19 on Innovative Workforce Behavior. The Role of Workforce Reskilling and Top Management Support

By

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Dedication

“Age is no barrier. It’s a limitation you put on your mind.....” - Jackie Joyner-Kersey

“Don’t let others tell you what you can’t do. Don’t let the limitations of others limit your vision. If you can remove your self-doubt and believe in yourself you can achieve what you never thought possible”- Roy T. Bennett

It is with genuine gratitude that I dedicate my work to:

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The Effect of Perceived Organizational Support during COVID-19 on Innovative Workforce Behavior. The Role of Workforce Reskilling and Top Management Support

Grace Aoun-Noujaim

ABSTRACT

The coronavirus outbreak is affecting hundreds of millions of people around the world. Decision makers face tremendous hurdles with people confined to their homes and economies effectively shutting down. The pandemic has caused changes in working schedules and overall worker prosperity. As a result, organizational support has become critical in assisting employees in adjusting to the “new normal” and contributing to the transition process. Human resource management plays an important role in improving employees' quality of life and reducing the health risks associated with their jobs. Constant training during the pandemic became necessary to accomplish adequate reskilling of staff. Although the extent research on the relationship between perceived organizational support and innovative workforce behavior is extensive, there is a gap in the literature in assessing this relationship while taking into consideration the role of workforce reskilling and top management support. The aim of this thesis is to develop and test a holistic conceptual model that depicts the relationships among workforce reskilling, top management support, organizational support during COVID-19, and innovative workforce behavior. In particular, the role of workforce reskilling plays in explaining the relationship between organizational support during COVID-19 and innovative workforce behavior, and the role top management support plays in enhancing this relationship are investigated. The conceptual model is empirically tested using an online questionnaire sent to employees working in Lebanon and the region. The findings provided evidence supporting the proposed relationships.

Keywords: Perceived Organizational Support during COVID-19, Innovative Workforce Behavior, Workforce Reskilling, Top Management Support

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List of Abbreviations

IWB: Innovative Workforce Behavior

POS: Perceived Organizational Support

POSC: Perceived Organizational Support during COVID-19

DCV: Dynamic Capabilities View

PLS-SEM: Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modelling

Chapter 1

Scope of the Study

The chapter includes an introduction, importance of this study, and the research questions that are to be addressed. Finally, this chapter concludes with the thesis statement.

1.1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has created indefinite and numerous obstacles and triggered significant changes in worldwide corporate operations. There appears to be no element of work that is unaffected by this unseen adversary, leaving decision makers and employees scrambling to find alternatives that are suitable for restoring work functions. Employees' physical and mental well-being has been affected by the pandemic's uncertainty, which has made them feel unsure of what lies ahead for them in many cases (Arora & Suri, 2020). Based on the World Health Organization (WHO) statistics on July 7, 2021, a total of 185,291,530 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 4,010,834 deaths (World Health Organization, 2021) were reported. These tremendous numbers created a huge worry world widely.

The pandemic has frequently resulted in significant organizational discrepancies and has had a significant impact on internal procedures. Businesses had to discover new means of communicating, coordinating, and leading from one day to the next as a result of remote working. Many organizations were forced to deliver new goods and services, while others had to lay off workers. As a consequence, in many organizations, the epidemic has resulted in difficult and ambiguous situations (Heide & Simonsson, 2021). The pandemic forced many

organizations to close, causing serious disruptions in different industry sectors. However, overcoming these obstacles does not guarantee a bright future, or even a future at all, as organizations will exist in a world that is vastly different from the one that existed prior to the outbreak (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020).

On the other hand, Organizational Support, Top Management Support and Innovative Workforce Behavior are not new topics. Most of it tackled on how organizations can express their commitment toward employees thus leading to an increase in Perceived Organizational Support (POS) such as fairness, supervisor support, adequate rewards and job conditions (Krishnan & Mary, 2012). Nowadays, there is a variety of managers in modern firms who plan, organize, lead, and govern the organization in order to achieve the goals set by the Board of Directors or the top executive management team. Still, the term "leadership" is sometimes misunderstood; are these managers true leaders? Or are they merely budget planners and job organizers? Do they know how to motivate, energize and support their employees? Do they have the ability to clearly articulate their approach and achieve their objectives? (Fahed-Sreih & Morin-Delerm, 2012).

Yet, research on perceived organizational support is usually conducted in organizations under normal circumstances, while organizational support perceived by employers and employees during the COVID-19 pandemic may vary. The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the way employees work and employers manage workforces. Employers are struggling to keep up with this drastic change and their main concern is to ensure business continuity during this crisis (Agba et al., 2020). Moreover, organizations expect and support innovative workforce behavior since it serves as a proactive resource for ensuring their effectiveness and competitive advantage (Kong & Li, 2018). Previous scholars have attempted to uncover probable aspects

that contribute to creativity using a comprehensive framework including innovation climate, task variety, social support, work motivation, as well as self-efficacy. (Kong & Li, 2018). Having information sharing technology in a firm for example increases employees' impressions of a favorable knowledge sharing culture, which helps them discover innovative solutions to business problems (Karkoulian et al., 2010), but under COVID-19, organizations innovated at a much faster rate than they usually could have. As a result, organizations focused on a single difficulty (COVID pandemic) and reallocated resources as needed, abandoning all other concerns (Johnson & Murray, 2021).

Thus, this thesis aims at examining the influence of organizational support on outcomes such as workforce reskilling and innovative workforce behavior during COVID-19 which has remained elusive. In addition, the impact of organizational and top management support during COVID-19 on workforce reskilling and innovative workforce behavior has yet to be properly examined. In fact, during COVID-19 pandemic, employees started focusing on e-learning to upskill and reskill to accommodate to the new normal situation during this pandemic. Employees started to adopt innovative practices for survival. Hence, it is necessary to set workers on clear reskilling paths that strategically enhance their capabilities; and many workers who involve in reskilling need engaging and affirming content to turn information into usable knowledge (ILO, 2021).

1.2 Importance of the Study

The presence of COVID-19 has been at the core of recent research in all areas of business. Current studies have reported the impact of COVID-19 on the company's financial performance, wellbeing of employees, and the company's organizational culture. However,

the underlying mechanism explaining the impact of perceived organizational support during COVID-19 on outcomes such as workforce reskilling and innovative workforce behavior has been scarce. In particular, the role of organizational support during COVID-19 and top management on reskilling of workforce and innovative workforce behavior is yet to be fully investigated. The purpose of the thesis is to address this gap.

1.3 Research Questions

This thesis includes the following research questions that will be addressed after the collected data is analyzed:

RQ1: What is the relationship between Organizational Support during COVID-19 and Innovative Workforce Behavior?

RQ2: How the Reskilling of Workforce does affects Innovative Workforce Behavior?

RQ3: What role does Workforce Reskilling play in the relationship between Organizational Support during COVID-19 and Innovative Workforce Behavior?

RQ4: What role does Top Management Support play in the relationship between Organizational Support during COVID-19 and Workforce Reskilling?

1.4 Thesis Statement

The remainder of the thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 2 provides an overview of the four variables used in the study including perceived organizational support during COVID-19, workforce reskilling, top management support, and innovative workforce behavior. Chapter 3 includes the proposed conceptual model (*Figure 1*) developed as well as the derived hypotheses.

Chapter 4 presents the research methodology, statistical analysis, as well as the findings. The fifth and last chapter includes the implications, limitations, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter provides highlights about the four variables used in the study including perceived organizational support during COVID-19, workforce reskilling, top management support, and innovative workforce behavior.

2.1 Perceived Organizational Support during COVID-19

Employees in an organization shape different views about how much firms value their efforts and well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). In addition, organizational support during COVID-19 is the type of support given by organizations that promote an environment that is highly concerned with their employees' welfare (Shore and Shore, 1995; Fasolo, 1995; George et al., 1993). Organizations showing this type of support are perceived to be regularly compensating their employees and fulfilling their needs (Randall et al., 1999). Organizational support has been associated with promoting positive work attitudes as a positive correlation was recorded between job satisfaction and organizational support (Cropanzano et al., 1997; Nye and Witt.,1993).

However, employees are more worried about the organization's obligation to them. Being esteemed by the organization will have several rewards and benefits such as pay and promotion and admittance to data and different types of help expected to more readily complete one's work. The standard of correspondence permits employees and employers to accommodate these particular directions (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Employers

ordinarily esteem employee's devotion and faithfulness. Employees who are sincerely dedicated to the organization show exceptional performance, attendance, and a reduced probability of leaving their place of employment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Moreover, employees form general impressions about how much their contributions are valued and how much their supervisors care about their well-being in the same way that they form global beliefs about how much they are valued by the firm (i.e., perceived supervisor support). Employees perceive their mentor's favorable or unfavorable attitude toward them as an indication of the organization's support especially that supervisors function as representatives of the organization, by supervising and evaluating subordinates' performance. (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Prior research has studied the implications of organizational support on the employees' creativity and innovation (Gumusluoglu and Ilsev, 2009). However, the organizational support took another turn during the COVID-19 pandemic. Organizations presented employees with a different type of support to tackle employee anxiety and endorse life satisfaction during the pandemic (Zhang et al., 2020). A new scale categorized into three different factors was used to measure the support of an organization during COVID-19: the work support includes the employees' free access to personal protective equipment, free rapid COVID-19 testing, and the availability of medical care whenever deployed to a new zone.

The personal support is illustrated with the employees' access to childcare and family support during increased work hours. The risk support is the last type of support that should be offered by organizations during COVID-19 pandemic; risk support includes the acknowledgment from employees that they are exposed to the virus, uncertainty

regarding the company's reaction to infected employees, and finally access to recent information regarding the pandemic (Shanafelt et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020).

2.2 Workforce Reskilling

Uncertainty is an important concept that everyone should be aware of. Today's world has showed how unpredictability is becoming the new normal. According to various statistics, millions of workers around the world must be prepared for the global labor market change. If the workforce wishes to stay relevant and employable, they must understand that reskilling and upskilling are required (Sivalingam & Mansori, 2020)

A recent report by McKinsey & Company stated that all employees, working in different industries, must adapt to the quickly changing business environments, where the organizations are required to match their employees with new roles and activities. This dynamic environment imposes more than just working from policies or application of different technological advancements including artificial intelligence and automation; it's about the decisions that organizations and leaders will take to reskill and upskill their employees in the post-pandemic environment to create new business models (Agrawal et al., 2020).

McKinsey & Company introduced six steps towards achieving reskilling of employees. Employers and employees as well must take six measures to improve workforce skills and to ensure that organizations flourish after the crisis. These steps include identifying rapidly the new skills that the recovery business model depends on. Organizations will be forced to pinpoint which skill pools will affect their business forward

as they will decide on measures to guarantee the future of the company. Furthermore, upskilling the workforce pool that will produce a significant amount of value in the modified business model, in addition to building employee skills is fundamental to the new business model (Agrawal et al., 2020).

However, it is critical to acknowledge the importance of strategic workforce planning as businesses prepare to reinvent and scale up their business models. Leaders require a deep understanding of not just the key tasks that crucial groups will start within the next 12 to 18 months, but also the abilities that each of these groups will require. In addition, testing the reskilling sets is crucial, and the majority of businesses that have successfully implemented reskilling programs indicated that they were advantageously positioned to overcome skill gaps created by different technological disruptions. On the other hand, organizations with failed reskilling programs did not backfire as these organizations expressed their happiness for going through the process, with the majority expressed their interest and readiness to fill future skill gaps (Agrawal et al., 2020).

Small-business reskilling initiatives are frequently more successful than large-business reskilling initiatives, since smaller businesses have a clearer picture of their skill gaps. Therefore, these small businesses possess an advantage at gap prioritization that need to be filled and ideal candidate identification for reskilling. However, it is urged that larger companies can also be flexible in addressing skill gaps while exerting more effort than smaller ones. Finally, protecting training budgets is vital and should not be reduced, rather skill development should be considered as a major strategic lever for adjusting to the new normal (Agrawal et al., 2020). Despite the fact that the COVID-19 has disturbed the

economy and work routines, it has also provided opportunity for businesses to undertake continuous learning and move toward upskilling and reskilling people (Zou et al., 2020).

Eventually, employees must be ready to match their skill sets to new positions and jobs. On another note, the Artificial Intelligence era necessitates reskilling and upskilling. Data analytics, which gathers all information on employees, including their upbringing, experience, performance, and skill sets, and monitors them through a computerized interface, is the future of HR (Fahed-Sreih, 2018). New business models were formed during and after the pandemic that impose employee retraining, including the capacity to operate on any new hardware or software. Technical skills to operate in a fully remote workplace, problem-solving skills to handle a redesign and innovation process, and enhanced social skills required for non-face-to-face engagement and teleworking are just a few of the new skill sets that employee will need to learn (Zou et al., 2020).

According to Horii and Sakuraii (2020) employers should begin by focusing on educating and reskilling workers to fill the 11 to 12 million additional jobs that Japan is expected to require by 2030. People with abilities in technology, analytics, and business will be needed to "translate" automation into innovation and growth, in addition to additional data scientists. Employers should make sure that the acquired training skills are put into effect while collaborating with government agencies to promote higher labor force participation, and taking into consideration disruptions within the vulnerable populations. In order to be competitive in today's market, Rangraz and Pareto (2021) believe that small manufacturing firms must consider Industry 4.0 (ongoing). Requirements to re-skill employees for the new work environment are one of the issues associated with the transition to Industry 4.0. Consequently, Employees must either adapt to the workplace

transformation brought on by digitalization, automation, and robotics, or they will be laid off.

2.3 Innovative Workforce Behavior

Competition is growing tougher and markets are becoming more demanding. Therefore, companies are being compelled to constantly improve and change in order to compete for market share. Stimulated innovation and Innovative Work Behaviors (IWBs) are one of the most effective ways for businesses to gain and maintain competitive advantages. As a result, modern companies attempt to encourage their employees to be inventive and creative (Knezović & Drkić, 2020).

In the age of globalization and digitization, the spread of innovation at the organizational and national levels is adopting new directions. Organizations are developing strategies, forming rules, and signing agreements as a result of globalization in order to improve innovation and achieve competitive and sustainable performance (Yunis et al., 2017). Consequently, investing in human capital and cultivating an inventive culture within the company can help facilitate innovation. Employee innovation is achieved in principle through what is known as innovative work behavior (IWB) (Knezović & Drkić, 2020). Innovative Workforce Behavior encompasses a variety of approaches to problem solving, a constant quest for improvements, new ways of doing tasks, new technology, different work tactics and methodologies, and assuring resources so that new ideas can be implemented (Yuan and Woodman, 2010).

Knowing that IWB can improve organizational effectiveness, performance, and employee happiness, it has been studied extensively, defining a variety of elements such as potential antecedents. Individual personality traits, organizational factors, team characteristics, organizational relationships, intrinsic job variables, are some of the factors that have been investigated (Knezović & Drkić, 2020). Earlier studies have linked engagement to innovative work behavior (IWB), as well as creativity, problem-solving improvement, and job performance. As a result, if managers can increase staff engagement, they may be able to profit from increased levels of creativity (Karkoulian et al., 2019). In addition, it was found that the performance of non-family employees in family businesses is influenced by training and innovative aptitudes, while strategic planning is a must to increase the link between human resource policy and performance of said employees (Fahed-Sreih & El-Kassar, 2018).

Innovation is a key lifeline for organizations particularly during difficult times. In the same way, the healthcare industry relies on innovation and creative work techniques. An article on Medical Representatives in Bahrain tackled their unique work behavior which looks to be capable of surviving and sustaining the world's most difficult circumstances. Innovative work behavior (IWB) has recently gotten a lot of attention from scholarly since it improves people's psychological processes and helps them achieve better results. Employees who engage in innovative useful approaches and strategies at work are referred to as engaging in novel work behavior (Darwish et al., 2020). This looks to be extremely important for Medical Representatives to grasp and outline approaches to properly manage their vigor, dedication, and absorption towards work (engagement) in order to meet their sales and marketing targets in the current COVID-19 crisis. Prior evidence also implies

that positive actions might be viewed as resources for individuals, encouraging them to use those resources to improve their results even more. As a result, we contend that innovative work behavior may not only influence engagement directly, but also assist Medical Representatives in improving their use of social support resources in order to increase engagement levels (Darwish et al., 2020).

2.4 Top Management Support

Management support can be defined as the organization's provision of the tools and resources needed for workers to complete new tasks. Management assistance is required for the coordination of efforts and the flow of knowledge necessary to build excellent work habits. Employees need a sense of involvement and contribution from management to be inspired to come up with new ideas, identify new opportunities, and put them into action without sacrificing productivity (Ismail et al., 2021.)

Top management support plays a vital role in ensuring that the mission of an organization is adequately followed paving the way for better firm performance. Furthermore, a proper realization of the goals and missions of an organization heavily lay in the hands of top management support (Williams et al., 2014). In addition, the support of top management comes with top managers thriving to develop new organizational capabilities (Gavronski et al., 2011).

Top management support results in adequate finances and resources to sponsor different innovation projects (Cooper & Edgett, 2004), this means that top managers encourage and assist teams in overcoming obstacles, as well as develop cross-functional

cooperation and communication (Rodríguez et al., 2008). Top management relied on their employees' acceptance and endorsement of their decisive decisions, since employees are responsible to promptly and actively implement the strategies and decisions set by top management, especially during the early phases of COVID-19 pandemic (Heide and Simonsson, 2021).

This fact illustrated management's excessive demands from their employees during the COVID-19 pandemic, which influenced not only the employees' work but also their personal lives too. Therefore, employees needed top management support to deliver expansive, cognitive, and physical support to the organization. (Einwiller and Stranzl, 2021). Despite the fact of healthcare technological advancement and virus control, true success is impossible to be achieved without having a strong leadership and management support (Poortaghi et al., 2021).

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework, Hypotheses, and Conceptual Model

This chapter includes the hypotheses deduced related to POS during COVID-19, innovative workforce behavior, top management support, and workforce reskilling, governed by two theoretical frameworks. Finally, the derived relations are depicted by a conceptual model marked by its originality.

3.1 Theoretical Frameworks

The Human Capital Theory and the Dynamic Capabilities View were used to govern the relationships between the proposed variables.

3.1.1 Human Capital Theory and Dynamic Capabilities View

The human capital theory tackles the role of personal gains and attributes (Orser and Leck, 2010) including investing in new skills, abilities, and experiences to achieve optimal success (Ballout, 2007; Melamed, 1996). These personal attributes and gains mainly include the employees' marginal contribution during their jobs, mainly including positive attitude creativity, innovativeness, reliability, and fulfilling work energy (Fitz-Enz, 2000). These inputs are all associated with successive effort (Ranki, 1999). Moreover, the human capital theory is based on the assumption that employees are willing to invest in pursuing higher education and acquiring new

abilities and skills aiming for compensation (Orser and Leck, 2010). Therefore, the human capital elements sponsor workforce reskilling while achieving greater personal attributes.

The Dynamic Capabilities View presents the idea that organizations should obtain diverse capabilities in dynamic business environments to be prepared for different business aspects to gain competitive advantage over their rivals. (Mikalef et al., 2018). In addition, the DCV describes the organizations as discovering new sources promoting new value in a rapidly changing environment. As a result, these organizations witness better resource allocating while achieving sustainable competitive advantage (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Teece et al., 1997). DCV is defined as ‘the ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly changing environments’ (Teece et al., 1997). It also describes the means to acquire valuable resources while using a process approach, where it creates an environment with an amalgam of the organization’s available resources with a changing business environment. Based on the DCV theory, organizations should form new alliances in response to changing business demands and terminate non-profitable relationships in order to achieve a competitive edge. As a result, in an uncertain business climate like COVID-19, dynamic capability can cope with the changing nature of business (Nayal et al., 2021).

3.2 Hypotheses Development

This section of the chapter will include five hypotheses to be addressed after the analysis. These five hypotheses are derived based on prior literature review and two theoretical frameworks: the Human Capital Theory and the Dynamic Capabilities View.

3.2.1 POS during COVID-19 and Workforce Reskilling

The COVID-19 pandemic has created particularly a difficult environment for human resource management, as employers are being forced to promptly endeavor into the "unknown unknowns" in order to assist their workforce in adapting to radical changes in the workplace and social environment (Carnevale and Hatak, 2020). However, Despite the fact that the COVID-19 has disturbed the economy and work routines, it has also provided opportunity for businesses to undertake continuous learning and move toward upskilling and reskilling people (Zou et al., 2020).

A recent report by McKinsey & Company stated that all employees in all industries must learn to adapt to quickly changing circumstances to match workers to new roles and activities, where leaders are required to reskill and upskill their employees in the post-pandemic environment to deliver new business models (Agrawal et al., 2020).

Organizations should adopt platform-based technology and create new business models as a result of highly volatile and instable environment (Sheppard, 2020). Human resources department, a key player in an organization, play a critical role in assisting employees in overcoming the challenges posed by unanticipated shifts in the workplace and in society. Apart from that, the digital and collaborative skills of the workforce are essential to move to the virtual work (Sheppard, 2020).

Furthermore, the implementation of digitalization processes is one of the economic effects of the global pandemic COVID-19. Companies must also use digital tools to provide workers with direct access to their jobs. Human Resource Management is critical in assisting organizations in navigating through the drastic changes brought about by the pandemic lockdown (Gigauri, 2020). However, perceived organizational support is delivered to the employees to reskill through the

human resource department. Therefore, perceived organizational support affects the workforce reskilling of an organization. The following hypothesis is generated:

H1: Perceived Organizational Support has a direct positive influence on Workforce Reskilling

3.2.2 Top management Support and Reskilling

Prior research has associated top management support with favorable outcomes in different business fields. These outcomes mainly include better corporate social responsibility, green human resource management (Yusliza et al., 2019), more effective environmental improvements (Digalwar et al., 2013), competitive advantage (Chadwick et al., 2015), green innovation (El-Kassar and Singh., 2019). It is urged that the role of top management in realizing different organizational initiatives is essential, as it is responsible to allocate resources and take decisions necessary to build change in the organization's environment (Bansal and Roth, 2000).

It is urged that one of the top management's key responsibilities is to orchestrate and allocate the firm's different resources (Dubey et al., 2018). Moreover, achieving organizational goals, a common objective between top management and employees, should be achieved while adapting to different business environments and global challenges management (Agrawal et al., 2020).

To achieve adequate reskilling of the employees, constant training is highly required. However, these training programs are usually costly and do not have a direct positive effect on the organization's return on investment. Therefore, support from the top management is vital as one

of top management's responsibilities includes setting budgets to proceed with the training programs management (Agrawal et al., 2020).

The rapid breakout of COVID-19 has triggered an unprecedented worldwide recession, putting a strain on China's manufacturing industry's job market. The recent and ongoing market turmoil caused by the COVID-19 epidemic, along with the pressures of digitization, has considerably boosted job demands among industrial and production workers.

A recent article on China's manufacturing employees showed that low-skilled, uneducated, and middle-aged workers, who formerly performed simple, repetitive activities, are becoming less competitive and facing increased job stress. Consequently, manufacturing personnel may gradually lose occupational satisfaction at such a turbulent moment, as the success and advancement they have gained in their professions may not be sustainable. Furthermore, in order to cope with such a difficult circumstance, industrial workers must develop and encourage innovative workplace behavior (IWB) (Ren and Chin, 2020). Therefore, employees who are reskilled and upskilled tend to behave innovatively. The following two hypotheses are deduced:

H2: Top Management Support moderates the relationship between Perceived Organizational Support and Workforce Reskilling

H3: Workforce Reskilling has a direct positive effect on Innovative Workforce Behavior

3.2.3 Perceived Organizational Support and Innovative Workforce Behavior

Many organizations are facing many obstacles and challenges as a result of constant change in technology and global economic integration (Jia et al., 2018; Le and lei, 2018). Now, researchers

have shown grown interest in innovation and innovative behaviors as a result of volatile business environments (Chen, 2011; Kim and Lee, 2013; Akram et al., 2016). Innovative behavior is described as the ability of employees and employers to come up with innovative ideas, products, services, and processes on different levels including the individual, group, and organizational levels (Farr and Ford, 1990) to gain competitive advantage (Drucker, 2014). Prior research investigated the two fundamental subcategories of innovation capability (Podrug et al., 2017) including product and process innovation that are relevant in a dynamic environment (Tsai et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2013).

Perceived organizational support is defined as the organization's extent to perceive the needs, contribution, and overall welfare of the employees to take care of the social and economic needs of employees (Eisenberger et al., 1986). In addition, perceived organizational support became more demanded especially during global challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic.

Organizational support to employees, will create a sense of loyalty and belonging to the organization that will trigger employees to go beyond the norms to achieve the objectives of the organization (Rhoades et al., 2001) in an innovative way to demonstrate innovative work behavior (Nazir et al., 2019). These employees will be eager to reinforce the strategies set by the organization to find solutions to obstacles in an innovative way (Young, 2012). Therefore, the following two hypotheses are deduced:

H4: Perceived Organizational Support has a direct positive influence on Innovative Workforce Behavior

H5: Workforce Reskilling mediates the relationship between Perceived Organizational Support during COVID-19 and Innovative Workforce Behavior.

3.3 The Conceptual Model

The stated relationships are illustrated with the following conceptual model:

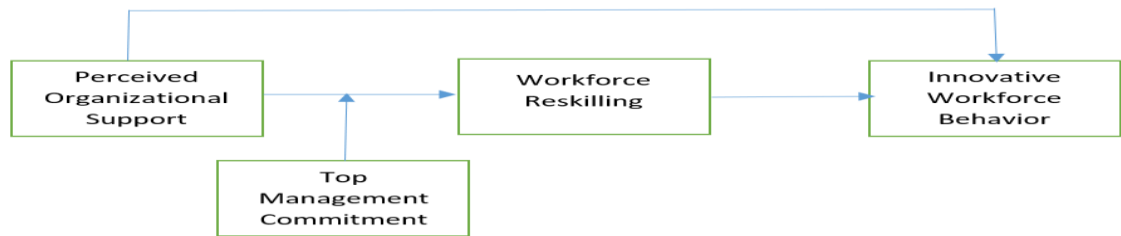


Figure 1. The Conceptual Model

Chapter 4

Research Methodology and Statistical Analysis

This chapter includes the description of our sample, instruments used to test the collect the data, and the procedures used to collect and analyze the data. In addition, this chapter the statistical analysis, findings, and discussion.

4.1 Research Methodology

4.1.1 Participants

The sample population included 554 working professionals in Lebanon and globally. A total of 110 participant completed the survey. The majority of the respondents were from Lebanon.

4.1.2 Measures

An online questionnaire was sent to sample population to collect data. The online questionnaire is comprised of five sections including the demographic section. The survey was based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

The demographic section included eight questions namely; Age Range, gender, highest level of education, years of experience, company size, role in the organization, location, and type of industry the participant is related to.

Top Management support scale, labeled from TMS1 to TMS5, was adopted from previous research papers used by Liang et al. (2007). Minor changes were made to target the support of the top management during COVID-19 pandemic.

Perceived Organizational Support during COVID-19 scale, labeled from POSC1 to POSC8, was adopted from Zhang et al. (2020). Two items were deleted, item 2 and item 8.

Workforce Reskilling scale, labeled from WR1 to WR10, was adopted based on the scale of Schrage et al. (2020).

Innovative Workforce Behavior scale, labeled from IWB1 to IWB5, was adopted from Prieto and Pérez-Santana (2014).

4.1.3 Instrumentation

The latent constructs of the proposed conceptual model (Top Management Support, Perceived Organizational Support during COVID-19, Workforce Reskilling, and Innovative Workforce Behavior) were tested using the Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM 3) software. The analysis was done and the results are presented in the following section.

4.2 Statistical Analysis

4.2.1 Descriptive Statistics

A total of 101 responses were collected. Out of the 110 respondents, 79 were females (71.8%) and 31 were males (22.8%). The results are summarized in Table I below.

Gender				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	79	71.8	71.8	71.8
Male	31	28.2	28.2	100
Total	110	100	100	

Table I: Distribution by Gender

Out of the 101 respondents, 41 respondents were aged between 25 and 35, 32 were between 35 and 44 of age, 25 were aged between 45 and 64, and 12 were aged between 18 and 24. The results are summarized in Table II.

Age				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
18-24	12	10.9	10.9	10.9
25-34	41	37.3	37.3	48.2
35-44	32	29.1	29.1	77.3
45-64	25	22.7	22.7	100
Total	110	100	100	

Table II: Distribution by Age

The majority of the sample worked in middle management positions making a total of 23.6%, 10.9% for upper management levels, 17.3% for junior managerial level positions, 13.6% for administrative positions, 6.4% for training positions, 7.3% for research positions, and 20.9% for other positions. Our respondents are also classified according to their accumulated years of experience, as 43.6% have been working for more than 15 years, 19.1% between 5 and 9 years, 13.6% from 3 to 5 years of work experience, 13.9% less than 3 years, and only 10% between 10 and 15 years of work experience. The results are summarized in Table III and Table IV.

Role at the Organization				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Administrative Staff	15	13.6	13.6	13.6
Junior Management	19	17.3	17.3	30.9
Middle Management	26	23.6	23.6	54.5
Other	23	20.9	20.9	75.4
Researcher	8	7.3	7.3	82.7
Trained Professional	7	6.4	6.4	89.1
Upper Management	12	10.9	10.9	100
Total	110	100	100	

Table III: Distribution by Role at the Organization

Years of Experience				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Above 15 years	48	43.6	43.6	43.6
From 10 to 15 years	11	10	10	53.6
From 3 to 5 years	15	13.6	13.6	67.3
From 5 to 9 years	21	19.1	19.1	86.4
Less than 3 years	15	13.6	13.6	100
Total	110	100	100	

Table IV: Distribution by Years of Experience

The sample was also classified according to the different industries these respondents are related to with the highest of 33.6% coming from the educational sector, 14.5% from the information and communication technology sector, 15.8% from the educational sector, 10% from the banking, finance, and auditing sector, 5.5% from the hospitality and tourism industry, 4.5% from manufacturing industry, and 31.9% belonged to other industries. The results can be summarized in Table V below.

Industry				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Banking & Finance / Audit	11	10	10	10
Education	37	33.6	33.6	43.6
Hospitality and Tourism	6	5.5	5.5	49.1
Information and Communication Technology	16	14.5	14.5	63.6
Manufacturing	5	4.5	4.5	68.1
Others	35	31.9	31.9	100
Total	110	100	100	

Table V: Distribution by Industry

Other demographic questions were also used in the online questionnaire, including the company size of the respondents as well as the highest level of education the respondents have reached. The respondents' results are summarized in Table VI and Table VII below.

Company Size				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
200 to 499 employees	10	9.1	9.1	9.1
50 to 199 employees	19	17.3	17.3	26.4
500 or more employees	59	53.6	53.6	80
Less than 50 employees	22	20	20	100
Total	110	100	100	

Table VI: Distribution by Company Size

Level of Education				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Has a Bachelor's Degree	27	24.5	24.5	24.5
Has a High School Diploma	2	1.8	1.8	26.4
Has completed a Master's Degree or a Ph.D. Degree	47	42.7	42.7	69.1
Pursuing a Master's Degree	34	30.9	30.9	100
Total	110	100	100	

Table VII: Distribution by Level of Education

4.2.2 Measurement Model

The relationships of the proposed conceptual model depicted in Figure 1 are tested using the Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The two phases of the PLS-SEM method are assessment of the measurement model phase and the calculation of the path coefficient phase. The measurement model is assessed by demonstrating the validity and reliability of the scale and by determining the values and significance of the outer loadings.

The reliability of the constructs is demonstrated by calculating the Cronbach's Alpha values, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE). The Smart PLS results presented in Table A below indicate high scale reliability as the composite reliability of all constructs are above the least required value of 0.7. Also, the Cronbach's Alpha for the constructs TMS, WR, and IWB are way higher than the minimum value of 0.7, while the POSC had an acceptable Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.620. In addition, the results revealed that the AVEs for the constructs TMS, WR, and IWB are well above the suggested value of 0.5, while the POSC construct had an AVE value of 0.382. This value is contributed to the small sample size and the fact that the scale is new. This limitation can be addressed by increasing the sample size and conduct further studies on the validation of this important scale.

Construct Reliability and Validity			
	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
IWB	0.926	0.944	0.773
POSC	0.62	0.75	0.382
TMS	0.889	0.919	0.694
WR	0.951	0.959	0.701

Table VIII: Construct Reliability and Validity

The discriminant validity was demonstrated as the square root of the average variance extracted of any construct exceeded its correlation with any other construct, see Table IX

Discriminant Validity				
	IWB	POSC	TMS	WR
IWB	0.879			
POSC	0.418	0.618		
TMS	0.431	0.571	0.833	
WR	0.709	0.498	0.499	0.837

Table IX: Discriminant Validity

The factor loadings shown in Table C reveal that most of the factor loadings are above the minimum required value of 0.7. Bootstrapping with 2000 iterations of resampling demonstrated the high significance of the factor loadings, as all p-values were less than 0.001. These results provide strong evidence of high scale validity and reliability.

Factor Loadings					
		Path Coefficients	Standard Deviation	T-Values	P-Values
IWB	IWB1	0.777	0.066	11.76	0
	IWB2	0.916	0.02	45.856	0
	IWB3	0.928	0.017	56.145	0
	IWB4	0.913	0.021	43.177	0
	IWB5	0.852	0.034	24.689	0
POSC	POSC1	0.552	0.117	4.736	0
	POSC3	0.511	0.153	3.352	0.001
	POSC4	0.533	0.152	3.512	0
	POSC6	0.782	0.066	11.862	0
	POSC7	0.67	0.113	5.952	0
TMS	TMS1	0.871	0.041	21.316	0
	TMS2	0.796	0.051	15.627	0
	TMS3	0.887	0.029	30.907	0
	TMS4	0.801	0.054	14.95	0
	TMS5	0.805	0.05	16.155	0
WR	WR1	0.739	0.058	12.669	0
	WR10	0.881	0.028	31.822	0
	WR2	0.903	0.021	42.642	0
	WR3	0.916	0.019	49.153	0
	WR4	0.839	0.05	16.929	0
	WR5	0.915	0.017	52.489	0
	WR6	0.849	0.037	22.833	0
	WR7	0.82	0.039	20.895	0
	WR8	0.602	0.094	6.428	0
	WR9	0.859	0.028	30.241	0

Table X: Factor Loadings

4.2.3 Calculation of the Path Coefficients

The relationships of the proposed conceptual model depicted in Figure 1 are tested using the PLS-SEM technique implemented on the Smart PLS software. First, the

mediation model relating Perceived Organizational Support during COVID-19, Workforce Reskilling, and Innovative Workforce Behavior is tested. The path calculation results of the direct and indirect effects are shown in Table XI and depicted in Figure II. In addition, the significance of the path coefficients is presented in Table XI based on bootstrapping with 2000 iterations of resampling. The data analysis results indicate that Perceived Organizational Support during COVID-19 has a significant positive direct effect on Workforce Reskilling as the value of the path coefficient is 0.498 and a corresponding p-value of 0.000. This provides evidence supporting hypothesis H1. The results also indicates that Workforce Reskilling has a significant positive direct effect on Innovative Workforce Behavior as the value of the path coefficient is 0.666 and a corresponding p-value of 0.000. This provides evidence supporting H3. Finally, Perceived Organizational Support during COVID-19 has no significant positive direct effect on Innovative Workforce Behavior as the value of the path coefficient is 0.087 and a corresponding p-value of 0.368. The results showed that Perceived Organizational Support during COVID-19 has a significant positive indirect effect on Innovative Workforce Behavior as results showed as the value of the path coefficient is 0.331 and a corresponding p-value of 0.000. Thus, hypothesis H5 is supported. The above results indicate that Workforce Reskilling mediates the relationship between Perceived Organizational Support during COVID-19 and Innovative Workforce Behavior and the mediation is full.

Significance of Path Coefficients				
Direct Effects	Path Coefficients	Standard Deviation	T Values	P Values
POSC -> IWB	0.087	0.097	0.9	0.368
POSC -> WR	0.498	0.074	6.741	0
WR -> IWB	0.666	0.071	9.342	0
Indirect Effects	Path Coefficients	Standard Deviation	T Values	P Values
POSC -> IWB	0.331	0.069	4.822	0

Table XI: Significance of Path Coefficients

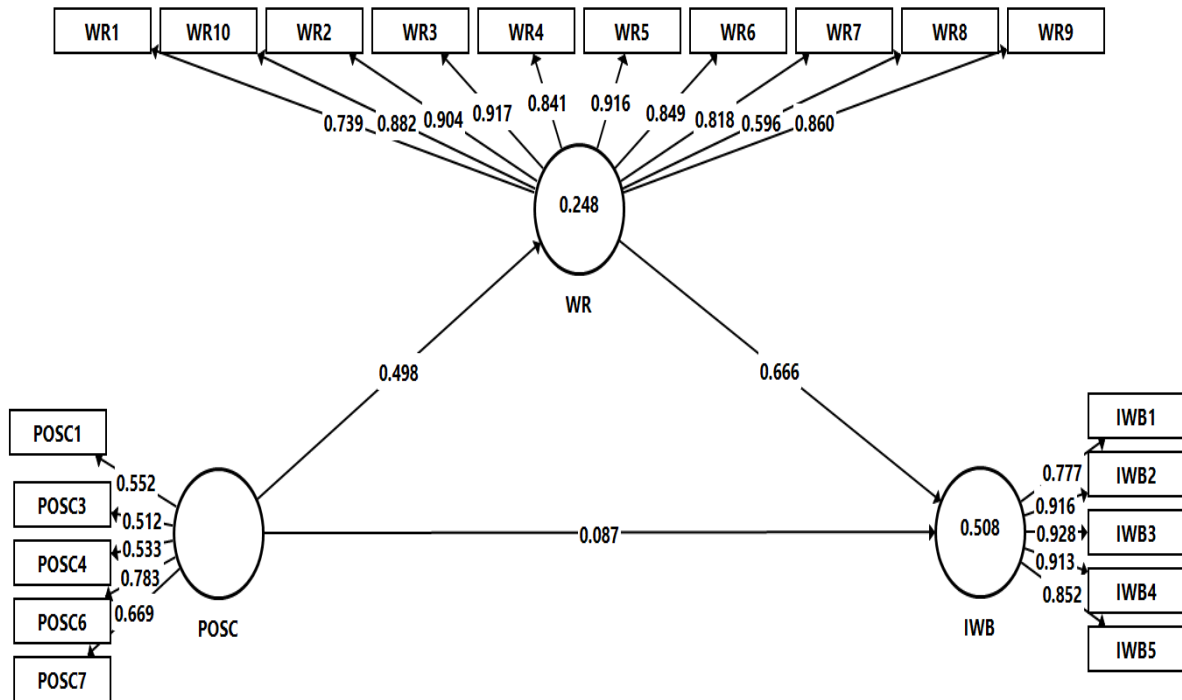


Figure II. Path Coefficients Results for the Mediation Model

Next, the moderated mediation model relating POSC, WR, TMS, and IWB is tested. The path calculation results of the direct and indirect effects are shown in Table XII and depicted in Figure III. In addition, the significance of the path coefficients is presented in Table XII based on bootstrapping with 2000 iterations of resampling. The first step in examining the moderating effect of TMS on the relationship between POSC and WR is to establish the significance of the influence of TMS on the outcome in this relationship WR. The data analysis results confirm that TMS has a significant positive direct effect on WR as the value of the path coefficient is 0.293 and a corresponding p-value of 0.019. The second step is to establish the significance of the interaction term POSCxTMS. However,

the data analysis results reveal that the interaction term POSCxTMS has no significant positive direct effect on WR as the value of the path coefficient is -0.042 and a corresponding p-value of 0.545. This did not provide evidence of supporting hypothesis H2. It is worth noting that TMS has a significant positive influence on IWB through WR indicating that WR mediates the relationship between TMS and IWB.

Significance of Path Coefficients				
Direct Effects	Path Coefficients	Standard Deviation	T Values	P Values
POSC -> IWB	0.087	0.1	0.867	0.386
POSC -> WR	0.322	0.113	2.836	0.005
POScTMS -> WR	-0.042	0.07	0.606	0.545
TMS -> WR	0.293	0.125	2.353	0.019
WR -> IWB	0.666	0.07	9.511	0
Indirect Effects	Path Coefficients	Standard Deviation	T Values	P Values
POSC -> IWB	0.214	0.083	2.577	0.01
POScTMS -> IWB	-0.028	0.046	0.615	0.539
TMS -> IWB	0.195	0.088	2.214	0.027

Table XII: Significance of Path Coefficients

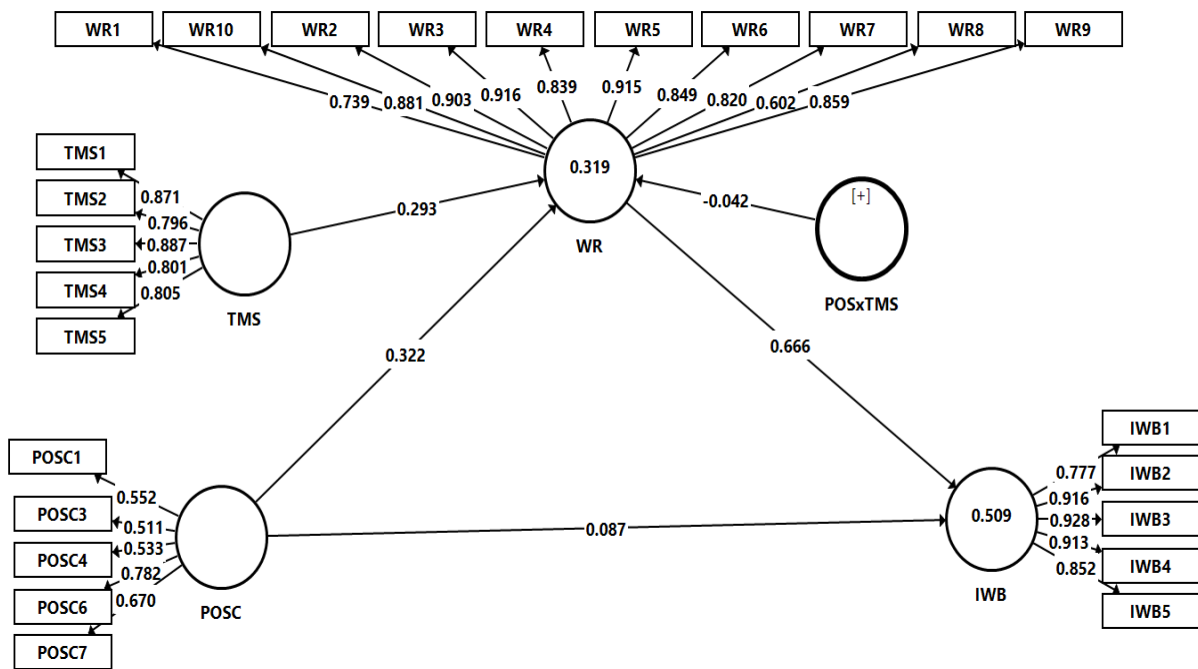


Figure III. Path Coefficients Results for the Moderated Mediation Model

5.2.4 Discussion

This study's goal is to test the conceptual model depicted in Figure I, linking Perceived Organizational Support during COVID-19 to Top Management Support, Workforce Reskilling, and Innovative Workforce Behavior by collecting data and analyzing data using the PLS-SEM technique implemented on the Smart PLS software. The results indicate that Perceived Organizational Support during COVID-19 has a direct positive influence on Workforce Reskilling. The investment in employees' skills and performance is supported by the perceived organizational support during COVID-19, a fact which confirms H1. Likewise, Workforce Reskilling has a direct positive influence on Innovative Workforce Behavior. Employees will be able to show innovative and creative behaviors as long as investments are made in the employees' skills, abilities and

performance, a fact supporting H3. In addition, Perceive Organizational Support during COVID-19 proved to have an indirect effect on Innovative Workforce Behavior, a fact supporting H5 stating that Workforce Reskilling mediates the relationship between Perceived Organizational Support during COVID-19 and Innovative Workforce Behavior. Moreover, the data analysis results confirm that Top Management Support has a significant positive direct effect on Workforce Reskilling. However, the data analysis results reveal that the interaction between Perceived Organizational Support during COVID-19 with Top Management Support has no significant positive direct effect on Workforce Reskilling, a fact that did not provide evidence of supporting hypothesis H2.

Chapter 5

Implications, Limitations, and Recommendations

This chapter presents the study's implications, as well as the limitations and recommendations for future research.

6.1 Implications

Employees working in an organization that provides various types of support during COVID-19 including access to appropriate personal protective equipment, testing for COVID-19 rapidly, and providing competent medical care are able to work on upskilling and reskilling their abilities to meet to dynamic demands of the business environment as it is described as a constituent of the organization's overall strategy. Moreover, reskilled employees will be trying to solve problems in innovative ways and will be searching for innovative and new beneficial working methods while anticipating new opportunities and problems.

6.2 Limitations and Recommendations

This research is constrained by a number of limitations that should be addressed for future research. These limitations include the sample size as our sample size that consists of 110 responses that considered relatively small. Therefore, future research should include a relatively a larger sample of the population for better representation. Another limitation is our sample representation as it mainly represents Lebanon. Therefore, further research should be looking for expand the data collection for better representation. Finally, another limitation is the usage of a new scale to measure the Perceived Organization during COVID-19. This

limitation can be addressed by increasing the sample size and conduct further studies on the validation of this important scale. As a recommendation, it would be interesting to investigate the difference of reskilling within generations especially the millennials.

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