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The Effects of Perceived Organizational Support, Abusive Supervision, and Exchange Ideology on Employees' Task Performance

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***Abstract*—**Employee's task performance has been recognized as a core contributor to overall organizational effectiveness. Hence, verifying the determinants of task performance is one of the most important research issues. This study tests the influence of perceived organizational support, abusive supervision, and exchange ideology on employee's task performance. We examined our hypotheses by collecting self-reported data from 413 Korean employees in different organizations. Our all hypotheses gained support from the results. Implications for research and directions for future research are discussed.

***Keywords*—**Abusive supervision, exchange ideology, perceived organizational support, task performance.

I. Introduction

TASK performance has been recognized as key roles that contribute to the organizational effectiveness [30]. As a result, researchers and practitioners are interested in verifying which variables predict whether employees engage in task performance. Moreover existing research has demonstrated the importance of social exchange relationship with organization, leader behavior, and personal characteristics as determinants of employees' task performance [3],[29],[39]. Among various concepts of social exchange relationship with organization, perceived organizational support is one of antecedents that have most received the attention [21]. Perceived organizational support has been defined as "an individuals' perception concerning the degree to which an organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being" [12, p.501]. Prior studies have found that perceived organizational support showed quite consistently homogeneous relationship with task performance (see [30] for reviews). Although previous work in this area has broadened our understanding of the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee's task performance, there are uncharted territories of perceived organizational support-task performance relationship so far. For example, task performance has been recognized a key component of job performance [7]. Actually this variable is known as the most important factor in a work setting regardless of different cultures [7]. On the basis of social exchange theory [5], perceived organizational support should play important roles in improving employee's task performance. Although social exchange theory should be applied to every culture, most of previous studies were conducted in Western culture. For that reason, this could be a serious limitation and difficult to apply in other cultures.

In the case of supervisory behavior, abusive supervision has increasingly received a lot of research interests [36]. Although abusive supervision constitutes a low base-rate phenomenon in workplace, its negative effects are nothing to sneeze [2]. Therefore, it is meaningful to explore the effects of abusive supervision on task performance. To date, however, insufficient attention has been paid to the impact of abusive supervision on employee's task performance. Likewise, we predict that abusive supervision should have negative effects on task performance in accordance with social exchange theory [5]. Also conservation of resources theory [18] implies the detrimental impact of abusive supervision on employee's task-related behavior because subordinates under abusive supervisor tend to devote fewer his or her own attention and effort on their task performance.

Finally, it has been widely accepted that dispositional characteristics influence individual's propensities to engage in task performance [3]. In particular, exchange ideology that captures the strength of individual reciprocal beliefs [1] is considered to have negative association with task performance because of calculative and selfish orientation. Despite this high probability, they are seldom studied directly.

The purpose of this paper is therefore threefold: (1) to explore the relationship between perceived organizational support and task performance in Oriental culture, (2) to examine how abusive supervision is related with task performance, and (3) to investigate the effect of exchange ideology on task performance. Our contribution is not only to help researchers better understand the complex relationship

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between variables mentioned above and task performance, but also to aid managers in tailoring their effort to improve employee's task performance.

II. Literature Review and Hypotheses

A. Job Performance and Task Performance

For decades, job performance has been perceived as those behaviors that are displayed by individual and contribute to the goals of the organization [30]. A variety of components have been suggested to describe the domain of job performance [6], [7],[20],[27]. Among these, task performance have been recognized a key part of job performance [7]. Task performance is defined as the accomplishment of duties and responsibilities related with a given job [27]. This definition of task performance includes two important characteristics. First, task performance is activities or actions to contribute to the technical core in job [7]. For this reason, organizations and supervisors value employees' task performance. The feature of contributing the technical core is a prominent property that helps differentiate task performance from the other performance component. Second, task performance is formally recognized as part of the job [7]. Accordingly, employee's task performance is rewarded based on performance evaluations.

As stated above, organizational effectiveness as well as job performance depends on task performance done by employees. As a result, a great number of researchers have investigated the antecedents of employee's task performance. This paper is an extension of existing research that has explored the various factors to influence on task performance. By doing so, we seek to achieve a better understanding of which factor are considered by managers to improve employees' task performance.

B. The Effect of Perceived Organizational Support on Task Performance

According to social exchange theorists, employment is the trade of effort and loyalty for benefits and rewards between employers and employees [8], [14], [15], [23], [26], [33]. When organization treats employees well, employees feel obliged to make a return for favorable treatment [16]. Perceived organizational support is one of the main concepts to describe a global exchange relationship between the organization and employees [32]. Perceived organizational support researchers suggested that employees form a global belief concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and care about their well-being [13]. Concern and consideration by organization is able to trigger various psychological mechanisms in employees [29]. First, support from organization should fulfill socioemotional needs of employees, enhancing workers' organizational membership. Second, perceived organizational support should reinforce employee's notions that organization appreciate and rewards good performance. Finally, on the basis of the reciprocity norm [16], perceived organizational support should create a felt obligation to help the organization reach its goals, leading to beneficial outcomes for organization.

Taken together, high levels of perceived organizational support are thought to generate high levels of task performance, because achieving excellent task performance is a good way to return organization's favor and contribute organizational objectives. Previous research has confirmed our expectation. For instance, Rhoades & Eisenberger's meta-analysis showed that perceived organizational support is positively related to task performance [29]. However, since previous studies have been conducted in Western cultures, it would be worthwhile to investigate the relationship between POS and task performance in other cultures as well. Particularly, this study examines the relationship using samples collected in South Korea and argues that social exchange theory is equally applied in Asia more specifically, South Korea. Thus, we expect that task performance is also likely to be enhanced when there is greater support from organization in Asian setting.

H1: Perceived organizational support has positive relationship with subordinates' task performance

C. The Effect of Abusive Supervision on Task Performance

Much of the leadership research has concentrated on leader behavior that produce positive employee attitudes and behavior that elevate, ultimately, organizational effectiveness [4],[39]. However, within the past 20 years, researchers have paid interest to the dark or negative side of leader behavior. Even if several different labels have been used to refer to these kinds of behaviors, most of the work has employed the term abusive supervision [36]. Abusive supervision is defined as "subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behavior, excluding physical contact [35, p.178].

In recent years, abusive supervision has emerged as a non-trivial variable in understanding employees' attitudes and behaviors. As previously noted, our focus in this study is to explore the negative effect of abusive supervision on task performance. According to social exchange theory [5] and norm of reciprocity [16], treatment an employee receives from his or her supervisor should determine the employee's reaction toward job and/or organization. Social exchange and reciprocity is usually perceived of in terms of positive exchange and reciprocity, scholars admit negative reciprocity, where negative favor is repaid with negative favor [11]. Thus, employees may return an abusive supervision by increasing their negative workplace behaviors or decreasing task performance [17].

Conservation of resources (COR) theory provides another useful lens for investigating abusive supervision-task performance relationship. According to COR theory [18], stress occurs with resource loss. Environment conditions including supervisor behaviors in workplace may threaten or cause a depletion of subordinate's resources [19]. During a stressful situation, employees strive to obtain and maintain resources that serve as means to achieve goals. In addition, having an abusive supervisor may require that employees expend energy and time "monitoring and managing upwards" rather than concentrating on their job [17]. Therefore, we suggest that abusive supervision could become a source of such stressful

circumstances, and thus lead to a negative impact on employee's task performance.

The logic outlined above indicates that both social exchange theory and COR theory predict that abusive supervision is likely to decrease the level of task performance. Nonetheless, there has been little study to focus on abusive supervision-task performance relationship. However, a few studies support our reasoning. For example, Harris and his colleagues found that abusive supervision was negatively related to job performance [17]. Also several studies verified abusive behaviors by supervisor that decreased subordinate's other types of job-related behaviors (e.g., organizational citizenship behaviors) [2],[40]. Thus, we expect the following hypotheses:

H2: Abusive supervision has negative relationship with subordinates' task performance

D. The Effect of Exchange Ideology on Task Performance

Researchers generally agree that personal characteristics including personality are important predictor of task performance [3], [31]. For this reason individual differences are becoming increasingly popular as selection processes. The concept of exchange ideology recognizes that individuals vary in the strength of their reciprocal beliefs [1], [10]. Whereas some employees with a strong exchange ideology engage in exchange relationships and put forth effort toward other parties (e.g., coworkers, supervisor, organization) with the expectation of reciprocity [22], others may share with their coworkers or organization without regard to what they receive [38]. Employee exchange ideology would result from a personal continual experience, observation, and education by significant others concerning the value of reciprocity [12]. Therefore, exchange ideology is considered a dispositional orientation [24] or individual difference trait [34]. Because some individuals are more sensitive to this exchange than others, exchange ideology has been largely explored for its moderating role on relations between two variables. However, exchange ideology literature would provide us with useful hints on main effects of exchange ideology. First, strong exchange ideology holders pay more attention to what they receive than what they give, and they regard exchange partners as debtors [9]. Such a self-serving bias makes these employees perceive they are receiving less than they deserve [34]. This implies that high exchange ideology holders pay more attention to negative experience and information than those with a weak exchange ideology, which leads to less positive interpretation of the same events or situations [34]. Second, employees with a high level of exchange ideology set a premium on direct and immediate exchange [28]. In other words, while benefits and rewards for efforts and dedications represent much to them, long-term relationships with the employers are not big deal. Therefore more calculating and selfish employee, namely member high in exchange ideology may be less likely to feel obligation to the organization [34], which leads to lower level of task performance. An experimental study showed that individuals with a strong exchange ideology are more likely to perceive unfairness and to think they are being taken advantage of [25]. In addition, a few studies identified the negative effects of exchange ideology on felt obligation to the organization [12], [34] and on job-related behaviors such as organizational citizenship behaviors [22]. In short, it seems that employee's exchange ideology should have negative effect on his or her own task performance. Such a relationship is plausible because of self-serving bias and selfish orientation mentioned above. Therefore, we offer the following hypotheses:

H3: Exchange ideology has negative relationship with subordinates' task performance

III. Method

A. Sample and Procedure

A self-completion questionnaire was distributed to full-time employees of companies located in South Korea. A cover letter attached to each of the questionnaires informed respondents the survey objectives and assured the confidentiality of their response. The questionnaires were returned directly to us, and 413 responses were received. Of the 413 respondents, 75.1% were men, average age was 33.78 years (*SD* = 5.78),and average organizational tenure was 4.34 years (*SD* = 4.75).

B. Measures

Perceived organizational support. Following [9], we used seven items with the highest factor loadings from original 36-item scale [13]. Response options ranged from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Sample items are "The organization cares about my well-being," and "The organization values my contributions to its well being." The scale's alpha reliability is .90.

Abusive supervision. As previous research, the respondents completed Tepper's 15-item abusive supervision scale [35] (along a 7-poit Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). Sample items include "My supervisor makes negative comments about me to others," and "My supervisor ignores me or gives me the silent treatment." The scale's alpha reliability is .97.

Exchange ideology. An eight-item exchange ideology scale [13] was used to measure employee's exchange ideology (along a 7-poit Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). Sample items are "An employee's work effort should depend partly on how well the organization deals with his or her desires and concerns," and "An employee who is treated badly by the organization should lower his or her work effort." Reliability coefficients for the exchange ideology is .84.

Task performance. Respondents provided ratings of task performance. A seven-item, 7-pont Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree,* 7 = *strongly agree)* developed by [37]. Sample items include "I adequately complete assigned duties," and "I fulfill responsibilities specified in job description." Coefficient alpha is .86.

C. Data Analysis

We used structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the hypotheses. We reduced the number of items by creating two indicators for each construct because the number of items was

large relative to the sample size. This approach enhances the subject-to-degrees-of-freedom ratio. On the basis of factor analysis results, the items with the highest and lowest loadings for each construct were combined first, followed by items with the next highest and lowest loadings, until all the items for each construct had been assigned to one of the indicators. Scores for each indicator were then computed as the mean of the scores on the items that constituted each indicator. To assess model fit, we used the overall model chi-square measure, the comparative fitindex (CFI), the goodness of fit index (GFI), and root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA).

IV. Results

A. Confirmatory Factor Analyses

We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with AMOS 19.0 to examine the distinctiveness of the constructs in the study. We compared the fit of a hypothesized four-factor model with various alternative factor models. As shown in Table I, the baseline four-factor model fit the data well (χ^2 =37.95,*df* = 14, *p*<.001; CFI = .99; GFI = .98; RMSEA = .06).

TABLE I
Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Measurement Models

Model	x^2	*df*	Δx^2	CFI	GFI	RMSEA
Baseline model	37.95	14		.99	.98	.06
Model 1	386.84	17	348.89	.84	.84	.23
Model 2	1270.95	19	1233.00	.46	.70	.40
Model 3	1276.28	20	1238.33	.25	.62	.46

Note. *N* = 413. All $\chi^2$and $\Delta\chi^2$values are significant at *p*<.001. CFI = comparative fit index; GFI = goodness of fit index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation.

Against, this baseline four-factor model, we tested three alternative models: Model 1 was a three-factor model with task performance merged with exchange ideology to form a single factor; Model 2 was a two-factor model, with task performance merged with exchange ideology to form a single factor, while perceived organizational support and abusive supervision merged into another single factor; Model 3 was an one-factor model combining all variables into single factor. As Table I shows, the fit indexes supported the hypothesized four-factor model, providing evidence of the construct distinctiveness of the variables in this study.

B. Descriptive Statistics

Table II displays the descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations among the study variables.

TABLE II
Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations

Variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3
1.POS	4.53	.90			
2. AS	1.81	.93	-.16***		
3. EXID	3.48	.96	-.34***	.16***	
4. TP	5.45	.68	.21***	-.25***	-.16***

Note. *N* = 413. POS = perceived organizational support; AS = abusive supervision; EXID = exchange ideology; TP = task performance. *** *p*<.001.

As can be seen, perceived organizational support has a significantly positive relationship with task performance and knowledge sharing. Likewise, both abusive supervision and exchange ideology are negatively associated with task performance and knowledge sharing.

C. Hypothesis Tests

Results of the SEM analysis are presented in Fig. 1. Exogenous variables were allowed to correlate, as were the residuals of task performance and knowledge sharing. The model depicting Hypotheses 1-6 showed adequate fit (χ^2 = 37.95*df* = 14, *p*< .001 ; CFI = .99, GFI = .98, RMSEA = .06), and all paths shown were significant, supporting all Hypotheses. That is, perceived organizational support had a positive relationship with task performance (β = .15, *p*<.01). Also abusive supervision had negative effects on task performance (β = -.22, *p*<.001). Likewise, exchange ideology had negative relationship with task performance (β = -.11, *p*<.05). In summary, SEM results supported Hypotheses 1-3, namely all Hypotheses.

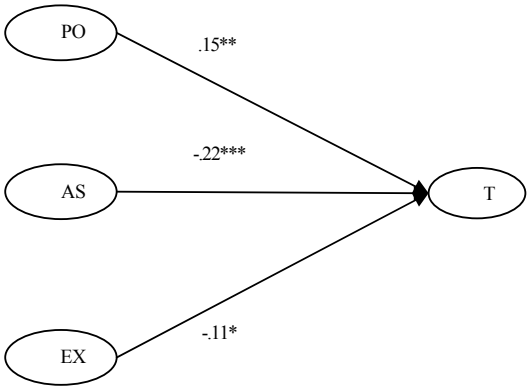

Fig. 1 Structural path estimates of the Hypothesized model

Note. $N = 413$. Structural path estimates are the standardized parameter estimates. To simplify the presentation, the correlations among the exogenous variables are not shown. POS = perceived organizational support; AS = abusive supervision; EXID = exchange ideology; TP = task performance. * $p<.05$.** $p<.01$.*** $p<.001$.

V. Discussion

The first key finding of this study is that perceived organizational support also has positive relationship with task performance in Oriental culture as research conducted in the West. This pattern of findings is backed up by social exchange theory [5] and the norm of reciprocity [16]. According to these views, increasing task performance can be considered as one of the best ways to reciprocate for those employees who have received favorable treatment from their organizations. This result extends our understanding and generalize ability of the positive effects of perceived organizational support. More specifically, it suggests that better perceived organizational support encourages employees more to engage in their task. Therefore, this research contributes to the literature and practices by enlarging the universal usefulness of perceived organizational support in organizations.

Second, our findings show that employees under higher abusive supervision perform less task performance than their counterparts in lower level of abusive supervision. This interesting effect can be explained by the social exchange theory [5] as in perceived organizational support case. Also COR theory [18] assists the plausibility of our results because COR theory proposes that stress (generated by abusive supervision) is likely to have a negative effect on employee's task performance. Management and leadership scholars have recently shown great interest in the negative effects on abusive supervision. Our findings expand the domain of deleterious effects of abusive supervision by assessing directly task performance. Hence, this paper adds to a growing number of studies that have made an attempt to probe the complex dynamics of abusive supervision.

Third, this paper suggests that employee's exchange ideology plays a significant role in determining his or her job-related behavior. In other words, depending on individual exchange ideology, employee react differently their in-role. According to previous research [28], [34], exchange ideology is likely to relate self-serving bias, which leads employee high in exchange ideology to seek more rewards with less effort and dedication. This implies that employee with a strong ideology might pay less attention to their task, which produce relatively low task performance level. Nevertheless, studies that examined the direct effect of exchange ideology are limited. Therefore, the results of this paper serve the usefulness of exchange ideology as significant dispositional characteristics in predicting and understanding individuals' in-role behavior.

The limitations of our study also point to possible directions for future research. First, as in all cross-sectional studies, causality is unclear. Therefore, a longitudinal design would be considered for future studies. A second limitation in this paper is that we used self-report survey measures to collect all the variables. Consequently, the observed relationships may have been artificially inflated as a result of common method bias. Third, we did not consider the processes underlying the hypothesized relationships. Future research should verify what mediates the relationships between antecedents and outcomes in our model. Also future research might expand on these finding by considering the impact of potential moderators on hypothesized relationship in this study. Despite these limitations, this study had added to our understanding of how perceived organizational support as social exchange concept with organization, abusive supervision as leader behavior variable, and exchange ideology as individual difference affects the employee's task performance. Especially, our finding made a positive contribution to the literature by examining variables mentioned above synthetically.

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