

Perceived Organizational Climate and Job Characteristics as Mediators of the Relationship between Core Self-Evaluations and Job Satisfaction

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The present study tested a mediation model consisting of job satisfaction as the dependent variable and core self-evaluations (CSE) as the independent variable, with perceived job characteristics and perceived organizational climate as its mediators. Using structural equation modelling (SEM), the relationships were examined in a sample of 294 full-time employees in an industrial organization in Ahvaz, Iran, who were selected by stratified random sampling method. Of this sample 94.5% were men with an average age of 42 years. Each participant in the study was required to complete four measures: Core Self-Evaluation Scale (CSES), Job in General Scale (JIGS), Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS), and Organizational Climate Scale. The results revealed that a) CSE was positively related to job satisfaction, b) CSE was positively related to perceived job characteristics and perceived organizational climate, c) perceived job characteristics and perceived organizational climate were positively related to job satisfaction, and d) perceived job characteristics and perceived organizational climate partially mediated the relationship of CSE with job satisfaction. Discussion and implications of the results are presented in the study.

Keywords: CSE, perceived job characteristics, perceived organizational climate, job satisfaction

Industrial and organizational psychologists have become increasingly interested in examining the dispositional sources of a wide variety of work behaviors and attitudes. Over the past 20 years, there is perhaps no area of

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psychology that has more deeply and broadly influenced organizational behavior than personality psychology (Judge & Hurst, 2008). The hypothesis that satisfaction is rooted in the employee's personality is not new. Hoppock (1935) emphasized the possible relationship between emotional adjustment and satisfaction. Staw and Ross (1985) indicated that even when people changed jobs, their job satisfaction exhibited significant stability. However, Spector (1997) noted that although many traits have been shown to correlate significantly with job satisfaction, most research with personality has done little more than demonstrate relations without offering much theoretical explanation.

The Big Five personality traits capture a large portion of variance in personality traits, but they fail to capture differences in how individuals evaluate themselves. In response, Judge, Locke, & Durham (1997) introduced the concept of *core self-evaluations* (CSE) for the first time while theorizing the dispositional bases of job satisfaction. They defined CSE as fundamental assessments that individuals make about their worth, competence, and capability. This relatively new concept has received growing attention in the research literature. CSE was proposed by Judge et al. (1997) as a higher order trait comprised of four lower-order traits: self-esteem, (internal) locus of control, (low) neuroticism, and self-efficacy. Individuals with high levels of CSE perform better on their jobs, are more successful in their careers, are more satisfied with their jobs and lives, report lower levels of stress and conflict, cope more effectively with setbacks, and better capitalize on advantages and opportunities (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003).

Several studies have investigated the influence of individual dispositions on job satisfaction (e.g., Helter, Ferris, Brown, & Watson, 2009, & Ishitani, 2010). In the literature on personality and satisfaction, the concept of core self-evaluations influenced a large number of empirical studies (e.g., Judge & Hurst, 2008; Stumpp, Hulshberger, Muck, & Maier, 2009). The CSE concept has emerged as a valid predictor of both affective work outcomes and mainly job satisfaction (e.g., Judge & Bono, 2001; Judge, Locke, Durham & Kluger, 1998). Additionally, studies have also found

CSE to be related to motivation (Erez & Judge, 2001), job performance (Judge & Bono, 2001), stress (Best, 2003), happiness and life satisfaction, (Judge, Erez, Bono & Thoresen, 2003), leadership (Eisenberg, 2000), goal commitment (Erez & Judge, 2001), and self-concordant goals (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Locke, 2005). Several studies showed the mechanisms through which CSE related to job satisfaction such as work-family interference/facilitation (Boyar & Mosley, 2007), types of jobs the employees were involved in (Judge, Bono, & Locke, 2000), perceived organizational climate (Crowford, 2008), and perceptions of job characteristics (Bono & Judge, 2003; Srivastava, Locke Judge, & Adams, 2010). Core self-evaluations literature has supported a strong relationship with job satisfaction (Judge et al., 1998, 2000, 2005). The purpose of the current study is to expand on prior research by examining the mediating roles of perceptions of job characteristics and perception of organizational

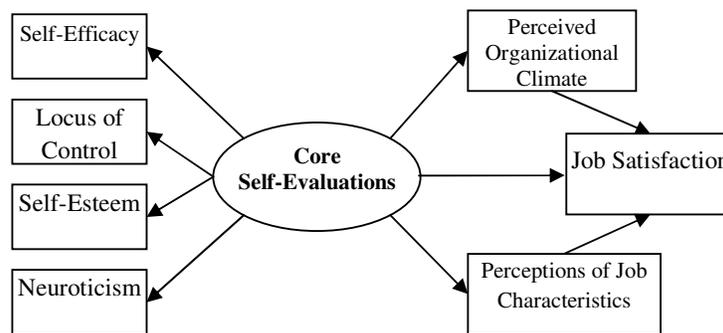


Figure 1
Core Self-Evaluations and Job Satisfaction: Proposed Model

climate in the CSE-job satisfaction relationship (see Fig. 1).

Background and hypotheses

Core self-evaluations

The first description of core self-evaluations came from Judge et al. (1997), who argued that a key characteristic that differentiates people from

one another is the fundamental evaluations we make about ourselves and how we relate to our environment. These fundamental beliefs are called “core self-evaluations.” People who have positive core self-evaluations see themselves positively across a variety of situations, and approach the world in a confident manner. Judge et al. (1997) believe that these people are capable of solving problems (high self-efficacy), worthy of respect (high self-esteem), responsible for what happens to them (internal locus of control), and prone to be optimistic and free from doubts and worries (high emotional stability or low neuroticism). The commonality of these traits is that core self-evaluations is a basic, fundamental appraisal of one’s worthiness, effectiveness, and capability as a person. Several studies have demonstrated that these characteristics of self-efficacy, self-esteem, internal locus of control, and emotional stability tend to be closely related to one another. For example, one investigation compiled the findings from a large number of previous studies and found that these four traits were correlated, on average, at $r=0.64$ (Judge, Ilies, Bono, & Gerhardt, 2002). Erez and Judge (2001) indicated that the four core traits have not only been shown to load on a single factor, they also share conceptual similarity. Brief descriptions of these four components are presented as follows:

1) **Self-esteem.** Harter (1990) believes that self-esteem is an overall value one places on himself as a person. Self-esteem, which is the central component of CSE, is also an individual’s global evaluation of self-worth (Baumeister, Smart & Boden, 1996).

2) **Generalized self-efficacy.** Although self-efficacy, as treated by Bandura (1997), is task-specific, Judge, et al. (1997) extend the concept to a global level, and define generalized self-efficacy as an estimate of one's fundamental ability to cope with life's stresses, and his or her belief in their ability to utilize the resources necessary to exercise general control over their lives.

3) **Locus of control.** Locus of control can be described as the degree to which individuals believe that they are in control of the events that take

place in their lives, or alternatively believe that the environment or fate is responsible for these events (Judge et al., 1998). Robbins (2001) indicates that people with an internal locus of control believe that they can control their own fate, thus, success or failure is in their hands. On the contrary, people with an external locus of control believe that they cannot control their own fate. They believe that success or failure is outside their control. According to Judge et al. (1998), people with an internal locus of control tend to have stronger job satisfaction in that they feel they control their situation.

4) **Emotional stability.** In psychopathology, the origin of emotional stability has been identified as one of the “Big Five” personality traits (Costa & McCrae, 1992), and is sometimes known as its converse, neuroticism. Individuals who have low emotional stability (high neuroticism) are more prone to worry, fear, stress, and feelings of helplessness than those with high emotional stability (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Neurotic individuals also tend to be less satisfied with themselves and their jobs (Clark & Watson, 1991).

Core self-evaluations and job satisfaction

Early research on core self-evaluations was particularly focused on the relationship of core self-evaluations with job satisfaction. Job satisfaction which is defined as an attitude one holds toward one’s job (Brief, 1998), is the most researched outcome associated with core self-evaluations (Judge, et al., 2005). The premise underlying these investigations was that people who see themselves as good and competent will react more positively to job responsibilities than will people who see themselves as bad or incompetent. The average meta-analytic correlation of CSE with job satisfaction was shown to be $r=0.41$ (Judge & Bono, 2001). Other studies have found similar levels of relationship using core self-evaluations measured directly (Rode, 2004). Judge, et al. (1998) indicate that individuals with positive CSE are more likely than individuals with less positive CSE to experience higher levels of job satisfaction. Thus, there

are theoretical reasons and much empirical evidence that CSE relate positively to satisfaction. Core self-evaluations literature has supported a strong relationship with job satisfaction (Judge, 1998, 2000, 2005). In several studies, core self-evaluations have been linked with job satisfaction and job characteristics (Judge et al., 1998; Judge et al., 2000; Judge and Bono, 2001). Judge, et al. (2000) indicated that CSE were related to job satisfaction over time. Judge, Van Vianen, and De Pater (2004) provided evidence of the relationship between the CSE and job satisfaction finding a correlation of 0.56. Judge, et al., (2004) found that the relationship of core self-evaluations with job satisfaction in the Netherlands was similar to the relationship found in the United States. Piccolo, Judge, Takahashi, Watanabe, and Locke (2005) found a similar relationship in the Japanese sample. Judge and Bono (2001) tested the four traits as indicators of a single latent CSE construct and found a correlation between the latent construct and job satisfaction to be .41. Based on both theoretical and empirical viewpoints a positive relation between CSE and job satisfaction was hypothesized in the present study.

Hypothesis 1: Core self-evaluations relate positively to job satisfaction.

Mediating role of perceived job characteristics

For the mediation effect of perceived job characteristics in the relationship between CSE and job satisfaction, CSE must be related to perceptions of job characteristics and these perceptions, in turn should be related to job satisfaction. Judge et al. (1997) noted that individuals with positive CSE are more likely to attend to positive aspects of their jobs. Srivastava et al. (2010) argued that people with high generalized self-efficacy perceive autonomy in a job where people with low generalized self-efficacy perceive bureaucracy. Similarly, people with high self-esteem are more likely to see work related setbacks as temporary and focus on the positive elements of the job, compared to those with low self-esteem. Thus, core self-evaluations are likely to affect enriched perceptions of job

characteristics (Srivastava et al., 2010). From a theoretical view, Judge et al. (1997) point to self-verification theory (Swann, Stein-Seroussi, & Giesler, 1992) to explain the relationship between CSE and perceived job characteristics. Self-verification theory (Swann et al., 1992) suggests that individuals will seek to verify their self-concepts by selecting situations that will afford them the feedback needed to reinforce that self-concept. Judge et al. (1997) concluded that individuals with positive CSE might seek out and categorize information in their work environment that would lead to positive conclusions about their work, while other individuals inclined to negative CSE might focus on the negative aspects of their jobs. Also, according to the job characteristics model (Hackman & Oldham, 1980), five core characteristics of the job (task significance, skill variety, task identity, feedback, and autonomy) make a job enriched and because of experienced meaningfulness, responsibility, and fulfillment of growth needs, leads to workers job satisfaction. Judge, et al. (2000) investigated the role of job attributes/characteristics in the relationship between core self-evaluations and job satisfaction. Judge et al. (2000) found that job characteristics mediated the relationship between CSE and job satisfaction. Thus,

Hypothesis 2: Core self-evaluations relate positively to perceptions of job characteristics.

Hypothesis 3: perceptions of job characteristics relate positively to job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4: The relationship between CSE and job satisfaction is mediated by perceived job characteristics.

Mediating role of perceived organizational climate

In addition to the mediating role of perceived job characteristics in the relationship between CSE and job satisfaction, and according to previous research (e.g., Crawford, 2008), another proposed mediating path in this study is the CSE to perceived organizational climate to job satisfaction. Organizational climate defined as employee's perceptions of the policies,

practices, and actions that are noticed, supported, and rewarded in a work environment (Schneider, 1985, 1990). In the literature, organizational climate has an established link with job satisfaction (Carr, Schmidt, Ford, & DeShon, 2003; Patterson, Warr, & West, 2004; Yoon, Beatty, & Suh, 2001).

Strong relationship between core self-evaluations and organizational climate was indicated by Crawford (2008). Clearly, positive self-evaluators were more likely to view their organizational climate in a positive manner than negative self-evaluators. As in the previous hypotheses, for the mediation effect to exist, two paths should be supported: Relationship between CSE and perceived organizational climate, and this perception to job satisfaction. Therefore,

Hypothesis 5: Core self-evaluations relate positively to perceptions of organizational climate.

Hypothesis 6: Perceived organizational climate relate positively to job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 7: The relationship between CSE and job satisfaction is mediated by perceived organizational climate.

Method

Participants

Data were gathered from a sample of full-time employees who were selected by stratified random sampling method from all departments of an industrial organization in Ahvaz, Iran. Questionnaires were distributed to 350 employees. All together, 294 questionnaires were returned and analyzed. The response rate was 84%. Of the employees in the final sample, 94.5% were men. The average age was 42 years, and the average tenure was 22 years.

Measures

Core self-evaluations. Core Self-Evaluations Scale (CSES, Judge et al., 2003) was used to assess CSE. This 12-item scale is derived from four

conceptually related variables: self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, neuroticism, and locus of control. Participants responded on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Judge et al. (2003) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .84 for this scale. In the present study Cronbach's alpha was .82.

Organizational climate. A 12-item scale developed by Manning, Davidson, & Manning (2004) was used to assess the employees' perceptions of organizational climate. This measure used a 1-5 response scale (1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree). Manning et al. (2004) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .93 for this scale. In the present study Cronbach's alpha was .91.

Perceived job characteristics. The 14-item version of Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS; Hackman & Oldham, 1980) was used to assess perceived job characteristics. Participants responded on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Hackman & Oldham (1980) reported Cronbach's alpha of .56 to .84 for this scale. In the present study Cronbach's alpha was .59.

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was measured with the Job in General Scale (JIGS, Ironson, Smith, Brannick, Gibson, & Paul, 1989). This 18-item Scale is scored by assigning numeric values to each "Yes," "No," and "undecided" response. Ironson et al. (1989) reported Cronbach's alpha of .91 to .97 for this scale. In the present study Cronbach's alpha was .92.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

To start with all proposed relationships were tested simultaneously; first a correlation analysis was conducted (Pearson correlation) among all the variables included in this study. The correlations among variables, means, and standard deviations are reported in Table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Inter-Correlations for Study Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Core self-evaluations	42.75	5.60	—	—	—
2. Perceived organizational climate	49.60	8.71	.46**	—	—
3. Perceived job characteristics	67.71	7.73	.39**	.55**	—
4. Job satisfaction	46.15	7.51	.31**	.49**	.42**

** P<0.001

Structural model. Structural modeling results suggested that the hypothesized model fit the observed data adequately, $\chi^2=3.09$; $df=2$; $p>0.05$; $\chi^2/df=1.545$, GFI=.99; CFI=.99; TLI=.98; NFI=.99; RMSEA=.04.

All of the hypothesized relationships were supported based on the structural modeling results. The structural model and standardized parameter estimates shown in Figure 2 indicate that H1, H2, H3, H5, and H6 regarding the direct paths were supported.

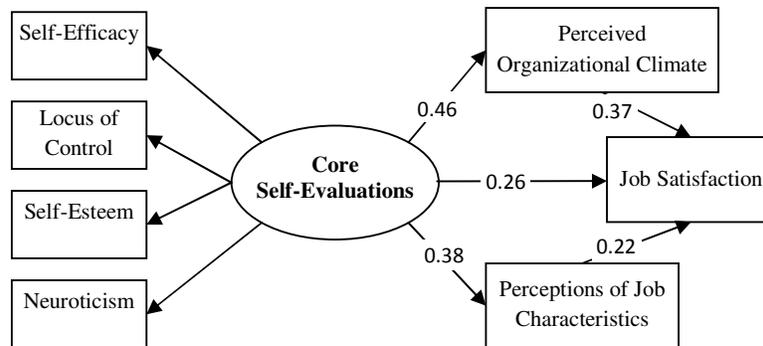


Figure 2
Core Self-Evaluations and Job Satisfaction: Structural Model with Standardized Path Coefficients (All Paths are statistically significant, $p<0.001$)

Because of the proposed mediation effects (H4 & H7), bootstrapping procedure was used to determine the significance of these effects. Bootstrapping procedure (using 1000 re-sampling) was used to determine the 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals around these effects. A confidence interval that did not span zero indicated a statistically significant effect. Table 2 indicates the results for bootstrapping analysis.

Table 2
Results for Bootstrapping Analysis with Two Mediators: Effects on Job Satisfaction

	Data	Boot	Bias	SE	95% Confidence interval
Total	.3164	.3167	.0003	.0617	.2085 –.4505
Organizational Climate	.2112	.2103	-.0009	.0568	.1203 –.3489
Job Characteristics	.1052	.1064	.0012	.0414	.0368 –.1996

As shown in Table 2 the three confidence intervals, with two mediators (total), with organizational climate, and with job characteristics, did not span zero that indicates statistically significant mediating effects. The emerged patterns suggest mediating roles of perceived job characteristics and perceived organizational climate in the CSE-job satisfaction relationship (H4 & H7).

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to test a mediation model, with CSE can influence employees' perceptions of job characteristics and organizational climate, and these perceptions can exert pervasive effects on their job satisfaction. These relationships which had received support from previous studies were examined with data from employees in an industrial organization in Ahvaz, Iran. In fact, this study sought to investigate the process by which the CSE concept is linked with job satisfaction, by including two external, environmental factors, perceptions

of job characteristics and organizational climate as potential mediators. This research provided an extension of related research as well as a replication, providing stronger support for the core self-evaluations and job satisfaction relationship in a different setting with a different culture. Judge et al. (1997) believe that CSE influence job satisfaction through a Process of emotional generalization – individuals' positive feelings about themselves spill over onto their jobs. Emotional generalization may also explain why individuals become more satisfied with the job. This high self-worth or self-confidence is the mechanism that affects the actual perceptions of work attributes.

The first hypothesis that core self-evaluations relate positively to job satisfaction, was supported. This result support previous research findings (Best, Stapleton, & Downey, 2005; Dormann, Fay, Zapf, & Frese, 2006; Judge & Bono, 2001; Judge et al., 1998; Judge et al., 2000; Judge et al., 2005; Piccolo, et al., 2005; Rode, 2004). As Judge et al. (2005) recognized, job satisfaction is the most researched outcome of CSE. Early research on core self-evaluations was particularly focused on the relationship of core self-evaluations with job satisfaction. Employees' job attitudes are important in their own right, of course, but such attitudes as job satisfaction has been shown to be substantially related negatively to turnover intention and positively to behaviors like job performance (Judge & Bono, 2001). The premise underlying these investigations was that people's appraisals of the world are at least a partial product of the assumptions that people hold regarding themselves, other people, and the world around them (Judge et al., 1997). People who see themselves as good and competent will react more positively to job responsibilities and will make similarly positive appraisals of their workplace. Therefore, positive self-evaluators will feel satisfied, committed, and are less likely to leave the organization. Individuals' positive feelings about themselves spill over onto their jobs.

Data collected for this study supported Hypothesis 2, that CSE have positive relationship with employees' perceptions of job characteristics.

According to previous research (e.g., Srivastava et al., 2010), CSE are likely to affect enriched perceptions of job characteristics. Judge et al. (2000) indicated that individuals with positive self-evaluations not only perceived their jobs as providing more intrinsic characteristics; they actually attained jobs with much higher complexity. There is considerable evidence that perception of work characteristics are related to dispositions. Empirical research has found that positively disposed individuals rate characteristics of the task or job as more enriched than do less positively disposed individuals (Brief, Butcher, & Robertson, 1995; Judge et al., 1998). Findings of the present study also supported Hypothesis 3, in that perceptions of job characteristics relate positively to job satisfaction. As noted earlier, according to the job characteristics model (Hackman & Oldham, 1980) general job satisfaction is one of the critical outcomes believed to come from enriched jobs. Two meta-analyses support this link, indicating a moderate positive correlation between perceptual measures of intrinsic job characteristics and job satisfaction (Fried & Ferris, 1987; Loher, Moeller, & Fitzgerald, 1985). Supporting the mediating role of perceived job characteristics in core self-evaluations and job satisfaction relationship (H4) is consistent with findings of Judge, et al. (1998). They found that part of a relationship between core self-evaluation traits and job satisfaction was mediated by perceptions of job characteristics.

A positive relationship between CSE and perceived organizational climate was indicated in the present study (H5). This means that positive self-evaluators view their organizational climate in a positive manner. Hypothesis 6 suggesting that perceived organizational climate relates positively to job satisfaction was supported in this study. This means that the higher the climate is; the higher the job satisfaction. Perceptions of organizational climate is an individual perspective on the situation of the work environment which is seen, observed, and felt by individuals as the members of the organization. Organizational climate is a very popular subject for research in the domain of industrial and organizational psychology. The perception of organizational climate is a dynamic

variable depending upon organizational attributes and different demographic and psychological characteristics of the employees. Organizational environment determines attitudes and behaviors of the organization's members. Therefore, in order to efficiently manage human resources in an organization, it is crucial to know and understand this environment. Being used to describe organizational environment, organizational climate is one of the most important psychosocial constructs influencing successful organization functioning and development. Finally, results of the present study reveal that the mediating role of the perceived organizational climate in the relationship between CSE and job satisfaction (H7). Crawford (2008) supported the mediation role of organizational climate in the CSE-job satisfaction relationship. According to Crawford (2008), this finding supports the notion that the environment one works within can have an effect on an employee's job satisfaction, whether he/she is a positive or negative core self-evaluator.

Limitations and future research

It is important to highlight some limitations of the present study which can guide future research. First, this study examines the role of only two situational mediators. Although these mediators were theoretically derived, future research is needed to further understand the other possible mediators in this process. Findings that identify additional mediators show the importance of workplace environment and would help managers in understanding factors that can create job satisfaction. Second, given the cross-sectional design of this study, causal relationships among the variables cannot be established. Longitudinal studies should be employed to test the hypotheses. Longitudinal research clarifies cause and effect relationships and whether the effects of CSE on work outcomes would diminish or strengthen over time. Third, the use of self-report measures may have inherent limitations (e.g., inability to recall, social desirability). A combination of self-report questionnaires and objective assessments would be ideal. Finally, because the participants were full-time employees,

care should be taken in generalizing and extending the findings to part-time employees.

Practical implications

The inclusion of the proposed model in this research is a main contribution of this research. Although the fit of the model to the data was not hypothesized, the findings were included. This provides a more accurate picture of the relationships in a specific setting and a specific culture. Findings showed that an employee that is a positive self-evaluator will regard his/her abilities, competencies, and/or self-worth as being satisfactory and is more likely to feel satisfied with his/her job. Professionals that are responsible for selection should consider the disposition of applicants in the hiring process. Crawford (2008) suggests that selecting employees that are positive self-evaluators will produce employees that are more likely to be satisfied with the job and feel committed to the organization. Joshua, Kittinger, Walker, Cope, & Wuensch (2009) argue that of importance to human resource managers is that by selecting individuals who score highly positive on the core self-evaluations scale in the hiring process, have employees that will view their jobs as more satisfying. They may also view the aspects of their work with higher regard, develop more loyalty to their organization as a function of being more satisfied, and perceive the characteristics of their particular job as more positive. Eby, Freeman, Rush, & Lance (1999) found that general job satisfaction is (negatively) related to turnover behavior. Thus, personnel managers could potentially benefit from lower turnover and recruitment costs, as well as higher day to day productivity resulting from significant decreases in absences by hiring individuals who score positively on the core self-evaluations scale. The environment that employees work in is also an important factor in predicting how satisfied employees will be. It is important that managers realize that they can create an environment which fosters satisfaction among employees. Two

means of creating this environment shown in this study are job characteristics and organizational climate.

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