

## **Investigating the Relationships of Perceived Organizational Support and Corporate Culture with General Health in Public and Private Sector Nurses**

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The aim of this study was to investigate the relationships of perceived organizational support and corporate culture with general health in public and private sector nurses in Isfahan. Participants were a randomly selected sample of 200 nurses from public and private sectors hospitals. Eisenberger perceived organizational support (1986), Cunha & Cooper corporate culture (2001), and Goldberg & Hiller general health (1979) questionnaires were used to collect the required data. The data were analyzed applying Pearson correlation, multivariate regression, and multivariate analysis of variance. A significant correlation was found between perceived organizational support as well as corporate culture and general health of nurses ( $p < 0.05$ ). In addition, the results of the stepwise regression showed that in the private sector corporate culture and in the public sector organizational support were predictors of general health. Comparing the public and private sector nurses, significant differences were found in the perceived organizational support between these two groups of nurses ( $p < 0.01$ ). It may be concluded that perceiving support from the organization and the corporation in decision makings, could help employees to increase their mental health.

**Keywords:** perceived organizational support, general health, public sector, private sector, nurses

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Following the widespread privatization policies, most developing countries had devoted their hospitals and health centers to private companies of medical sectors in order to increase the efficiency of these medical institutions. Most advocates of privatization of medical sector believe that private sector will present better services in comparison to the public sector. But, studies conducted on private hospitals reveal other facts regarding the attitude of managers toward their staff, nurses as well as patients (Baru, 2007). Baru (2007) in his study found that the changes made in medical center were only for the advantage of the big companies which are the owners of these hospitals. While, in the successful implementation of such a program personnel as well as managers have a key role and ignoring them might cause the low quality of services and performance. So, the current study, is investigating two important and influential variables, i.e., perceived organizational support and corporate culture, can have significance for the managers and officials. Moreover, the difference between the public and private medical sectors will be identified.

The importance of psychological factors in the cure of the mental and physical illnesses emphasizes the significant impact of job stress on mental health. The change in the working conditions and job insecurity can lead to overwhelming stress on employees and might endanger their physical and mental health. Ferrie, Martikainen, Martin, Maramot, Stansfeld, and Smith (2001) in their study entitled the mental health and the condition of state employees after privatization concluded that lack of job security and unemployment both were associated with an increase in psychiatric pathological disorders and general medical advice. In this regard, International Labor Organization (2002) reported that in the field of occupational safety and health privatization, reconstruction and increased organization of small enterprises increased unemployment, stress, being alcoholic, job insecurity and long work hours and these all cause psychiatric injury at work and private life and subsequently would lead to an increase in digestive problems, heart disease and mental disorders.

Tyson & Pongruengphant (2004) in a longitudinal study of 14 hospitals in Thailand measured sources of professional stress and strategies to overcome it as well as job satisfaction. In this study, although nurses in the public sector reported more job stress than those in the private sector, the job satisfaction of public sector nurses were measured as significantly more and this was due to the fact that public sector employees felt more perceived organizational support.

The organizational researchers used the concept of perceived organizational support to describe the motivations underlying the behavior of employees and how employees shape positive attitudes (Davis and Rothstein, 2006). In Shore and Wayne's (1993) words, perceived organizational support is a state in the person based on which he feels that the organization considers him an important and outstanding person and requires his services.

Some studies (i. e., Davis and Rothstein, 2006; Erickson & Roloff, 2007) have showed that those employees who perceive a high support would express sympathy, and feel a high dependency and loyalty toward the organization. Cunha and Cooper (2002) have studied the effect of privatization on corporate culture and personnel health.

In this study it is hypothesized that privatization is associated with the process of change. Preliminary steps for the privatization would lead to a change in the corporate culture as well as an increase in the employee's perceived job stress and symptoms of mental and physical disease and a decrease in job satisfaction. In the long-term, these signs should become obvious. This study was conducted in three companies. In general, the results showed that corporate culture insisted on the integration of practice, individuals and organizations. Moreover, the results showed that prior to privatization, job stress was reported to be high while job satisfaction was reported to be low. While, in the companies which were already privatized more physical and mental diseases were reported (Cunha and Cooper, 2002).

Several studies (such as Almost & Laschinger, (2004) and Bartlett, & Kang (2004)) have reported that cooperative working and working relationships are correlated with the amount of pressure on nurses. They regarded supportive atmosphere and creating an atmosphere of respect, trust and open communication in the work environment effective in reducing stress imposed on them.

In the study carried out by Aarons, Sommerfeld and Walrath-Greene (2009) with a sample of 170 nurses on comparing perceived organizational support in public and private sectors, researchers found that the private sector staff perceived more organizational support. Moreover, these centers' staff had better and a more significant attitude toward their jobs.

Heponiemi, Kuusio, Sinervo and Elovainio (2010) conducted a study entitled evaluating job attitudes and well-being among public vs. private physicians. In this study, the organizational justice and job control were used as mediator variables. The results showed that physicians who worked in the private sector had higher job satisfaction and more organizational commitment compared to those who worked in the public sector. Moreover, the private sector's physicians had lower job stress and less sleep problems. In addition, they perceived more organizational justice and consequently had better attitude toward the job and their organization. The relationship between perceived organizational support and corporate culture with well-being had been investigated in different studies. However, little attention has been paid to the relationship between these variables in both private and public settings.

Since privatization is almost an emerging phenomenon in our country, and recently its prevalence is enhanced in the organizations, institutions, and hospitals; there is a need for more research being conducted in this context, evaluating its effectiveness, efficiency, type of strategy used and their consequences in comparison to those carried out in government agencies.

Few studies have been done in this field and specifically in health care centers. On the other hand, lack of support and inefficiency among nurses

is one of the important factors that can affect their general health creating problems for the individual, his/her family and the society. Thus, the current attempt investigates the effect of perceived organizational support and corporate culture on nurses' health in both private and public sectors and it aims are to answer the following questions:

1. Do the two variables of perceived organizational support and corporate culture predict the general health of the nurses working in the private sector?
2. Do the tow variables of perceived organizational support and corporate culture predict the general health of nurses working in the public sector?
3. Are there differences between the perceived organizational support, corporate culture and general health of nurses who work in the private sector and those who work in the public sector?

## **Method**

### **Participants and Sampling Procedure**

The population of this study was all male and female nurses (2259 nurses in total, 1587 in the public sector and 672 in the private sector) working in Isfahan hospitals in 2010. Out of all the population hospitals, four private hospitals and four public hospitals were selected based randomly. By applying the statistical power, a random sample of 200 nurses was selected from the 8 hospitals in Isfahan (100 in the private sector and 100 in the public one). After analyzing the results with regard to the adequacy of the statistical power the sample size was confirmed. The optimal statistical power was considered higher than 0.8. Forty-two female and 29 male nurses were working in the private sector with a mean age of 30 and an SD of 8.32 years and with a mean seniority of approximately 10 years (SD = 6.41), while in the public sector, 57 female and 13 male nurses were working with a mean age of 32 and an SD of 7.19 years, and with a mean seniority of approximately 10 years (SD = 7.01).

## **Instruments**

1. Cunha and Cooper's Corporate Culture Questionnaire (2002). After the piloting and validating process, this questionnaire was used to measure corporate culture. It contains 24 questions with 4 subscales (Organizational Orientation, Performance Orientation, People Orientation, and Market Orientation) on a 6-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.92 in Cunha and Cooper's (2002) and 0.84 in this study.

2. Eisenberger *Perceived Organizational Support Questionnaire* (1986). There are two forms of the questionnaire (36 as well as 16 items). In this study, the long form was used. The answers were given on a 7-point Likert scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree). Its reliability was 0.97 in Eisenberger & et al (1986). Baharlooee (2009) estimated its reliability by Cronbach's Alpha to be 0.90 in this study and re-estimated to be 0.91.

3. *Goldberg & Hiller General Health Questionnaire* (1979): The complete version of the general health questionnaire has 60 questions and it has 2 short forms of 12 and 28 questions. In this study, the Goldberg and Hiller's (1979) 28-item version (GHQ28), consisting of the 4 subscales of somatic symptoms, anxiety and insomnia, social dysfunction and severe depression, was used. For each item four answer possibilities are available (1-not at all, 2-no more than usual, 3-rather more than usual, 4- much more than usual). Taghavi (2001) has estimated its validity and reliability in Iran. In his attempt, its reliability was investigated using test-retest, Cronbach Alpha and internal consistency methods and the coefficients were 0.70, .90 and .93, respectively. In the current study the reliability was estimated to be 0.86.

## **Procedure**

At the descriptive level, the means and standard deviations of all the research variables calculated and at the inferential level, Pearson correlation and stepwise multiple regression were applied. Perceived organizational support and corporate culture variables were used in each

sector to predict the criterion of general health. In addition, multivariate analysis of variance was used to compare the two groups of nurses on the research variables.

### Results

70 questionnaires were collected from the public sector and 72 from the private sector. The descriptive statistics of subjects' scores for each variable are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Descriptive Statistics of the Research Variables**

Variables	Private		Public	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
perceived organizational support	26.20	23.93	146.16	17.91
Corporate culture	79.16	14.29	79.16	14.99
General health	49.42	12.11	50.95	14.92

Table 2 shows the correlation coefficients between the variables of perceived organizational support, corporate culture and general health.

**Table 2**  
**Correlation Coefficients between Perceived Organizational Support, Corporate Culture and General Health Variables**

Variables	General Health			
	Private		Public	
	r	Sig	r	Sig
Perceived organizational support	-.145	.22	-.29	1
Corporate culture	-.366	.002	-.23	.04

A more careful analysis of the correlation coefficients between the research variables showed that in the private sector, there was only a significant relation between the corporate culture and general health ( $p < 0.01$ ). In the public sector there was a significant relationship between the perceived organizational support ( $p < 0.01$ ) and corporate culture ( $p < 0.05$ ) and general health.

**H1:** The perceived organizational support and corporate culture predict nurses' general health in the private sector.

The results of the stepwise regression for predicting general health in the private sector are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
**The Results of the Stepwise Regression for Predicting General Health in the Private Sector**

Predictor variable	R	R Square	F	Sig
Corporate culture	.366	.134	10.65	.002

As can be seen in Table 3, out of the two predictor variables, only the corporate culture has been entered into the equation. The significance of regression coefficient shows that the corporate culture significantly predict the general health in the private sector ( $p = 0.002$ ). Table 4 shows the standard and non-standard coefficients of predicting the general health based on the corporate culture.

**Table 4**  
**Results of the Standard and Non-Standard Coefficients of Predicting the Public Health in the Private Sector**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
constant	73.96	7.63	-	9.68	.0001
Corporate culture	-0.31	.095	-0.36	-3.26	.002

Dependent Variable: General Health

**H2:** The perceived organizational support and corporate culture predict nurses' general health in the public sector.

The results of the stepwise regression for predicting general health in the public sector are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5**  
**The Results of the Stepwise Regression for Predicting General Health in the Public Sector**

Predictor variable	R	R Square	F	Sig
perceived organizational support	.29	.084	6.23	.015

As can be seen in Table 5, from the two predictor variables, only the perceived organizational support has been entered into the equation. The significance of regression coefficient shows that the perceived organizational support significantly predict the general health in the public sector ( $p=0.015$ ). Table 6 shows the standard and non-standard coefficients of predicting the general health based on the perceived organizational support.

**Table 6**  
**Results of the Standard and Non-Standard Coefficients for Predicting the General Health in the Public Sector**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
constant	86.22	14.23	-	6.05	.0001
perceived organizational support	-.24	.097	-.29	-2.49	.015

Dependent Variable: General Health

**H3:** The perceived organizational support (a) and corporate culture (b) and general health (c) have significant difference among nurses of private and public sectors.

The results of the multivariate analysis of variance between nurses of public and private sectors are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7**  
**Multivariate Analysis of Variance of the Effect of Group Membership**  
**(private versus public) on Research Variables**

Research Variables	Leven s Test For Equality of Variances		SS	Df	Ms	F	Sig
	F	Sig					
perceived organizational support(a)	2.485	.11	14031.94	1	14031.94	31.33	.0001
Corporate culture (b)	.474	.49	7.192	1	7.192	0.034	.85
General health(c)	1.491	.22	82.79	1	82.79	0.449	.50

As can be seen in Table 7, based on the significance of Levin's test it is evident that the equality of variances cannot be rejected. Also, the results of the multivariate analysis of variance regarding the comparison between nurses of public and private sectors show that there is a significant difference in the degree of perceived organizational support between the nurses of these two sectors ( $p < 0.001$ ). According to Table 1, it can be seen that the mean for the public nurses is more than that of private nurses for this variable. On the other hand, the means for corporate culture and general health did not differ significantly between these two groups ( $p > 0.005$ ).

### Discussion

As for the relationship between perceived organizational support and corporate culture with general health in the public and private sectors, the results show that there exists a significant relationship between corporate culture and the general health in the private sector. This relation was found to be significant in the public sector with both perceived organizational support and corporate culture. In addition, the results of the stepwise regression analysis showed that in the private sector corporate culture and in the public sector organizational support were predictors of general health.

Different studies (Almost and Laschinger, 2002; Bartlett & Kang, 2004; Cunha and Cooper, 2000; Heponiemi et al., 2010) have investigated the

relationship between perceived organizational support and corporate culture with psychological health and in most of these studies a significant and positive relationship has been reported. All these studies are in line with ours. However, the present researchers could not find any research investigating the relationship among these variables in both sectors of public and private hospitals.

Findings of this study show that when privatization, as a method for changing the competitive environment and as a move toward stabilization of the new strategy, occurs, the development of the corporate culture is considered as an important issue by the business managers and political leaders (Asiedu & Folmer, 2007). The corporate culture can be taken as a systematizing mechanism that paves the way for the affairs to be carried out in the organization and reflects the ideas of the organization's staff. Since, in our culture managers play a supportive role in supporting the strategic changes, it can be argued that corporate culture can include organizational support, too. These findings are in line with the results of Gardner, Thomas-Hawkins, Fogg and Latham (2007) showing that a positive working environment enables the nurses to offer a professional care and increase their decision-making ability. In addition, it maintains that the characteristics of hospital management and the degree of support nurses receive for their care has a large impact on their performance.

On the other hand, as the public organizations get older and acquire clear rules and as the staff experience less job uncertainty and conflict and enjoy a set of established regulations regarding wages and salaries, employment status, and work tasks, it seems reasonable to expect a more fixed culture and more stable norms. So, if the staff gains organizational support in addition to a sense of stability and job security, as a sign of valuing the staff on the part of the organization, they will gain a better health condition that eventually leads to higher-quality services.

The results of the study showing a higher mean for the nurses of the public sector in perceived organizational support is in disagreement with the findings of Arons et al.'s (2009) indicating that the staff of the private

sector had a better and more positive attitude toward their job and had a higher degree of perceived organizational support. Moreover, the findings are contrary to those of Honingh, and Oort (2009) showing that the private sector teachers perceive a higher degree of organizational support than that of the public teachers. This disagreement might be due to the state of privatization in Iran, which is rather new. A more careful analysis of studies carried out in other countries investigating the privatization process in developed countries (see Ferrie et al., 2001; Tyson and Pongruengphant, 2004; Arons et al., 2009; Heponiemi et al., 2010) reveal that the structural adjustment program initially faces many problems and a lot of organizations have failed in implementing the privatization. However, with identifying factors affecting privatization and performing appropriate development programs and giving necessary organizational support to the employees, this endeavor is gradually gaining success. Probably, the most important factor is the employment situation which encourages people to seek jobs providing them with job security. Since public organizations provide more job security, there will be more perceived organizational support for their employees. On the other hand, privatization, a new phenomenon based on the Article 44 of the Constitution, has not shown its long-term effectiveness yet. So, this situation might be a hindrance to the creation of a sense of organizational support on the part of employees in this sector.

Moreover, the rules and organizational guidelines in private hospitals are determined by the management and the organizational atmosphere might change under their influence. For instance, the changes in the working hours, the amount of rewards paid, the length of time staying at work, and the hiring and firing policies are all affected by the managers' decisions. These usual changes in private organizations might cause insecurity for the employees and this in turn might impede the creation of a sense of organizational support in employees.

According to Table 7, the means of the corporate culture in the two sectors of public and private do not differ significantly. It can be argued

that collaboration plays a significant role in the nursing job and the nurses' work is related to the patients' health and requires a high degree of cooperation without which unfortunate events might happen. Corporate culture can open the communication networks and demands teamwork to facilitate the enactment of the nurses' duties. Thus, nurses consider it as a necessity and feel obliged to possess it.

In addition, we should point to a common cultural background of nurses in both public and private sectors which possibly explains the lack of significant difference between them on the variable of the corporate culture.

According to Table 7, the means of the general health in these two sectors points to a no significant difference. Since in the private sector the corporate culture was a good predictor of nurses' general health and in the public sector the organizational support was a good predictor of nurses' general health it can be said that each sector needs support in their work.

In this study, no significant difference was found between the means of these sectors with regard to the general health. To provide this health, nurses need support in every situation and condition. Consequences of their feelings will have a great impact on their performance.

Since the current study was conducted only among the nurses of Isfahan, it is suggested that it be replicated in various subcultures in Iran and the results be compared. In addition, for more careful analysis of the effects of privatization on employees' psychological characteristics, it is suggested that multiple methods (questionnaires, interview, etc.) be employed to gather more details on the effects of organizational changes on employees. This study was also confined to the investigation of only two psychological variables; further studies can show the effects of privatization on other psychological variables in medical centers and other organizations.

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