

**The Effect of Workplace Social Support on Job Satisfaction: Investigating the
Moderating Role of Cynicism**

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Abstract

Positive perceptions of social support at work lead individuals to be more satisfied with their job, which in turn increases well-being. Previous literature on job satisfaction has investigated the impact of various personality traits. An important individual difference that has been relatively overlooked in this context, however, is cynicism, the tendency to expect that others will engage in exploitation and deception, based on the perspective that people are morally bankrupt and behave treacherously to maximize their self-interest. The objective of this study was to investigate the effect of perceived workplace social support on job satisfaction, and the moderating role of cynicism. Based on research showing that cynical individuals are less likely to receive appropriate social support and do not feel supported, even when support is actually offered to them, we hypothesized that for employees high in cynicism, the positive effect of perceived workplace social support on job satisfaction will be reduced. In an online survey with a between-subjects design, job satisfaction, cynicism and perceived workplace social support were measured via self-report. A total of 119 participants took part in this study. Results showed that cynicism was negatively correlated with perceived workplace social support and job satisfaction. Furthermore, simple linear regression analysis revealed that participants who felt more socially supported at work were more likely to be satisfied with their job. We did not find evidence suggesting that cynicism moderates this relationship. The present study contributes to organizational practices to improve job satisfaction by emphasizing the importance of workplace social support.

Keywords: perceived workplace social support, job satisfaction, cynicism, well-being, organizations

The Effect of Workplace Social Support on Job Satisfaction: Investigating the Moderating Role of Cynicism

In 2022 in the US, employees are experiencing high rates of dissatisfaction, disengagement and general unhappiness at work. Of these employees, 50% feel stressed each day and 19% even consider themselves miserable (Collins, 2022). This dissatisfaction and disengagement have major negative consequences for the organization in which the individual is embedded. They negatively affect the quality of service and impair job performance (Nadinloyi, 2013). It is estimated that unengaged employees globally cost organizations \$7.8 trillion in lost productivity (Collins, 2022). More importantly, job dissatisfaction can have detrimental consequences for the individual's well-being (Kinman et al., 2011) and has a major influence on mental health (Nadinloyi, 2013).

So far, an important goal of psychological research has been to evaluate factors that promote job satisfaction in order to increase well-being. Previous research has found that, among other things, social support at work leads to higher job satisfaction (Mérida-López et al., 2019). However, how individuals perceive support at work may differ and there appear to be factors that influence whether workplace social support is actually beneficial for individual job satisfaction (Deelstra et al., 2003). Although social support has received a great deal of attention in job satisfaction research, an important personal characteristic that has been neglected in this setting is cynicism. By addressing this gap, the novelty of this study lies in its inclusion of cynicism as a moderator in the relationship between workplace social support and job satisfaction and it can possibly identify a factor that does (or does not) need to be addressed in order to ensure employee job satisfaction and well-being.

Job Satisfaction

There are many ways in which job satisfaction has been defined in the past. Spector (1997) defines job satisfaction as a reflection of how people feel about their jobs and the

different aspects of their jobs. According to Locke (1969) on the other hand, job satisfaction refers to ‘the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one’s job values’ (p. 316). The current research however adopts a more recent and straightforward definition and will define job satisfaction as an evaluative state that expresses contentment with and positive feelings about one’s job (Mérida-López et al., 2019).

Previous literature has often grouped predictors of job satisfaction into four categories. These categories are individual, social, psychological and organizational (Kong et al., 2018). Individual predictors of job satisfaction include gender (Kara et al., 2012), personal fulfillment (Kara et al., 2012) and skill variety (Li and Tse, 1998; Williamson et al., 2005). Personality traits have also received a great deal of attention as individual predictors in job satisfaction research, especially neuroticism, agreeableness and extraversion, with neuroticism having a negative effect, and agreeableness and extraversion having a positive effect on job satisfaction (Williamson et al., 2005; Lounsbury et al., 2003). Social predictors include the quality of work-life balance and family-work conflict (Kong et al., 2018) and psychological predictors include emotion-regulation ability and emotional intelligence (Mérida-López et al., 2019).

Organizational predictors of job satisfaction are of special interest for this study and they include enriching job characteristics (Williamson et al., 2005), job demands (Chiang et al., 2014), organizational atmosphere and culture (Kara et al., 2012) and perceived diversity climate (Madera et al., 2013). Feeling a strong connection with colleagues binds employees to the job (Dechawatanapaisal, 2022). Similarly, perceiving co-workers as competent and warm results in higher job satisfaction (Bufquin, 2017). Overall, social support in the workplace has been found to be a positive predictor of job satisfaction (Harris et al., 2001; Harris et al., 2011).

Perceived Workplace Social Support

It is particularly interesting that employees appear to take the relation with their co-workers and supervisors into account when evaluating their own job satisfaction (Bufquin, 2017; Dechawatanapaisal, 2022). Because low perceived co-worker and supervisor support appear to be linked to increased fatigue (Bültmann et al., 2002) and are two of the most important predictors and risk factors of stress-related disorders (Nieuwenhuijsen et al., 2010), it is necessary to further explore the relationship between perceived workplace social support and job satisfaction.

Perceived workplace social support can be defined as the degree to which individuals perceive that their well-being is valued by workplace sources, such as supervisors and the broader organization in which they are embedded, and the perception that these sources provide help to support this well-being (Kossek et al., 2011). Workplace social support can include offering emotional support, supervisor mentoring or supporting co-workers with work-related tasks, which in turn improves psychological and behavioral functioning (Harris et al., 2007).

Perceived workplace social support is a predictor of happiness (Mérida-López et al., 2019), less work-family conflict (Kossek et al., 2011), higher job-tenure (Harris et al., 2007), less emotional labor and exhaustion and more personal accomplishment (Kinman et al., 2011) and lower intention to leave an organization, mediated by embeddedness (Dechawatanapaisal, 2022).

Intriguingly, while perceived workplace social support has generally been found to be a positive predictor of job satisfaction (Harris et al., 2007; Kinman et al., 2011; Mérida-López et al., 2019), a study by Deelstra et al. (2003) conversely found that receiving social support at work can actually elicit negative reactions if the support is perceived as imposed, and that the

extent to which employees feel like they need support moderates this. These findings suggest that perceptions of workplace social support do not yield positive outcomes for everyone.

Cynicism

As the research by Deelstra et al. (2003) indicates, there are factors that can influence whether workplace social support is actually beneficial for individual job satisfaction. However, not much attention has been paid to exploring these factors beyond that study. Another factor that could potentially play a role in this context is employee cynicism. Cynicism is a stable individual disposition that can be defined as ‘the tendency to expect that others will engage in exploitation and deception, based on the perspective that people, at their core, are morally bankrupt and behave treacherously to maximize their self-interest’ (Stavrova et al., 2020).

Cynicism has several negative consequences on the individual. It has a negative impact on career potential (Cicek et al., 2021) and leads to worsened psychological well-being, conflicts at work and marital problems (Stavrova et al., 2020). Additionally, previous research has found that cynicism has a negative influence on health outcomes in general and that it is negatively related to job satisfaction, such that high cynicism is related to low job satisfaction (Srivastava & Adams, 2011; Eryesil & Öztürk, 2016; Volpe et al., 2014). In organizational psychology research, the relationship between cynicism and turnover intention has been widely investigated. Turnover intention is the desire to leave your current organization for something better and it has been found that more cynical individuals, compared to less cynical ones, have a stronger tendency to leave their place of employment (Cicek et al., 2021). Interestingly, perceived organizational support seems to mediate this relationship.

Cynical employees hold the perception that they receive less organizational support from the company in which they are embedded (Byrne & Hochwarter, 2008). Similarly,

Kaplan et al. (2004) showed that cynical individuals are generally less likely to seek or accept social support. They found that cynical people are less likely to receive appropriate social support due to a lack of trust in the authenticity of other people's concerns about their well-being (Kaplan et al., 2004). Cynics might even avoid social support because they challenge the motives and intentions of those who attempt to provide help. They are unwilling to trust others, which hinders social integration, and they perceive social support as unavailable (Hart, 1999). More specifically, cynics often misinterpret social support and therefore do not feel supported, even when support is actually offered to them (Kaplan et al., 2004).

The Current Research

Integrating these lines of research, the present study aims to re-evaluate the influence of perceived workplace social support on job satisfaction, while taking into account the role of employee cynicism. More specifically, the current work poses the following question: "Are individuals with perceptions of high workplace social support more likely to be satisfied with their job, and is this effect reduced for individuals who are cynical?"

Studying predictors of job satisfaction is important because it has been found that job satisfaction leads to higher employee productivity, lower levels of absenteeism, broader economic prosperity and it is negatively related to depression and anxiety (Nadinloyi, 2013). Additionally, it positively predicts actual career development confidence and makes employees more likely to be satisfied with their life (Ko, 2012).

To our knowledge, no research to date has paid attention to cynicism as a possible moderator of the relationship between perceived workplace social support and job satisfaction. It is important to explore this because cynicism is believed to reduce the positive effect of perceived workplace social support on job satisfaction. The present study could therefore broaden the existing job satisfaction literature and can be used to help organizational policy makers create a work environment in which social support is more available.

Hypotheses

Given previous findings and the importance of perceptions of co-worker and supervisor support in job satisfaction research (Harris et al., 2001; Harris et al., 2007; Harris et al., 2011; Kinman et al., 2011; Mérida-López et al., 2019), it is hypothesized that perceived workplace social support is positively related to job satisfaction. Enhancing workplace social support has been prominent among the efforts to improve employees' job satisfaction and well-being, but these efforts might be counterproductive if cynical employees do not accept the given support or perceive support as unavailable. Cynics might perceive workplace social support as inappropriate or imposed and, as a result of that, not gain as much from it. Therefore, more cynical individuals, compared to less cynical individuals, will likely benefit less from the positive effects of workplace social support on job satisfaction. Because of this, it is hypothesized that the relationship between perceived workplace social support and job satisfaction is moderated by cynicism. More specifically, we predict that, for employees high in cynicism, the positive effect of perceived workplace social support on job satisfaction will be reduced.

Method

Sample

We conducted an a priori power analysis using GPower 3.1, which indicated that, to detect a small-to-medium sized interaction effect $f = 0.07$ with 80% power and an alpha level of .05, in a regression analysis with 3 predictors, a total sample of 141 participants would be needed. To compensate for potential participant drop-outs and exclusions, we aimed to recruit a total of 161 participants.

Participants were recruited using a convenience sampling method. During a 2-week data collection period, the questionnaire was distributed via social media platforms, e.g. WhatsApp and LinkedIn, and no compensation was granted for participation in the study.

Additionally, the survey was launched on SurveyCircle and SurveySwap to generate more responses. The total sample size consisted of $N = 242$ participants. After having checked the data, participants who had unfinished surveys ($N = 58$), failed attention checks ($N = 14$) or extreme responding ($N = 1$) were excluded. Of the remaining participants, 50 were unemployed and therefore a final sample size of $N = 119$ was considered appropriate for further analysis. The average age of the respondents was 27.7 years ($SD = 12.1$), of which 35.3% identified as female, 63.9% as male and 0.8% preferred not to report their gender. Regarding education level, 30.3% of the respondents reported having obtained a high school degree, 52.1% a bachelor degree, 14.3% a master degree and 3.4% a doctorate degree. Of all participants, 0.8% rated their English proficiency as beginner, 9.2% as intermediate, 16.0% as upper-intermediate, 44.5% as professional working proficiency and 29.4% as bilingual.

Measures

Perceived Workplace Social Support

Participants' perception of workplace social support was measured with a multiple-item scale constructed by Dechawatanapaisal (2022). The scale is a combination of three existing scales measuring perceived organizational support, perceived supervisory support and perceived co-worker support. Perceived organizational support was measured based on a six-item scale developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986), perceived supervisory support was measured with the four-item supervisor support scale adopted from Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe (2003) and perceived co-worker support was measured with a three-item scale used by Yang et al. (2019). Correlations among the three forms of social support were significant and positive (r s between .26–.43), and they were therefore combined into a single measure of perceived workplace social support (Dechawatanapaisal, 2022). The scale consists of 12 items rated on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = “strongly disagree”, 6 = “strongly agree”) in order to offset the central tendency bias. Example items of perceived organizational support,

perceived supervisory support and perceived co-worker support respectively are “My organization cares about my well-being”, “My supervisor takes pride in my accomplishment at work” and “My co-workers help me with difficult tasks”. A higher score on this scale reflects more positive perceptions of workplace social support. The total scale showed a good reliability in our sample, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .92. The subscales for perceived organizational, supervisory and co-worker support showed a good reliability in our sample as well, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .90, .83 and .82 respectively.

Job Satisfaction

Participants’ job satisfaction was measured with the Job Satisfaction Index (Brayfield & Rothe, 1951). This scale consists of 18 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = “strongly disagree”, 5 = “strongly agree”). An example item is “I feel that I am happier in my work than most other people”. For half of the items, a higher score reflects higher levels of job satisfaction. For the other half, a higher score reflects lower levels of job satisfaction, and was therefore reverse coded for analysis. The scale showed a good reliability in our sample, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .94.

Cynicism

Participants’ cynicism was measured with the Cynical Distrust Scale (Cook & Medley, 1954; Greenglass & Julkunen, 1989). This scale consists of 8 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = “strongly disagree”, 7 = “strongly agree”). An example item is “I think most people would lie to get ahead”. A higher score on this scale reflects higher levels of cynicism. The scale showed a good reliability in our sample, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .85.

Procedure

The study consisted of an online survey assessing participants’ personality and attitudes. It was a between-subject design and participants were not assigned to different conditions. The survey included a cover letter that informed participants about the goal and

procedures of this study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants included in the study and voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality were assured.

In total, the online survey consisted of 13 scales assessing perceived workplace social support, job satisfaction and cynicism via self-report, along with ten other self-report measures that were not relevant in the context of the present study. Additionally, two attention checks were included. Randomization had been applied to all scales to prevent order effects and other self-report biases. At the end of the survey, demographic questions about age, gender, level of education and English proficiency were asked and participants were debriefed about the real purpose of the study.

Analysis Plan

For the purpose of this particular study, only the demographic data and data for perceived workplace social support, job satisfaction and cynicism will be included in the analysis. In the present moderation model, perceived workplace social support was the independent variable, job satisfaction the dependent variable and cynicism the moderating variable. Descriptive statistics were examined to get an overview of the scores on the main variables. To test the effect of perceived workplace social support on job satisfaction, a linear regression analysis was conducted. The moderating effect of cynicism on the relationship between perceived workplace social support and job satisfaction was assessed using PROCESS macro v4.2. Both analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27).

Results

Assumptions

The data met almost all assumptions for the conducted analyses. A scatterplot between perceived workplace social support and job satisfaction revealed that the relationship was linear. A test of multicollinearity indicated it was not a concern ($VIF = 1.17$) and the Durbin

Watson test indicated that there was very little autocorrelation ($DW = 1.84$). Scatterplots of standardized residuals and predicted values showed that the data also met the assumption of heteroscedasticity. The normal P-P plot of standardized residuals showed points that were not completely on the line, but very close. However, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that only residuals of cynicism followed a normal distribution ($D(119) = 0.07, p = .177$). The residuals for perceived workplace social support ($D(119) = 0.09, p = .034$) and job satisfaction ($D(119) = 0.11, p = .001$) were not normally distributed. Therefore the assumption of normally distributed residuals was violated. Nonetheless, in our current sample where the number of observations per variable was larger than 10, violations of this normality assumption should not noticeably impact results (Schmidt & Finan, 2018).

Descriptive statistics

An examination of bivariate correlations revealed that perceived workplace social support (PWSS) was positively related to job satisfaction ($r = .67$) and negatively related to cynicism ($r = -.38$). Likewise, job satisfaction showed a negative association with cynicism ($r = -.29$). Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for the main and demographic variables are presented in Table 1.

Hypothesis testing

Simple linear regression

Simple linear regression analysis was used to test if perceived workplace social support significantly predicted job satisfaction. The overall regression was statistically significant and yielded an R^2 of .45 ($F(1, 117) = 97.41, p < .001$). This indicates that 45% of the total variation in job satisfaction can be explained by PWSS. It was found that perceived workplace social support significantly predicted job satisfaction ($b = 0.67, t(117) = 9.87, p < .001$) and this thus provides supporting evidence for hypothesis 1. The more a participant felt socially supported at work, the more likely they were to be satisfied with their job.

Table 1*Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among the Variables*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	27.69	12.06	–						
2. Gender	–	–	.110	–					
3. Education level	1.91	0.76	.248**	-.142	–				
4. English proficiency	3.92	0.95	.013	-.102	.120	–			
5. PWSS	4.47	0.86	.045	.071	.121	-.059	–		
6. Job Satisfaction	3.40	0.81	.136	.036	.191*	-.058	.674**	–	
7. Cynicism	2.74	0.87	-.094	-.068	-.334**	.099	-.377**	-.290**	–

Note. $N = 119$, *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, M = mean, SD = standard deviation.

Moderation analysis

To examine the moderating role of cynicism on the relationship between perceived workplace social support and job satisfaction, the PROCESS macro Model 1 (Hayes, 2013) was applied. Following standard procedures, bootstrap samples were set to 5000 with confidence intervals generated at the 95% level (Hayes, 2013). The magnitude of the effect was examined at three values of the associated moderator: the 16th, 50th and 84th percentile. With respect to job satisfaction, the full prediction model for the moderating variable cynicism was significant ($F(3, 115) = 33.14, p < .001$) and had an R^2 of .46, meaning that 46% of the total variance in job satisfaction can be explained by perceived workplace social support, cynicism and the interaction between the two. The main effect of PWSS was significant ($b = 0.89, t(117) = 4.10, p < .001$) while the main effect of cynicism was non-

significant ($b = 0.39$, $t(117) = 1.15$, $p = .251$). Additionally, the interaction effect was found to be non-significant ($b = -0.09$, $t(117) = -1.30$, $p = .196$). Therefore, cynicism did not have a significant moderating impact on the relationship between perceived workplace social support and job satisfaction, and our results do not support hypothesis 2. This means that in our sample, being cynical does not weaken the positive effect of perceived workplace social support on job satisfaction. The results of the moderation analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Moderation Analysis with Job Satisfaction as Outcome Predicted by PWSS, Cynicism and Their Interaction

Variables	Job Satisfaction					
	b	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
PWSS	0.89	0.22	4.10	<.001***	0.46	1.32
Cynicism	0.39	0.34	1.15	.251	-0.28	1.07
PWSS x Cynicism	-0.09	0.07	-1.30	.196	-0.24	0.05

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, $R^2 = .46$, b = unstandardized regression coefficient, SE = unstandardized standard error, $LLCI$ = lower limit of the 95% confidence interval, $ULCI$ = upper limit of the 95% confidence interval.

Exploratory Analyses

Bivariate correlations between the demographic and main variables revealed that education level was significantly positively linked to job satisfaction ($r = .19$) and negatively related to cynicism ($r = -.33$). To control for the potential confounding effect of education level, we performed the moderation analysis again with education level as a covariate. Results showed that education level was not a significant covariate ($b = 0.11$, $t(117) = 1.49$, $p = .138$),

and including it in the model did not influence the outcome of the initial moderation analysis. The moderating effect of cynicism on the relationship between perceived workplace social support and job satisfaction remained non-significant ($b = -0.09$, $t(117) = -1.28$, $p = .205$). An additional moderation analysis was performed to control for the potential confounding effect of English proficiency. Results showed that English proficiency was not a significant covariate ($b = -0.01$, $t(117) = -0.09$, $p = .927$) and the moderating effect of cynicism on the relationship between perceived workplace social support and job satisfaction remained non-significant ($b = -0.09$, $t(117) = -1.28$, $p = .203$).

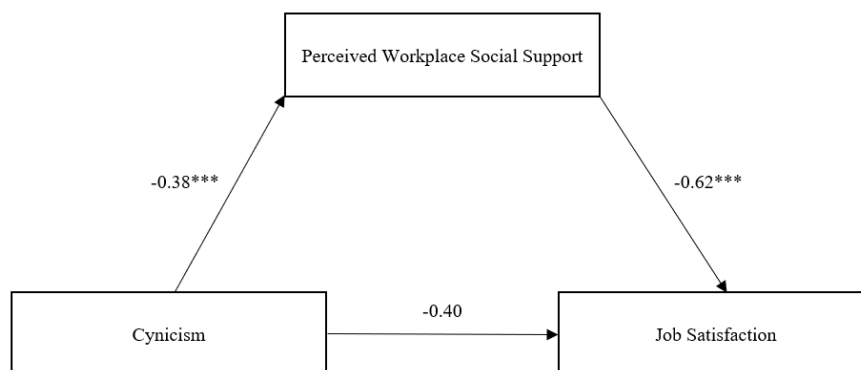
Furthermore, we looked at all subscales of perceived workplace social support separately to potentially find an effect. Bivariate correlations between cynicism and each subscale revealed that cynicism is significantly negatively related to perceived organizational support ($r = -.34$), perceived supervisor support ($r = -.31$) and perceived co-worker support ($r = -.33$). Three additional moderation analyses were performed in which perceived organizational, supervisor and co-worker support respectively were the independent variable, job satisfaction was the dependent variable and cynicism was the moderating variable. For all three subscales of perceived workplace social support, the full prediction model was significant. While the main effects of perceived organizational support ($b = 0.15$, $t(117) = 3.52$, $p < .001$), perceived supervisor support ($b = 0.16$, $t(117) = 3.41$, $p < .001$) and perceived co-worker support ($b = 0.22$, $t(117) = 2.59$, $p = .011$) were significant in their respective analysis, the main effect of cynicism was non-significant in all three analyses. Additionally, no significant interaction effects had been found. This indicates that, when looking at each subscale separately, cynicism did not have a significant moderating impact on the relationship between perceived workplace social support and job satisfaction.

Given the negative correlations between cynicism and both perceived workplace social support ($r = -.38$) and job satisfaction ($r = -.29$), a mediation analysis using PROCESS macro

Model 4 (Hayes, 2013) was performed with cynicism as the independent variable, job satisfaction as the dependent variable and perceived workplace social support as the mediator. Bootstrap samples were set to 5000 with confidence intervals generated at the 95% level (Hayes, 2013). The full prediction model for the mediating variable perceived workplace social support was significant ($F(1, 117) = 19.40, p < .001$) and had an R^2 of .14, meaning that 14% of the total variance in job satisfaction can be explained by cynicism and perceived workplace social support. Path a , showing a negative effect of cynicism on perceived workplace social support, was found to be significant ($b = -0.38, t(117) = -4.40, p < .001$). Path b , showing a negative effect of perceived workplace social support on job satisfaction, was also significant ($b = -0.62, t(117) = 8.90, p < .001$). Furthermore, path c' , showing the direct effect of cynicism on job satisfaction in presence of the mediator, was found to be non-significant ($b = -0.40, t(117) = -0.57, p = .573$). This indicates that cynicism does not influence job satisfaction directly. The path diagram of the present mediation model is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Mediation Analysis With Unstandardized Coefficients. Effect of Cynicism on Job Satisfaction, Mediated by Perceived Workplace Social Support.



Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Results revealed a significant total effect of cynicism on job satisfaction ($b = -0.28$, $t(117) = -3.28$, $p = .001$). Additionally, a significant indirect effect of cynicism on job satisfaction ($b = -0.24$, CI $[-0.36, -0.13]$) had been found, as zero was not within the confidence interval. Because the direct effect of cynicism on job satisfaction was not significant when perceived workplace social support was included as a mediator, perceived workplace social support fully mediated the relationship between cynicism and job satisfaction.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate whether individuals with high perceptions of workplace social support were more likely to be satisfied with their job, and whether this effect would be reduced for individuals who were cynical. Attempting to replicate previous findings on job satisfaction, the first hypothesis stated that perceived workplace social support would be positively related to job satisfaction. We indeed found that perceived workplace social support significantly predicted job satisfaction, indicating that employees who perceived a higher level of social support in the workplace were also more likely to be satisfied with their job. These findings provide support for the first hypothesis and are in line with previous research (Bufquin, 2017; Dechawatanapaisal, 2022; Harris et al., 2007; Kinman et al., 2011; Mérida-López et al., 2019).

The second hypothesis expected a moderating effect of cynicism on the relationship between perceived workplace social support and job satisfaction, such that being cynical would reduce the positive effect of workplace social support on job satisfaction. This hypothesis was based on the idea that cynics generally mistrust others' intentions of providing support and are less likely to perceive and receive appropriate social support (Kaplan et al., 2004), consequently decreasing job satisfaction (Harris et al., 2007; Kinman et al., 2011). Significant negative correlations were found between cynicism and both perceived workplace

social support and job satisfaction. Considering that the interaction effect was not significant, the second hypothesis was not supported. Therefore, in the current study, cynicism was not a significant moderator in the relationship between perceived workplace social support and job satisfaction.

The negative relation between cynicism and job satisfaction is in line with previous literature (Srivastava & Adams, 2011; Eryesil & Öztürk, 2016; Volpe et al., 2014). It was however interesting that when including cynicism in the model, the positive effect of perceived workplace social support on job satisfaction was still significant while cynicism did not significantly predict job satisfaction. A reason for cynicism not being a significant predictor of job satisfaction anymore when including it in this particular model could be that the effect of cynicism on job satisfaction is fully accounted for by perceived workplace social support, as appeared from the exploratory mediation analysis. This implies that the significant effect of cynicism on job satisfaction disappears when it goes through perceived workplace social support. Another potential explanation for these findings could be that general cynicism does not have an effect on the relationship between perceived workplace social support and job satisfaction, but that domain specific cynicism (e.g. organizational cynicism) does. It has been found that organizational cynicism is very strongly affected by workplace experiences and is a strong negative predictor of job satisfaction (Volpe et al., 2014).

Something else worth mentioning is the fact that our study had a relatively young sample. Since past research has found that employees over the age of 40 are more likely to be satisfied with their job than those who are younger (Siassi et al., 1975), this could have played a role in the results we found. Lastly, even though co-worker support had been found to be an important determinant of people's overall job satisfaction (Bufquin, 2017), it was represented by only three questions in the study. However, exploratory analysis revealed that cynicism is not differently associated with each of the subscales of perceived workplace social support

and by looking at each subscale in separate moderation analyses, cynicism still did not moderate the relationship between workplace social support and job satisfaction. Therefore, investigating perceived workplace social support as a whole, rather than a specific part of it, can be ruled out as an explanation for the non-significant moderating effect of cynicism in the current research.

Theoretical Implications

This study advances the existing literature by presenting the connection between perceived workplace social support and job satisfaction and the moderating effect of cynicism. It responds to a call for research by scholars in the field of social support and job satisfaction (Deelstra et al., 2003; Harris et al., 2007) to further explore the support-based factors that lead to job satisfaction. Past research has shown evidence for factors that influence whether workplace social support is actually beneficial for individual job satisfaction (Deelstra et al., 2003). The current study investigated cynicism as a possible factor and found that, in this case, there is no moderating effect, indicating that cynical employees can still benefit from social support at work. This implies that cynicism does not have a strong negative influence on job satisfaction in this specific context and researchers can therefore focus on other potential factors.

Additionally, job satisfaction has been identified as a negative consequences of cynicism by previous research (Srivastava & Adams, 2011; Eryesil & Öztürk, 2016; Volpe et al., 2014). The results of our exploratory analysis showed that perceived workplace social support fully mediates this effect. Although this finding should be interpreted with caution, it implies that studies should take social support in the workplace into account when investigating cynicism in relation to job satisfaction. Furthermore, this study replicates the previous finding that workplace social support is a positive predictor of job satisfaction (Harris et al., 2007; Kinman et al., 2011; Mérida-López et al., 2019) and contributes to the

growing literature on the predictors of job satisfaction. This is especially important, given the growing effectiveness of social support in predicting and maintaining job satisfaction.

Practical Implications

This study's findings have important practical implications for organizational practices. The results imply that organizations can increase their employees' job satisfaction by making social support at work more available. Managers could create a work environment that makes workers feel supported and appreciated, by for example improving organizational policies and the corporate culture or organizing activities for employees to strengthen their mutual social ties. This in turn is beneficial to the organization because they can minimize costs in the way that satisfied employees show higher organizational commitment, lower absenteeism and lower rates of depression (Nadinloyi, 2013).

The moderation model showed that cynicism is not a significant moderator in the relationship between perceived workplace social support and job satisfaction, suggesting that organizational support policies do not have to be specifically adjusted for cynical individuals. It therefore helps organizational policy makers to further identify factors that do (or do not) need to be addressed in order to ensure employee job satisfaction and well-being.

Strengths and Limitations

This study has some limitations that suggest caution when interpreting the results. First, the recruitment of the sample involved convenience sampling and our sample might therefore not be representative. Second, as stated in the Method section, a total sample of 141 participants would have been needed to detect a small-to-medium interaction effect. Unfortunately, due to high participant loss, the final sample size turned out smaller than intended. Therefore, we were not able to detect an effect as small as the one we set out to detect. Third, the study is reliant solely on self-report data of participants. When testing a sensitive construct like cynicism, this could potentially lead to social desirability responding

and other biases. Forth, the study is correlational and conclusions about the causal relationship between perceived workplace social support and job satisfaction can therefore not be made.

The study also has some strengths that are worth mentioning. The research question of the present study is new to the field in that, to our knowledge, no research to date has paid attention to cynicism as a possible moderator of the relationship between perceived workplace social support and job satisfaction. Second, the study combined three single measures into a multidimensional scale of perceived workplace social support and was thereby not only looking at one, but at several facets of perceived workplace social support. This increases the validity of our results. It additionally gives a more comprehensive and broader image of its relationship with job satisfaction, namely that looking at the subscales does not alter the found relationships with cynicism and job satisfaction.

Future Directions

Since the current sample did not yield the intended power, future research should replicate the study with a larger sample size. Besides that, it would be interesting to investigate the current research question in a sample of older employees who have already been in the workforce for several years. Because our sample is mostly younger employees who potentially are less cynical than older ones, taking an older sample might actually find the interaction effect with cynicism. Another fruitful avenue would be to examine the moderating effect of organizational cynicism on the relationship between perceived workplace social support and job satisfaction. This would allow us to examine whether a domain-specific type of cynicism would have a stronger effect in this relationship. Finally, future studies should adopt an experimental or longitudinal design to better examine the associations between perceived workplace social support and job satisfaction. An experimental design allows for establishing causality by manipulating workplace social support and looking at its effect on job satisfaction. Although a longitudinal design does not

necessarily tell us something about causality between the two constructs, it would allow us to look at the relationship between perceived workplace social support and job satisfaction over time and see whether the existing effect changes or persists.

Conclusion

In sum, the results of the present study highlight the role of workplace social support as a positive predictor of employees' job satisfaction. Cynicism does not play a significant moderating role in this relationship, indicating that cynical employees might still benefit from the positive effect of workplace social support on job satisfaction. Through replicating and therefore cementing the results of previous research, our study contributes to the growing literature on job satisfaction, furthering our understanding of the complexity of workplace social support as an antecedent of job satisfaction. It additionally contributes to organizational practices to improve job satisfaction and has important practical implications for researchers and practitioners with the aim of enhancing employees' well-being.

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