Sources of social support, job satisfaction, and quality of life among childcare teachers☆

Jongil Yuh *, Sungsil Choi

Duksung Women's University, Seoul, South Korea

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Although literature has suggested a link between social support and well-being, relatively little research has examined the association of social support with job satisfaction and quality of life for employees. This study aimed to investigate whether and how different sources of social support influenced quality of life in conjunction with job satisfaction among teachers. Two-hundred and eighty-one childcare teachers in Korea completed measures of social support, job satisfaction, and quality of life. The results revealed that while director and colleague support predicted job satisfaction, director and family support predicted quality of life after controlling for age and marital status. Furthermore, results showed that job satisfaction mediated the relationship between director support and quality of life. The findings suggest the protecting role of different sources of social support in teachers' job experience and evaluation of life domains. Suggestions for future research and implications for improving childcare teachers' quality of life are discussed.

© 2017 Western Social Science Association. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Social support has long been a core social construct in studying personal relationships. Conceptualizations of social support vary widely among researchers, embracing a wide range of different viewpoints and contexts. For example, Cobb (1976) defined social support as "information leading the subject to believe that he is cared for and loved, esteemed, and a member of a network of mutual obligations" (p. 300). According to Hirsh (1981), social support is "provided by other people and arises within the context of interpersonal relationships" (p.151). Vangelisti (2009) stated that social support can be defined from sociologi-cal, psychological, and communication perspectives. In the literature review, while a sociological perspective emphasizes the degree of individuals' integration into a social group and the communication perspective emphasizes the relations that occur between the providers and recipients of support, the psychological perspective focuses on the perceived availability of support such as the type or amount of support received or perceived (Vangelisti, 2009). The specific aspects of social support that researchers emphasize differ widely, as researchers have focused on diverse aspects, such as contents, kinds, and sources. For instance, the concept of social support can be defined in terms of particular categories such as emotional support, instrumental support, informational support, and appraisal support as well as the sources including directors, coworkers, friends, and family.

Despite these different definitions and constructs of social support, there is a general consensus that social support has therapeutic value in health (Pearson, 1986). However, social support has been researched primarily

---

with a focus on the presence or absence of negative outcomes associated with stress, rather than positive well-being (Feeney & Collins, 2015). Moreover, the potential beneficial effects of social support on positive well-being and how it operates has received limited attention.

Whereas positive well-being embraces diverse concepts, quality of life represents an important aspects of well-being. Although there is no common definition or definitive theoretical framework for quality of life, it can be conceptualized as an individual's perception of their position in life, within the context of the culture and value systems in which they live, and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) (Eckermann, 2012). Quality of life is considered a key indicator of overall psychological well-being; however, limited research has investigated whether social support is associated with quality of life as an indicator of well-being for employees. Notwithstanding the direct impact, social support can indirectly influence employees' quality of life through job satisfaction. Whereas quality of life embraces perceptions of all salient life domains, job satisfaction is considered as an emotional state associated with one's job experience. Job satisfaction has been conceptualized as a dynamic construct determined by the interplay between multiple factors. Job satisfaction is closely related to subjective well-being as well as job performance (Chao, Jou, Liao, & Kuo, 2015; Wright & Bonett, 2007). Social support is one of the most important contextual resources for coping with job-related stress. However, empirical research exploring how social support is related to both job satisfaction and quality of life among employees is limited.

This study examined the extent to which social support is related to both job satisfaction and quality of life as indicators of well-being among teachers. In particular, the well-being of childcare teachers has been recently emphasized since it affects not only teacher retention but also negative outcomes for children as a key factor of high-quality childcare programs. In the review of the literature on preschool teachers' well-being, emotional and physical health were suggested topics for future research (Hall-Kenyon, Bullough, MacKay, & Marshall, 2014). Besides, many previous studies (e.g., Brown, Pitt-Catsouphes, McNamara, & Besen, 2014; Hombrados-Mendieta & Cosano-Rivas, 2013; Kusma, Groneberg, Nienhaus, & Mache, 2012; Mintz-Binder, 2014; Sultan & Rashid, 2014) have focused on overall social support as a variable in explaining job satisfaction or quality of life but not different sources or types of social support. To address these gaps, we conducted separate analyses of different sources of social support that contribute to both job satisfaction and quality of life. Although social support has a well-known psychotherapeutic function, there is insufficient knowledge concerning the nature of the mechanisms involved and the factors that moderate its effectiveness (Sarason & Sarason, 2009). Therefore, we also extended previous research by exploring how the associations between different sources of social support, job satisfaction, and quality of life are mediated. Efforts to clarify this relationship can expand our knowledge of the role of social support in well-being. This detailed information

can also be employed to develop strategies to improve the well-being of childcare teachers.

2. Literature review

2.1. Influence of social support on job satisfaction

Job satisfaction has been an interesting topic in the field of organizational psychology and management. Locke (1969) defined job satisfaction as "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). According to Spector (1997), job satisfaction refers to the extent to which people like or dislike their jobs on the whole and different aspects of their jobs. Job satisfaction includes external aspects such as working conditions and internal aspects such as individual's expectations.

Social support has been shown to influence job satisfaction. Previous studies showed that general social support was positively related to job satisfaction among individuals in various work places (Brown et al., 2014; Mintz-Binder, 2014; Sultan & Rashid, 2014). When employees perceive greater social support, they are more likely to have increased job satisfaction; however, the relationship between social support and job satisfaction might differ according to the job characteristics or the specific aspect of social support that researchers chose to emphasize. In a study investigating the determinants of day care teachers' job satisfaction in Germany, the variable of social support was not a significant predictor of job satisfaction among the 16 selected variables, which included socio-demographic variables, personal resources, job demands, and job resources (Kusma et al., 2010). Previous studies showed that four types of social support such as career mentoring, task support, coaching, and collegial support, accounted for approximately 17% of variance in job satisfaction among hospital employees. Among these four types, career mentoring and task support were found to be the significant predictors (Harris, Winskowski, & Engdahl, 2007). Among different sources of social support, supervisor support was found to be a strong predictor of job satisfaction and an indirect predictor of turnover intentions among police officers in New Zealand (Brough & Frame, 2004). In the same study, supervisor and colleague support, rather than family support, was significantly related to police officers' job satisfaction. In contrast, a study of 270 job incumbents and their employed partners illustrated that partner support was indirectly related to job satisfaction through work–family balance (Ferguson, Carlson, Zivnuska, & Whitten, 2012).

Given that teaching is known to be a stressful job with long work hours, relatively insufficient salary, and stressful interactions with many people, identifying specific sources of social support would be especially beneficial for teachers' well-being and job performance. When teachers perceive adequate social support, which results in job satisfaction, they are more likely to provide high quality care and more opportunities for children's positive outcomes. By contrast, when teachers are dissatisfied with their job, they are more likely to have lower their organizational commitment and to leave their jobs. Perception