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Who Feels Supported at Work? Organizational Support across Social and Job Positions in Research Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This study examined differences in perceived organizational support among researchers working in agricultural research institutions in Punjab, Pakistan. Drawing on organizational support theory, the study conceptualized organizational support as employees' perceptions that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. Data were collected from 329 researchers using a stratified sampling approach. Organizational support was assessed using an eight-item scale demonstrating satisfactory psychometric properties, including strong internal consistency, acceptable item loadings, and VIF values indicating no problematic collinearity. Descriptive statistics were calculated across marital-status and job-designation groups. Because the groups differed in size and variance assumptions could not be taken for granted, Welch's ANOVA was employed, followed by Games–Howell post hoc comparisons. Organizational support differed significantly across marital-status groups, $F (2, 78.45) = 124.46$, $p < .001$. Single researchers reported the highest support, followed by married and divorced researchers. Organizational support also differed significantly by job designation, $F (2, 48.77) = 207.99$, $p < .001$. Scientific officers reported significantly higher support than Senior Scientists and Principal Scientists, whereas principal and senior scientists did not differ significantly. The findings demonstrate that perceptions of organizational support vary across employees' social and occupational positions and highlight the importance of context-sensitive organizational practices in agricultural research institutions.

Keywords: *organizational support, marital status, job designation, Welch's ANOVA, researcher*

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural research institutions play a strategic role in Pakistan as agricultural productivity, food security, rural livelihoods, climate adaptation and technological innovation are partly reliant on the production and use of scientific knowledge (Batool et al., 2023; Shahzad et al., 2023). In these institutions, researchers are a specialized occupational group whose activity demands a high level of intellectual effort, institutional support, professional recognition, and the capacity to participate in the goals of the institutions (Barakabitze et al., 2015; Brodeur & Dupont, 2006; Erickson et al., 2018). While the production of scientific results and technological innovation are often the focus of agricultural research discussion, the organisational environment in which researchers conduct their research should also be considered. Researchers don't just work for an administrative organization, they form perceptions of whether their institution acknowledges their work, meets their needs, appreciates their accomplishments, and cares about their health (Shahzad, Batool, & Sajid, 2024; Shahzad et al., 2025). In the public sector research institutions, formal bureaucratization, occupational hierarchy and differentiated employment roles can influence the everyday experiences of organizational support, particularly (Fernandes et al., 2023; Grint & Nixon, 2025; Shin et al., 2023).

To conceptualize the general level of belief that employees have about the value placed on their contributions and care shown for their wellbeing, the concept of perceived organisational support (POS) was proposed (Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2020; Agrawal & Singh, 2022; Aldabbas et al., 2023). Organizational support theory then developed the concept of POS as a significant process in which-by-which workers react to the manner in which they are treated in organizations and form reciprocal attitudes toward the organization (Allen et al., 2008; Amazue & Onyishi, 2016; Angela & Rojuaniah, 2022). The greater the sense of social and organizational inclusion, the more likely employees will feel their actions are valued and that others care about their well-being. On the other hand, when employees feel their efforts are not being rewarded, their complaints are not being taken seriously, or they feel their efforts are not being appreciated, their feelings of reciprocity in the organization may be diminished.

Organizational support may be more significant among scientific researchers (Ashraf, 2020; Beyhan, 2026). The nature of research work is usually that of professional autonomy, specialized expertise, long-term projects, performance expectations, and reliance on organizational resources. Recognition, appreciation of extra effort, responsiveness to complaints and concern about employee wellbeing can therefore be a good indicator of the relationship between an organisation and its professional workforce (Beyhan, 2026; Çelik, 2023; Chou & Jing, 2026; Ersoy et al., 2011). Current evidence has linked POS to key employee and organizational outcomes, such as work attitudes, performance and well-being (Beyhan, 2026; Çelik, 2023; Ghanbari et al., 2024). A large meta-analysis of 558 studies reported strong support for the organizational support theory and that certain organizational antecedents such as leadership, organizational practices, working conditions and the employee–organization context play an important role in the development of POS (Hngoi et al., 2023; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Yet organizational support should not necessarily be assumed to be experienced uniformly by all employees within the same institution. Employees occupy different social positions, carry different family responsibilities, and hold different organizational roles (Matusik et al., 2022; Prysmakova & Lallatin, 2023). Marital status can represent an important social position because employees' family responsibilities and work–family interfaces may influence how organizational practices are experienced and interpreted (Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2020; Ashraf, 2020). Similarly, job designation can reflect differences in organizational authority, occupational status, access to resources, recognition, and proximity to decision-making processes (Ghanbari et al., 2024; Onuoha & Tolulope, 2013; Soleimani et al., 2017). Thus, employees working in the same institution may nevertheless construct different perceptions of organizational support. This issue is particularly relevant to agricultural research institutions in Punjab, where researchers work within formal occupational hierarchies and diverse family circumstances. The present study therefore examines whether perceived organizational support differs across marital-status groups and job-designation groups among researchers working in agricultural research institutions of Punjab.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perceived Organizational Support and Organizational Support Theory

The concept of perceived organizational support is based on organizational support theory (OST) and social exchange perspectives. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) suggested that an employee may form a generalized impression about the value the company places on his or her input and the extent to which the company cares for him or her. These beliefs are not just for one-on-one encounters but also for what the organization does and how it does it when dealing with employees (Jones et al., 2008; L. Li et al., 2025; Y. Li et al., 2025). POS is thus a significant relational aspect of working life since it brings organizational practice into employee's perception of their position in the organization (Lo & Riemenschneider, 2011; Morris et al., 1999).

The theoretical underpinning of POS is very similar to reciprocity. If employees feel treated well, they might feel compelled to respond in kind with positive attitudes and work-related behaviors. On the other hand, if a staff member's contributions are not being recognized or valued by the organization, this can convey the message that they are not valued (Nwanzu, 2017; Nwanzu & Adams, 2019; Onuoha & Tolulope, 2013; Oyinlade, 2013). These original studies showed that employees develop such global organizational beliefs and that POS is correlated with significant employee reactions. This framework was further reinforced through further theoretical development and empirical synthesis (Pimenta et al., 2024; Prysmakova & Lallatin, 2023; Qammar et al., 2007). Among the important antecedents of POS, Shanock and Eisenberger (2006) believe that fairness, supervisor support, human-resource practices, and working conditions are among them, and Riggle et al. (2009) conducted a meta-analysis and found that there are systematic relationships between organizational support and employee attitudes, performance, and well-being.

In the current study, organizational support is conceptualized as employees' perceptions of organizational appreciation, concern, responsiveness and recognition. Measurement items thus reflect instrumental and socioemotional aspects of support. Items on recognition of contributions/completion reflect the researcher's perception of the value of their contributions or accomplishments, while items on well-being, general satisfaction, and organizational concern reflect the socioemotional aspect of support. The items that were negatively worded regarding ignored complaints, unrecognized effort, and limited concern further reflect perceived organizational neglect.

Organizational Support in Research Organizations

Research organizations constitute a significant context in which to explore POS, since the actions of the researcher are shaped by the work of the organization, as well as its resources (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006; Soleimani et al., 2017). Most scientific work is not a complete personal effort. Researchers' capacity to do their job may be influenced by access to laboratories, equipment, funding, administrative cooperation, professional development, recognition and opportunities for advancement (Yoon & Lim, 1999; Zheng et al., 2024). In turn, the perceptions of organizational support could affect the interpretation of research/author relationships and how the institution reacts to research/author contributions (Qammar et al., 2007; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

The findings of recent study in Pakistan which focused on government agricultural researchers also underscore the importance of POS in this profession (Batool et al., 2023; Shahzad et al., 2023). The study of agricultural researchers revealed a negative correlation between perceived organizational support and work alienation, indicating that the perception of care and recognition from the institution is related to the psychological attachment to work (Shahzad, Batool, Anjum, et al., 2024; Shahzad, Batool, & Sajid, 2024). But this evidence is mostly related to the impact of organizational support on the employee, and less to the fact that it is distributed or perceived differently across different social and organizational positions.

Marital Status and Organizational Support

Marital status may also be important for organizational support since work is a part of a larger social and family context (Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2020; Angela & Rojuaniah, 2022). Staff with various family situations may have varying expectations around flexibility, understanding, work–family suitability, and caring for personal well-being (Ashraf, 2020; Beyhan, 2026). These differences are not evidence that married or unmarried employees are entitled to more, or less, support from the organization, but rather offer a sociologically plausible basis for comparing how organizational support is experienced by those in different marital-status groups (Ashraf, 2020; Ghanbari et al., 2024).

An organizational support point of view is whether organizational practices are seen as responsive to employees. If organizational arrangements are responsive to the legitimate needs of the employee and acknowledge their contribution, employees may perceive that the organization cares for them (Beyhan, 2026; Onuoha & Tolulope, 2013). However, if employees feel that they are not being responded to, their appraisal of the support may be less positive. Marital status can be related to perceived organizational support because of the way work and non-work are experienced within the family context.

Job Designation and Organizational Support

A second important basis for looking at variation in POS is job designation (Oyinlade, 2013; Qammar et al., 2007). These organizational structures share authority, responsibilities, recognition and access to organizational resources unequally (Ashraf, 2020; Onuoha & Tolulope, 2013). Organizations can therefore be different for your employees at various occupational levels (Angela & Rojuaniah, 2022; Qammar et al., 2007; Soleimani et al., 2017). Senior researchers may be able to be more directly involved in decision making and have more institutional visibility, while lower-ranked researchers might have less influence with regard to institutional decision making or resource allocation (Fernandes et al., 2023; Grint & Nixon, 2025; Kish-Gephart et al., 2023; Laaser & Karlsson, 2022). These differences in structure can influence how employees understand and perceive recognition, fairness, voice, and concern for the organization (Popov & Baimurzina, 2024; Shin et al., 2023).

The argument does not assume that differences will be in either direction between designations. Organizational support theory proposes that organizational treatment and working conditions impact employee perceptions of support, and organizational hierarchy offers varying opportunities to experience and interpret support (Grint & Nixon, 2025; Kish-Gephart et al., 2023; Sibeon, 2023). Thus, it is important that empirical investigation is conducted to ascertain if there is a difference in researchers' perceptions of organizational support for the various job designations.

Taken together, the literature establishes POS as a theoretically important indicator of the employee–organization relationship while also suggesting that such perceptions may vary according to employees' social and occupational locations. However, comparatively limited attention has been directed toward group-level differences in organizational support among agricultural researchers, particularly within public-sector research institutions in Punjab. The present study addresses this gap by examining organizational support across marital-status and job-designation categories. Accordingly, the study proposes:

H1: There are statistically significant differences in perceived organizational support across different marital-status groups.

H2: There are statistically significant differences in perceived organizational support across different job-designation groups.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Participants

The study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine differences in researchers' perceptions of interactional justice. The research was conducted among researchers working in an agricultural research institution of Punjab. A stratified sampling technique was used to obtain representation from the relevant researcher groups. Data were collected from 329 respondents. Moreover, A quantitative and cross-sectional research design was used in this study. This design was used because it is opting option to find out differences in interactional justice based on marital status and job designations. The present research was conducted on researchers who were working in various institutes of agricultural research wing of agriculture department of Punjab. To select the

study participants, stratified and proportionate sampling techniques were used. These techniques ensure that representative samples were collected from target population. 329 participants were selected using these sampling techniques. Total 500 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 305 were returned. 10 questionnaires had many missing values, so they were not included in the final data analysis. They were deleted during data screening. 11 questionnaires were found to have serious respondent misconduct when questionnaires were analysed because they showed less than .25 percent spread of answers in Likert scale questions.

Measurement of Organizational Support

Organizational support was measured using an eight-item perceived organizational support scale based on the conceptualization of Eisenberger et al., (1986). The scale assesses employees' perceptions that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being, which are the central dimensions of perceived organizational support. The items assessed whether the organization values employees' contributions, appreciates extra effort, responds to complaints, cares about employee well-being and satisfaction, recognizes good performance, demonstrates concern, and takes pride in employees' accomplishments. Negatively worded items assessed perceived lack of appreciation, responsiveness, recognition, and concern. Responses were aggregated to obtain an overall organizational-support score, with negatively worded items appropriately reverse-coded before analysis.

Data Analysis

Psychometric properties of the organizational-support scale were first assessed, including item loadings, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and collinearity diagnostics, as appropriate to the measurement model. Descriptive statistics were then calculated to summarize the distribution of organizational support in the sample. To examine whether organizational support differed across marital-status and job-designation groups, Welch's one-way ANOVA was employed. Welch's ANOVA was selected because it is more robust than conventional one-way ANOVA when the assumption of homogeneity of variances may not be satisfied. Where the omnibus test indicated differences among groups, Games–Howell post hoc comparisons were used to identify pairwise differences. Games–Howell is appropriate for multiple group comparisons where group variances and/or sample sizes may differ. The analysis consequently provided both an omnibus assessment of group differences and transparent pairwise comparisons across the relevant marital-status and job-designation categories.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Measurement Properties of Organizational Support

Table 1. Items, Loadings, Reliability and Collinearity of organizational support Scale

Items	λ	Communality	Alpha	CR	VIF
OS			.907	.905	
OS1	.789	.622			2.474
OS2	.796	.633			2.275
OS3	.842	.708			2.820
OS4	.753	.567			2.129
OS5	.734	.538			1.934
OS6	.753	.566			1.983
OS7	.795	.631			2.233
OS8	.770	.593			1.995

Note: CR = composite reliability, VIF = variance inflation factors, λ = loadings

The psychometric properties of the organizational support scale were examined before conducting the group-comparison analyses. As presented in Table 1, all eight organizational support items demonstrated satisfactory factor loadings, ranging from .734 to .842. Specifically, the loadings were .789 for OS1, .796 for OS2, .842 for OS3, .753 for OS4, .734 for OS5, .753 for OS6, .795 for OS7, and .770 for OS8. These values exceed the commonly recommended threshold of .70, indicating that each item made a substantial contribution to the underlying organizational support construct. Item communalities ranged from .538 to .708, suggesting that between 53.8% and 70.8% of the variance in individual items was explained by the organizational support construct.

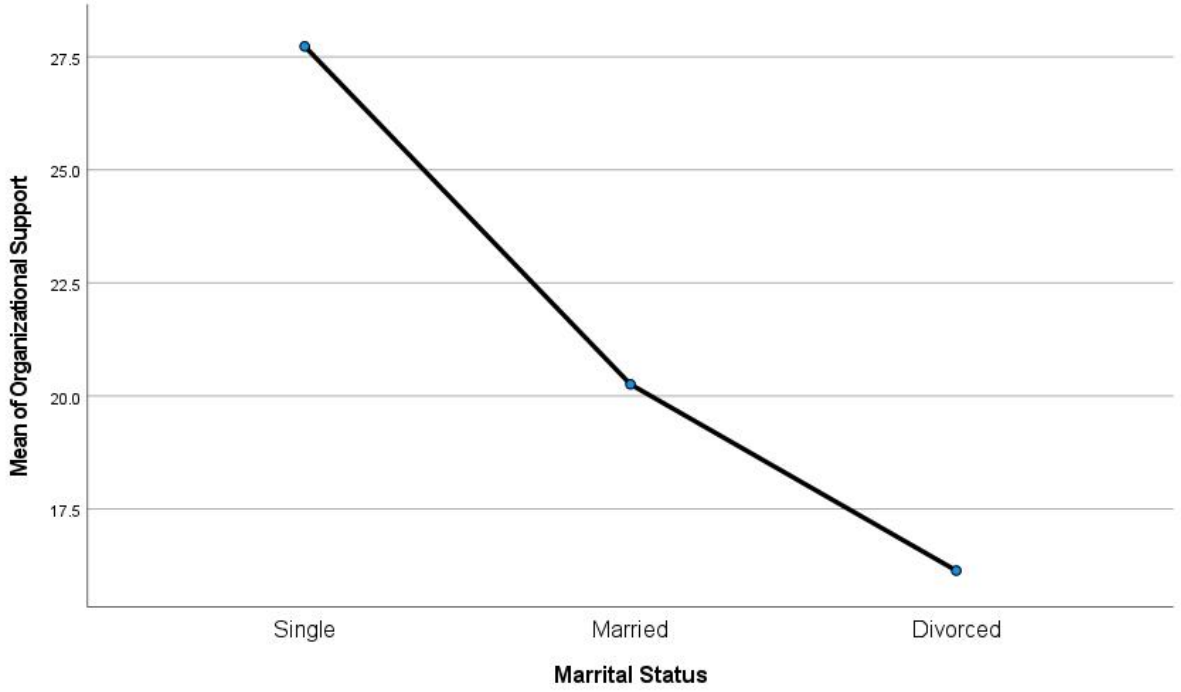


Figure 1: Summary of Organizational Support Based on Marital Statuses

The scale also demonstrated strong internal consistency and composite reliability. Cronbach's alpha was α = .907, while composite reliability was CR = .905, indicating a high degree of internal consistency among the eight items. The close correspondence between alpha and composite reliability further supports the reliability of the scale. Collinearity diagnostics showed VIF values ranging from 1.934 to 2.820, which are well below commonly used thresholds for problematic multicollinearity. Thus, the measurement results provide evidence that the organizational support scale demonstrated satisfactory reliability, convergent performance, and acceptable collinearity characteristics for subsequent analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for organizational support across marital-status and job-designation groups. Substantial variation in organizational support was evident across the marital-status categories. Single researchers (n = 60) reported the highest mean level of organizational support (M = 27.73, SD = 3.17), followed by married researchers (n = 240; M = 20.26, SD = 6.56). Divorced researchers (n = 29) reported the lowest level of organizational support (M = 16.14, SD = 4.26). The corresponding 95% confidence intervals were [26.92, 28.55], [19.42, 21.09], and [14.52, 17.76], respectively.

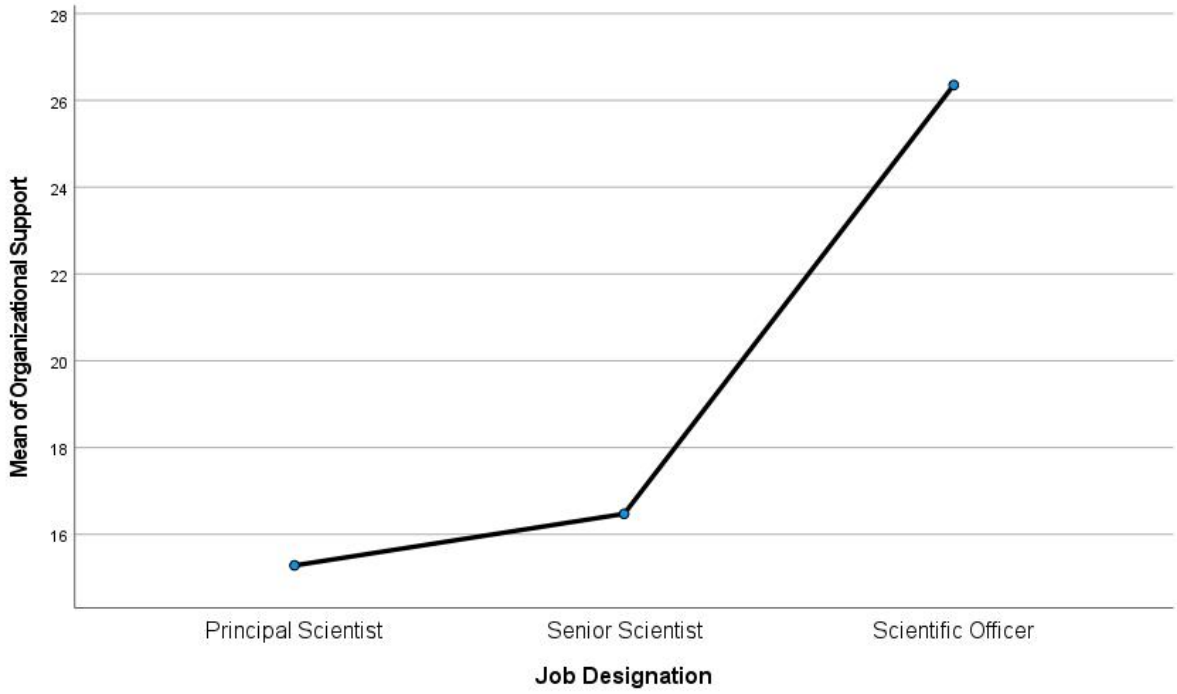


Figure 2: Visually summary of organizational support across various jobs levels

The descriptive pattern therefore indicates progressively lower organizational support across the single, married, and divorced groups.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Organizational Support Across Various marital Statuses and Job Designations

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% CI for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Marital Status								
Single	60	27.73	3.167	.409	26.92	28.55	21	34
Married	240	20.26	6.556	.423	19.42	21.09	10	39
Divorced	29	16.14	4.257	.791	14.52	17.76	10	28
Job Designation								
Principal Scientist	14	15.29	1.637	.438	14.34	16.23	12	18
Senior Scientist	154	16.47	3.073	.248	15.98	16.96	10	25
Scientific Officer	161	26.35	5.704	.450	25.47	27.24	10	39

A marked difference was also observed across job designations. Scientific Officers (n = 161) reported the highest organizational support (M = 26.35, SD = 5.70), followed by Senior Scientists (n = 154; M = 16.47, SD = 3.07). Principal Scientists (n = 14) reported a mean of 15.29 (SD = 1.64). The 95% confidence intervals were [25.47, 27.24] for Scientific Officers, [15.98, 16.96] for Senior Scientists, and [14.34, 16.23] for Principal Scientists. These descriptive statistics suggest considerable differences in perceived organizational support according to occupational position, although inferential testing is required to establish whether these observed differences are statistically significant.

Differences in Organizational Support by Marital Status and Job Designation

Because the group comparisons involved unequal group sizes and the assumption of homogeneity of variance could not be assumed, Welch's ANOVA was employed. As shown in Table 3, organizational support differed significantly across marital-status groups, Welch's F (2, 78.45) = 124.46, $p < .001$. Thus, the null hypothesis of equal organizational-support means across the three marital-status groups was rejected. This finding provides support for H1, indicating that organizational support was statistically significantly different across marital-status categories.

Table 3. Welch's ANOVA for Organizational Support by Marital Status and Job Designation

Independent variable	Welch's *F*	df1	df2	*p*
Marital status	124.46	2	78.45	< .001
Job designation	207.99	2	48.77	< .001

The Games–Howell post hoc tests further clarified the nature of these differences. All three pairwise comparisons were statistically significant. Single researchers reported significantly higher organizational support than married researchers, with a mean difference of 7.48 points, SE = 0.59, 95% CI [6.09, 8.86], $p < .001$. Single researchers also reported significantly higher organizational support than divorced researchers, with a mean difference of 11.60 points, SE = 0.89, 95% CI [9.44, 13.75], $p < .001$. Finally, married researchers reported significantly higher organizational support than divorced researchers, with a mean difference of 4.12 points, SE = 0.90, 95% CI [1.95, 6.29], $p < .001$. Taken together, the post hoc findings indicate a clear ordering in the observed group means: single researchers reported the highest organizational support, followed by married researchers, whereas divorced researchers reported the lowest. Additionally, organizational support also differed significantly across job-designation groups, Welch's F (2, 48.77) = 207.99, $p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis of equal organizational-support means across the three job-designation categories was rejected, providing support for H2.

The Games–Howell comparisons revealed that the difference between Principal Scientists and Senior Scientists was not statistically significant, with a mean difference of −1.19 points, SE = 0.50, 95% CI [−2.45, 0.07], $p = .067$. In contrast, Principal Scientists reported significantly lower organizational support than Scientific Officers, with a mean difference of −11.07 points, SE = 0.63, 95% CI [−12.58, −9.55], $p < .001$. Similarly, Senior Scientists reported significantly lower organizational support than Scientific Officers, with a mean difference of −9.88 points, SE = 0.51, 95% CI [−11.09, −8.67], $p < .001$. Thus, although Principal Scientists and Senior Scientists did not differ significantly from one another, both groups reported significantly lower organizational support than Scientific Officers. To summarize, the inferential results show that there is statistically significant differences between the perceived organizational support of married and unmarried participants, as well as between the perceived organizational support of married participants and the job designation of each participant. Most importantly, the Games–Howell analysis indicated that the Principal Scientist–Senior Scientist comparison was not significant while the Scientific Officers–job designation comparison was.

Table 4. Games–Howell Post Hoc Comparisons of Organizational Support by Marital Status and Job Designations

Comparison	Mean Difference	SE	95% CI	*p*
Marital Status				
Single – Married	7.48	.59	[6.09, 8.86]	< .001
Single – Divorced	11.60	.89	[9.44, 13.75]	< .001
Married – Divorced	4.12	.90	[1.95, 6.29]	< .001
Job Designation				
Principal Scientist – Senior Scientist	−1.19	.50	[−2.45, .07]	.067
Principal Scientist – Scientific Officer	−11.07	.63	[−12.58, −9.55]	< .001
Senior Scientist – Scientific Officer	−9.88	.51	[−11.09, −8.67]	< .001

The results indicate that the perceived organizational support does not exist equally among the agricultural researchers of Punjab, rather it is different in terms of marital status and job designation. Findings indicated that marital status had a distinct gradient: divorced researchers reported the lowest levels of organizational support; married researchers reported the next lowest levels; and single researchers reported the highest levels. These differences can be seen from the point of view of organizational support theory which is the difference in the experiences of the employees in the organization in terms of recognition, responsiveness, and concern for the employee's welfare. However, that is a cross-sectional design and can't prove that differences in organizational support are caused by marriage per se. The same was true for organizational support, which varied greatly based on job designation. There was significantly more support than both the Senior Scientists and Principal Scientists, but no significant difference between the latter two groups. The pattern indicates that there is no linear relationship between the formal position of the occupation and the perceived institutional support. Instead, organizational visibility, the nature of supervisory relationships, recognition mechanisms, access to resources, and the daily encounters with institutional structures can impact the perception of support between occupational groups. The results further validate the organizational support theory in the somewhat under-researched setting of agricultural research institutions in Pakistan.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND PRACTICE

Future studies should explore the mechanisms as to why these group differences exist instead of the variables of marital status and job designation being direct explanations for organizational support. Qualitative interviews might explore the meanings of recognition, institutional care, complaints, workload, promotion and institutional responsiveness in various social and occupational roles. Longitudinal studies could also establish whether perceptions of organizational support are impacted after promotion, a change in family status, organizational restructuring, or leadership change. In the practical sense, there should be a periodic check of how employees feel about recognition, well-being, responsiveness and appreciation in agricultural research institutions. Special consideration can be made for groups with comparatively low support; but there should be no assumption that all individuals in a group have the same needs. Perceptions of organizational support may be enhanced by transparent recognition systems and accessible grievance systems, supportive supervision, equitable professional-development opportunities, and regular employee feedback systems.

CONCLUSION

The study is concluded that there is a significant difference between the groups of agricultural researchers on Punjab on the basis of marital status and job designation regarding perceived organizational support. All marital comparisons were significant with single researchers experiencing the greatest and divorced researchers experiencing the least level of perceived support. The support was significantly higher for job designation of Scientific Officers than both Principal Scientists and

Senior Scientists, with no significant difference between Principal Scientists and Senior Scientists. The results suggest that organizational support needs to be studied as a socially differentiated workplace experience, that is, as an experience that is not shared by all employees within an organization. The results offer a foundation for further research into the organizational and relational processes which shape the perception of institutional care and recognition of researchers.

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