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Amar Kumar Mishra, Rajesh Kumar Upadhyay, Anjali Chaudhary, Anita Singh

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Amar Kumar Mishra

Graphic Era (Deemed to be University),
Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India
Email: amrs2310@gmail.com

Rajesh Kumar Upadhyay*

Graphic Era Hill University,
Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India
Email: upadhya.rajesh@gmail.com
*Corresponding author

Anjali Chaudhary

College of Business and Administration,
Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University,
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Email: archaudhary@pnu.edu.sa

Anita Singh

IMS-Ghaziabad,
Uttar Pradesh, India
Email: anitasinghims@yahoo.com

Abstract: Every employee in some way or another feels stress in their job due to their interaction with innumerable strategy, structure, systems, and styles continuously and inevitably. The ongoing pandemic across the globe has created a sense of mistrust, suspicion, and insecurity among the employees in almost every sector, increasing job stress and eroding organisational commitment, especially affective one; putting the survival of organisations at stake in the long run. However, organisations that will stand with employees extending their support and succeed in making their employees perceive the organisational support will not only keep at a bay the threat of survival but eventually will be the one to grow and prosper in the future. In the present paper, the researchers have explored the relationship between job stress, perceived organisational support, and organisational commitment among employees of higher education institutions in India using cross sectional research design and found that the erosion of organisational commitment that has resulted due to job stress during the pandemic can be restored through organisational support.

Keywords: job stress; organisational commitment; perceived organisational support; HEI.

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Biographical notes: Amar Kumar Mishra has done PhD in HR, MBA (OB&HR), MCom from the University of Burdwan (West Bengal). Besides he has qualified UGC NET in Management, Commerce and HR. He has obtained experience of more than 15 years in academics. At present he is rendering his services Graphic Era Deemed to be University as Professor in OB/HR.

Rajesh Kumar Upadhyay is a faculty member in the area of HR & OB. His research and teaching experience exceed the span of 15 years during which he has taught courses related to human resource management and organisational behaviour at both the graduate and postgraduate levels. He has also been the resource person in several workshops on research methodology organised by reputed colleges and universities. His current areas of research interest are organisational effectiveness, organisational change, team effectiveness and organisation citizenship behaviour.

Anjali Chaudhary is an erudite academician with high calibre and extensive experience of over ten years in higher education industry. Doctorate in commerce, she is rendering her services to the College of Business and Administration, Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as an Assistant Professor.

Anita Singh is a Professor and area chair in the area of HR at Institute of Management Studies, Ghaziabad, India. She is having a varied experience of 25 years in academics, research and training. Coauthor of several books, she is a recipient of prestigious Most Fabulous Professors in India of WHRD Congress.

1 Introduction

HEI in India in the private sector saw an unprecedented growth post-liberalisation, privatisation, globalisation era. The first decade of this century witnessed mushrooming of HEIs in the private sector. However, the majority of them are struggling for their survival. The survival, growth, or prosperity of any organisation in general and academic institutions, in particular, depends to a large extent on the commitment of its manpower. OC is an essential prerequisite for the success of any organisation (Sharma, 2016). Even organisations with a mature system, competent employees and learning culture had not been successful in the absence of committed employees (Naghneh et al., 2017). Alipour and Monfared (2015) define OC as a relative degree of identification of personal identity with the organisation and their involvement and participation in the organisation. Committed employees feel a sense of belongingness with their organisation and put in extra effort in helping the organisation attain its goal (Alipour and Monfared, 2015). Commitment, especially affective commitment, it must be borne in mind, is a psychological state of mind that is developed when employees have a sense of security.

The outbreak of pandemic Corona has a cascading influence on the affective commitment of workforces across the globe, especially in developing countries like India. A major chunk of people is in the state of lockdown. The economic uncertainty, the potential threat of recession, and fear of job losses have a cascading effect on the mindset of people. Terror is looming large on the future of everyone in this environment of uncertainty. There is an unprecedented surge in mistrust. All this is resulting in anxiety, depression, agony, and job stress, and apprehension by the individuals that they are unable to deal adequately with the demands placed upon them (Lazarus, 1971). And this stress is depleting affective commitment among employees, putting the survival of organisations at stake. This unfortunate situation calls for effective modalities to address the issue and deliver results. One such modality that has gained prominence in literature is POS. Zhang et al. (2017) defined POS as the motivation for a leader to appreciate the contributions of their personnel and take care of their wellbeing. Employees see the organisations as a person and make a general perception of them. However, contrary to separate entity concepts; supervisors, senior managers, or administrators are not viewed as separate entities but are perceived as agents working on behalf of the organisation's intentions. Based on this personification, employees base their judgment on how organisations treat them. POS affects the well-being of employees, the positivity of their attitudes toward the organisation and work, and behavioural outcomes similar to those of an OC (Eisenberger and Huntington, 1986).

As such in this paper POS has been considered as the intervening variable through which the relation between OC and JS can be explained, especially in HEI. Consequently, the investigation in the paper started with JS as the core component in the postulated model, followed by POS as intervening variables to explain OC. The research has followed the post-positivist approach in explaining how POS can influence OC among employees, especially during the current scenario.

2 Conceptual framework and hypothesis development

The present research is built upon the tenets of organisational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986). According to OST, employees frame general perception about the care is taken by the organisations of their wellbeing. Organisations are personified by the employees (Levinson, 1965) and the more an organisation treats its employees as human capital instead of marginal capital, the more positively it is personified as. Organisations' readiness in supporting employees satisfy the socio-emotional needs of workers, reducing their stress, and increasing OC (Abdelmoteleb, 2019).

2.1 OC

The concept of OC has drawn immense attraction since its conceptualisation (Mowday et al., 1982). The present scenario has made the study of OC most relevant where insecurity, pay cut, layoffs have put the employees under tremendous stress. Organisations, nevertheless, are also going through tremendous pressure for their own survival but those organisations who will fail to retain their committed workforce will have to pay very dearly in the long run. OC is the construct that binds the individual to the organisation (Allen and Meyer, 1990). OC has been conceptualised as a three-component construct by Allen and Meyer (1990): affective commitment, normative

commitment, and continuance commitment. It won't be an exaggeration to say that Organisational commitment is the most vital factor for the success or survival of any organisation. (Naghneh et al., 2017). An organisation can ignore it only at the cost of its existence. OC, naturally, has been studied, researched, and examined across the globe to study its effect (Becker and Billings, 1993; Shore et al., 1995; Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2006). Most of the studies have reported positive consequences of OC on various organisational variables. These include a turnover reduction (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Mowday et al., 1982), motivation (Caldwell et al., 1990), job performance (Riketta, 2002), productivity (Sharma, 2016; Wu and Liu, 2014) and career development (Hau-siu Chow, 1994).

2.2 *JS-OC*

There are various approaches to JS. According to one school of this is a response to a complex event (Selye, 1976) or, the demands events place on individuals (Kahn et al., 1964). According to another school of thought, it is a characteristic of the environment that poses a threat to people (Caplan et al., 1975). Further, whatever be the approach, JS has always been found to affect OC. There is no dearth of researches exploring the relation between JS and OC. While some research studies have not been conclusive in establishing any direct relation between JS and OS (e.g., Kahn and Byosiere, 1992), most of these studies have shown an inverse relation between JS and OC (e.g., Al-Hawajreh, 2011) explored various sources of stress at the job and identified role conflict, role ambiguity and autonomy as potential stressors. He further reported an inverse relation between OC and each stressor. Eisenberger et al. (2010) reported an inverse relation between JS and OC. Sharma (2016) found a positive relation between OC and productivity. JS adversely affect employees' attitude and thereby lowers their productivity and consequently lowers the OC (Haque and Aston, 2016). Sager (1990) studied the impact of JS on OC and reported that managers having high JS showed less OC and vice versa. Similarly, Williams et al. (2001) investigated the impact of JS and reported that JS leads to decreasing OC and productivity. From the above reviews, it can logically be summed that JS and OC are associated negatively. As such we propose the following hypothesis:

H1 JS is negatively and significantly associated with OC.

2.3 *JS-POS*

POS refers to the general belief of employees that the organisation respects their contributions and cares for their wellbeing (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Researchers have consistently demonstrated the relation between POS and JS (e.g., Cropanzano et al., 2003). The perception of fairness and appreciation in the form of extrinsic and intrinsic support from the organisation helps employee cope with high work requirements, thereby reducing the amount of JS (Rhodes and Eisenberger, 2002). George et al. (1993) study also recommended that POS reduces undesirable physical and emotional responses caused by job stress. POS is assumed to be a three-dimension construct consisting of fairness, supervisor support, and organisational rewards and job condition. All of these have found to be significantly related with job satisfaction, positive mindset, reduced strain, enhanced commitment and performance and turnover (Xu and Yang, 2018). There

are various reasons of stress in HEI, primarily being the burnout, other administrative activities, pressure of publications, insecurity, high expectations from parents, organisations as well as society. Besides, there are factors such as unfairness and lack of support from the organisation (Ahmed et al., 2016). JS becomes detrimental when support from organisation is deprived (Ahmed et al., 2016). Thus the following hypothesis was proposed.

H2 JS negatively and significantly associated with POS.

2.4 *POS-OC*

Commitment describes a person's attachment to a goal-social or non-social, organisations, work groups or leaders, and work. OC reflects the employee's attachment to the organisation, the employee wants to maintain their membership in the organisation, accepts its goals and values and the desire to do everything possible to stay with it (Shra'ah et al., 2013).

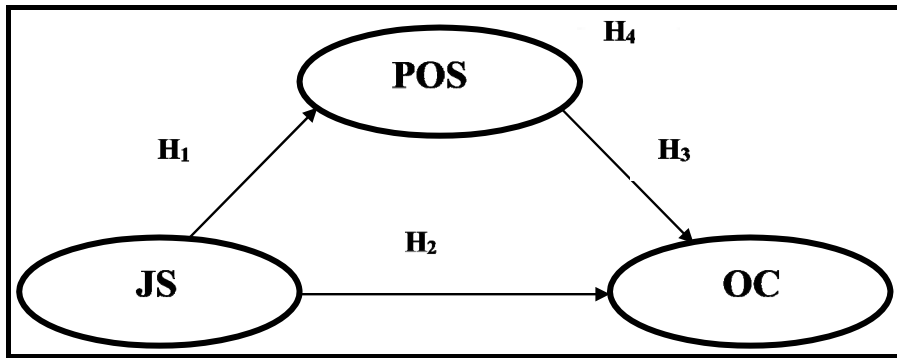
POS is obviously considered as an antecedent of OC. Though there is not much work in empirically testing the relation between POS and OC. Majority of these findings centres on 'social support theory' (Eisenberger and Huntington, 1986). Employees have deep gratitude and commitment to an organisation that ensures the right treatment of its employees. Feeling taken care of generates a high percentage of sales among employees (Eisenberger and Huntington, 1986). This leads to OC. In other words, POS is significantly and positively related to OC (Wu and Liu, 2014). Labrague et al. (2018) reported nonlinear relation between POS and OC. Labrague et al. (2018) posited that POS affects belongingness. Research studies have also reported that employees with high levels of POS are energetic, and seldom absent (e.g., Allen et al., 2003; Eisenberger et al., 1986); more committed to the organisations they work for (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Based on the above discussion, following hypothesis was proposed.

H3 POS positively and significantly affects OC.

2.5 *POS as mediator*

Previous researches have demonstrated that JS affects OC negatively; also employees scoring low on POS will have less OC (Gargr and Dhar, 2014). Further, it has also been found there exists an inverse relation between JS and POS (Ahmed et al., 2016). JS reduces POS which in turn affects OC negatively. social exchange theory also posits that OC is significantly affected by POS (Eisenberger and Huntington, 1986). Increased POS naturally leads to lower JS, and a higher OC (Amazue and Onyishi, 2016). All these arguments lead us to formulate the fourth hypothesis, i.e.,

H4 POS significantly mediates JS-OC relationship.

Figure 1 Hypothesised model

3 Methodology

3.1 Sample collection

Self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data using single cross sectional research design. Questionnaire is considered as effective tool for collection of data for a variety of reasons:

- 1 Data can be gathered from large population which ensures more generalisation of data and more precise statistical analysis (Rowley, 2014).
- 2 The information collected from respondents is more real and honest, due to non-association of the researcher (Saunders et al., 2009).
- 3 Respondents are open-minded and capable of providing significant research-related data. The results of other studies, e.g., Turulja and Bajgoric (2016) also show high associations between self-administered questionnaires and objective metrics.

The convenience sampling method was applied to choose responders. A Google form was created and floated through emails and social sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp and LinkedIn. Respondents were assured that their personal responses would be kept confidential. The total response obtained was 597, out of which 488 were usable (81.74%).

3.2 Constructs used

POS was measured on six-item questionnaire (Rhoades et al., 2001). In present study Cronbach alpha was .882. JS was measured on ten items perceived stress scale by Cohen et al. (1983), e.g., “In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and ‘stressed’”. In present study Cronbach alpha was .852. OC was measured on modified 10-item questionnaire (Mowday et al., 1979). In present study Cronbach alpha was .862.

All responses were measured on 5-point likert scale.

4 Analysis and result

4.1 Demographic profile of respondents

The respondents for the present study were faculty and staff members working in HEIs across India in the age group of 25 to 60 years. Gender wise, 41.19% respondents were male while 58.81% respondents were female. Detailed profile of the respondents is given in Table 1.

Table 1 Demographic profile of respondents

	<i>Particular</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Gender	Male	201	41.2
	Female	287	58.8
Age	25 to 35 years	128	26.2
	35 to 45 years	202	41.4
	45 to 55 years	135	27.7
	55 and above	23	4.7
	Post Graduate	276	56.6
Education	Doctorate	204	41.8
	Post Doctorate	8	1.6
	Total	488	100.0

4.2 Results

4.2.1 Descriptive statistics

Table 2 shows the mean, standard deviation, and relationship between each measure. All correlation coefficients are below the 0.7 threshold, so the probability of collinearity (Tabachnick et al., 2007) is low. The diagonal values represent the reliability of the measures. All values are greater than 0.8, and this confirms high internal consistency of the scale (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 2 Descriptive statistics

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. deviation</i>	<i>JS</i>	<i>POS</i>	<i>OC</i>
JS	3.094	1.027	0.852		
POS	3.115	1.045	-.619**	0.882	
OC	3.149	1.081	-.670**	.637**	0.862

Notes: **p < 0.001, ***p < .001

Source: Calculated using SPSS 21

4.2.2 Analytical approach

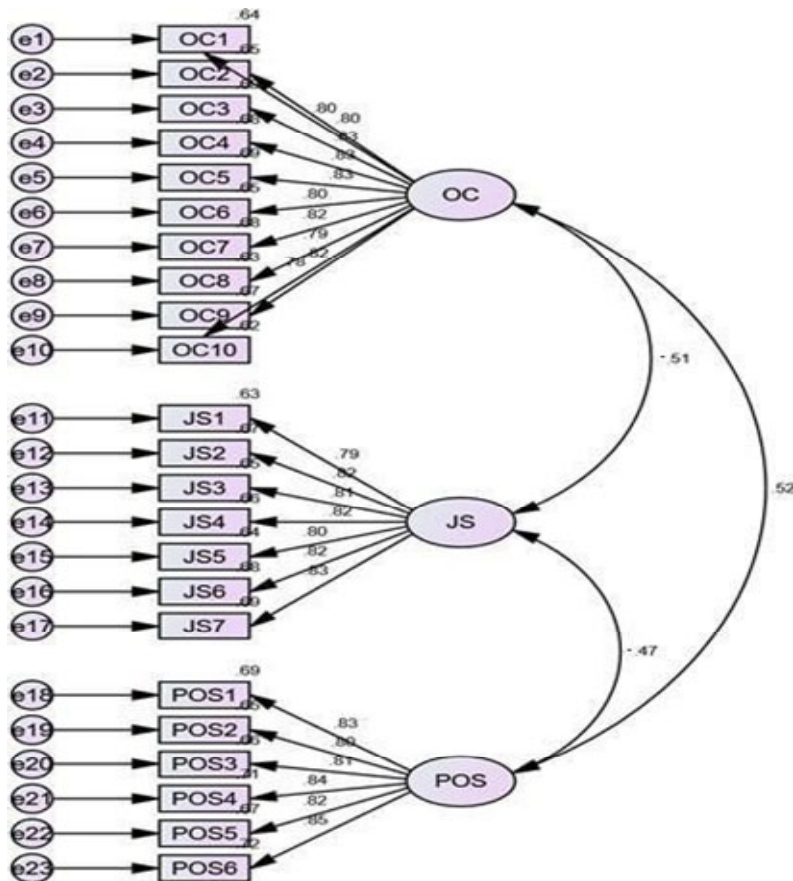
At the outset, dimensionality of the variables was examined using CFA. Covariance matrix was used as input and maximum likelihood method was employed for the analysis. χ^2 is the generally accepted parameter to check model fit. But, as its value is sensitive to sample size; other indices were also used like CMIN/df, CFI and SRMR (for

assessing goodness of fit) and PClose and RMSEA (for assessing badness of fit) (Hu and Bentler, 1998). Hypothesis testing was done by path analysis using AMOS 21.

4.2.3 Confirmatory factor analysis

The model provided an excellent fit of data $\chi^2 (227) = 226.874, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 0.999, CFI = 0.993, SRMR = 0.031, PClose = 0.989$ and $RMSEA = 0.020$. The composite reliabilities and average variance extraction were 0.931 and 0.662 (JC), 0.951 and 0.677 (OC) and 0.928 and 0.683 (transformation leadership). The construct validity was assessed using AMOS 22.0 software. The conditions for convergent validity (average variance extraction values (AVEs) > 0.5 and CR > AVE values for each of the variables; Table 3) was met and so was for the condition of discriminant validity for each construct (MSV < AVE; square root of the AVE > correlation between other constructs) (Hair et al., 2010).

Figure 2 CFA of measurement model (see online version for colours)



All elements were combined for the final study where it was found that each loading factor was 0.7 or higher (Comrey and Lee, 1992). As shown in Table 3, this questionnaire (Total elements = 26) is used to ensure that the conceptual model strongly supports validity and reliability.

Table 3 Factor loading statistics

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Factor loading</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>CR/Cronbach alpha</i>	<i>MSV</i>	<i>AVE</i>
JS	JS1	0.794	27.810***	0.931/0.852	0.261	0.66
	JS2	0.816	26.948***			
	JS3	0.809	26.85***			
	JS4	0.815	26.4***			
	JS5	0.801	27.252***			
	JS6	0.822	25.784***			
	JS7	0.828	27.293***			
OC	OC1	0.802	25.610***	0.951/0.862	0.272	0.658
	OC2	0.804	25.505***			
	OC3	0.829	24.781***			
	OC4	0.826	25.114***			
	OC5	0.83	24.547***			
	OC6	0.805	24.753***			
	OC7	0.824	23.163***			
	OC8	0.791	24.787***			
	OC9	0.818	24.803***			
	OC10	0.785	25.003***			
POS	POS1	0.829	21.201***	0.928/0.882	0.272	0.682
	POS 2	0.804	21.238***			
	POS 3	0.81	21.644***			
	POS 4	0.843	22.153***			
	POS 5	0.821	22.099***			
	POS 6	0.849	21.95***			

Note: ***p<.001

Source: Calculated using AMOS 21

Discriminant validity was ensured using following requirements: AVE > MSV, AVE > ASV (Hair et al., 2010), and the AVE > square root structural correlations (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). From Table 4 it can be clearly seen that all the AVEs are larger than MSV for the corresponding structure. Also, the AVE values for the matching structures are greater than ASV values. Furthermore, we note that the square root values of the AVEs are greater than the correlation coefficients.

Table 4 Reliability statistics

	<i>CR</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i>MSV</i>	<i>MaxR(H)</i>	<i>OC</i>	<i>JS</i>	<i>POS</i>
OC	0.951	0.658	0.272	0.951	0.811		
JS	0.931	0.660	0.261	0.932	-0.511***	0.812	
POS	0.928	0.682	0.272	0.929	0.522***	-0.468***	0.826

Note: ***p<.001

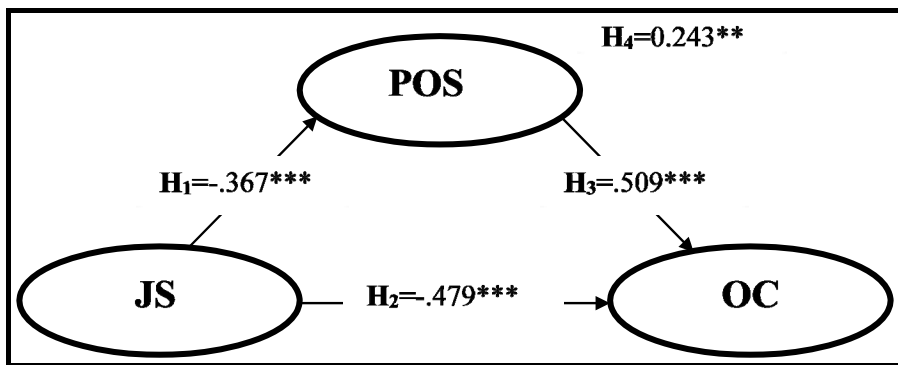
Source: Calculated using AMOS 21

As the data was collected using a single method, it was pertinent to check the biasness. The presence of ‘common method bias’ was examined using CLF method (Gaskin and Jim, 2016). Since the difference between weights was very low (< 0.200), this confirmed no issue of Biasness (Gaskin and Jim, 2016).

4.2.4 Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis testing was done using AMOS 21 to check model fitness. The model gives χ^2 value 226.874. The higher CMIN indicates that the data clearly fits the model. Other model fit indices, similarly, confirms the model fit to the data: normed $\chi^2 = 0.999$, CFI = 0.996 shows good fit. SRMR = 0.025, RMSEA = 0.039 and PClose 1.00 also validated model fitness. This paved the path for further analysis of the represents the structural model.

Figure 3 Structural model



Source: Amos output

Hypothesis 1 posited a significant negative relationship between JS and OC. Standardised coefficient value (B = 0.479, p < .001) specifies the strength of the relation between JS and OC and supports Hypothesis 1. Similarly, Hypothesis 2 posited a significant negative relationship between JS and POS. Standardised coefficient value (B = 0.367, p < .001) specifies the strength of the relation between JS and POS and supports Hypothesis 2. (Table 5) .Further, Hypothesis 3 was also supported as Standardised coefficient value (B = 0.509, p < .001) specifies the significant positive relation between OC and POS. (Table 5).

Table 5 Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Association of variable	B value	t-value	Conclusion
H01	JS --->OC	-0.479	19.874***	Hypothesis accepted
H02	JS--->POS	-0.367	17.782***	Hypothesis accepted
H03	POS--->OC	0.509	21.782***	Hypothesis accepted

Source: Calculated using SPSS 21

Hypothesis 4 posited that POS mediates the relationship between JS and OC. This hypothesis was tested using Hayes approach. It is germane to first consider the conditions of Mediation as suggested by Hayes (2013). Contrary to Baron and Canny (1986)

approach, this suggests that the significant indirect effect is the only condition for mediation. Further, a significant direct effect followed by significant indirect effect indicated partial mediation whereas an insignificant direct effect followed by significant indirect effect indicated total mediation.

This result shows a significant indirect effect (relation between JS and OC through POS (path $ab = -0.243^{***}$) indicating presence of a mediator. Further, the direct relation between JS and OC (path $c' = -0.236^{***}$) is also significant. This proves the condition for partial mediation Hence, it can be inferred that POS partially mediated the relationship between JS and OC supporting hypothesis 4 (Table 6).

Table 6 Simple mediation analysis

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Association of variable</i>	<i>Direct effect</i>	<i>Indirect effect</i>	<i>Total effect</i>	<i>Conclusion</i>
H04	JS-->POS-->OC	-.236***	-.243***	-.479***	Partial mediation

Note: *** $p < .001$

Source: Calculated using SPSS Process Plugin

5 Discussion

In the present study the factors which leads and create a positive commitment towards the organisation among employees in HEI was investigated considering the three major constructs, i.e., JS, POS are how they affect OC. Four hypotheses were developed based on the literature related to concepts. All the hypotheses were found to be significant.

The first hypothesis exhibits that a significant role is being played by JS which is negatively and significantly associated with the OC among employees. This is in line with the previous studies (Chen et al., 2006). The findings also strongly support the first proposed Hypothesis in this study.

Second hypothesis was also found significant which proposes that JS is significantly associated with the POS. We found in the study that POS is a strong indicator of JS in HEI. Our findings on JS is supported by the study of Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) which concludes that POS significantly reduces JS instilling a feeling of gratitude among employees justifying theory of reciprocity.

The third hypothesis proposed association between POS and OC. The study finds a strong significant positive relation between POS and OC. This exhibits the role of POS in increasing commitment of employees towards organisation. This is in line with the previous studies (Chen et al, 2006). The findings also strongly support the first proposed Hypothesis in this study (Armeli et al., 1998).

The fourth hypothesis states that JSis having positive and significant association with OC mediated by POS. This hypothesis was also supported in our study where JS was found to be strong predictor of OC, partially mediated by POS. Organisational support helps alleviation in the stress of employees. The more positive the perception of employees towards support received from the organisations, the more likely they are to adopt positive attitude towards the organisation with feelings of gratitude. The findings are consistent with earlier research (Ahmed et al., 2016; Saadeh and Suifan, 2020).

6 Implications

6.1 Theoretical implication

The results of the study encourage the researchers to develop some theoretical implications that are important for the administrators of HEIs. The study, thus, has enhanced the existing literature on JS, POS and OC. More specifically it has contributed to existing research into the context of India furthering new knowledge and understanding on these relationships. These findings also provide insights in improving OC through providing support and alleviating stress. The current study result support findings of Amazue and Onyishi, (2016). Finally, the variables that have studied in the present research were assessed in the light of organisational support theory (Eisenberger, et al., 1986) which has given the strong base for the study and also in understanding the model of the study. The study has also tried to draw attention of management of HEI towards the problems which employees face and also the issues and organisational factors which promote higher level of commitment.

The results of the study encourage the researchers to develop some theoretical implications that are important for employers, administrators, academicians, as well as for the researchers. The study, thus, has enhanced the existing literature on JS, OC and POS more specifically it has contributed to existing research into the context of India furthering new knowledge and understanding on these relationships.

6.2 Practical implication

The practical implications of the study can be summarised as follows: first, the results obtained in this study can be used to explore the various support mechanisms used by organisations to improve the image of the organisation for employees. Using the model in this study, the support that employees consider important should be clearly identified. Second, it is important that organisations support employees especially during these pandemic to alleviate their stress level which will enhance not only the image of the organisations but also increase commitment of the employees towards organisation. The results obtained in this study show interesting effects on innovative practices of organisations to attract and retain the best incumbents like Google, 3 M. Therefore, the organisation must be prepared to make appropriate investments in providing support to employees to reap the benefits in the future.

7 Limitation and future scope

Like others, this study is incomplete. This has some limitations. First, the results of this study limit the analysis of the relationships between different combinations by examining the study. People in a mountainous region started only by Uttarakhand. Therefore, further studies in other industries are recommended to publish the results. Second, the study relies simply on one medium. Further investigation by other intermediaries is likely to understand the relationship between perceived confidences, perceived ease of use, perceived value with purchase behaviour and factors that influence this relationship.

8 Conclusions

Every employee in some way or other feels stress in their job due to their interaction with innumerable strategy, structure, systems and styles continuously and inevitably. It can range from mild to acute stress depending upon the capacity in employee to cope up with the stress. While a little bit of stress is functional in nature, excessive stress is always dysfunctional impairing commitment of employees towards their organisations. History is testimony of the fact that even organisations with mature system, competent employees and learning culture had not been successful in the long run in the absence of committed employees. The ongoing pandemic across the globe has created sense of mistrust, suspicion and insecurity among the employees in almost every sector, especially in the HEI, increasing job stress and eroding organisational commitment, especially affective one; putting the survival of HEIs at stake in the long run. However, HEIs that will stand with employees extending their support and succeed in making their employees perceive the organisational support will not only keep at a bay the threat of survival, but eventually will be the one to grow and prosper in future.

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