







Perceived Organizational Support and Employee Motivation: Evidence from the Retail Sector in Kuala Lumpur Based on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

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Abstract. This research investigates the correlation between perceived organizational support (POS) and employee motivation (EM) among retail employees in Kuala Lumpur. Due to the rapid and customer-focused dynamics of the retail sector, sustaining elevated employee enthusiasm is a persistent concern. Despite its importance, there is a paucity of empirical research examining how workers' views of organizational support affect their motivation in the Malaysian retail sector. To fill this gap, a quantitative, cross-sectional approach was used, including 251 participants from three prominent shopping malls: MyTown, Sunway Velocity, and EkoCheras. Data were gathered using structured questionnaires and evaluated using descriptive statistics, reliability testing, and Pearson correlation. The findings revealed a substantial positive association ($r = 0.611$, $p < 0.01$) between perceived organizational support (POS) and employee motivation (EM), grounded in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which highlights the importance of hygienic and motivational aspects in work satisfaction. These results indicate that employees who see themselves as appreciated, supported, and acknowledged by their businesses tend to have elevated levels of motivation. The study offers practical insights for retail managers seeking to boost employee engagement, decrease turnover, and enhance service delivery by adopting supportive organizational practices, including equitable treatment, transparent communication, and professional development opportunities.

Keywords: Perceived Organizational Support (POS), Employee Motivation (EM), Retail Sector, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Human Resource Practices.

1 Introduction

The retail sector in Malaysia is a significant contributor to national employment, especially in big metropolitan areas like Kuala Lumpur. Notwithstanding its economic importance, the industry contends with ongoing labor issues, such as elevated employee

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turnover, diminished job satisfaction, and problems in sustaining long-term motivation among personnel. The fundamentally customer-centric and high-pressure nature of retail employment imposes significant emotional and physical demands on workers, hence heightening the need for robust organizational support systems.

Employee motivation is recognized as a crucial factor influencing service quality, operational efficiency, and customer happiness. In Malaysia's retail sector, motivation is sometimes compromised by unpredictable working hours, restricted career growth prospects, and inadequate acknowledgment of employee contributions. Perceived organizational support (POS), defined as the degree to which employees feel their organization appreciates their contributions and prioritizes their welfare, has become a pivotal psychological factor affecting employee attitudes and behaviors.

Although POS has been thoroughly studied in Western contexts and many sectors, there is a significant deficiency of empirical data about its effects in Malaysia's retail sector. Much of the current research either generalizes findings across sectors or focuses on culturally dissimilar environments, so limiting the application of outcomes to the Malaysian setting. Moreover, little research has used Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory to investigate how POS may concurrently alleviate work unhappiness and augment intrinsic drive.

This research aims to examine the correlation between perceived organizational support (POS) and employee motivation among retail employees in Kuala Lumpur. This empirical investigation enhances the knowledge of how supportive organizational practices may improve employee engagement and guide more successful human resource initiatives in Malaysia's competitive retail sector.

Despite the extensive body of literature on perceived organizational support and employee motivation, empirical evidence within the Malaysian retail sector remains limited. Existing studies largely focus on Western or manufacturing-based contexts, which may not fully capture the realities of Malaysia's service-oriented and collectivist work environment. Moreover, few studies have examined these relationships within high-pressure urban retail settings such as Kuala Lumpur. This study addresses this gap by empirically examining the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee motivation among retail employees in Kuala Lumpur, grounded in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory.

1.1 Research Objectives and Hypothesis

This study aims to investigate the level of employee motivation (EM) among retail workers in Kuala Lumpur and to evaluate the degree of perceived organizational support (POS) experienced by retail personnel. In addition, the study seeks to examine the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee motivation within the retail sector.

Drawing on the existing literature and the proposed conceptual framework, this study hypothesizes that perceived organizational support is significantly and positively related to employee motivation. Accordingly, H1 posits that a substantial positive correlation exists between perceived organizational support (POS) and employee motivation (EM) among retail personnel.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Outcomes of Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) refers to the degree to which workers feel that their company appreciates their efforts and is really invested in their welfare (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Multiple empirical researches have associated elevated levels of perceived organizational support (POS) with favorable employee outcomes, including increased work satisfaction, enhanced organizational commitment, and reduced intentions to depart from the company (Al-Suraihi et al., 2020; Ghazali et al., 2018). In the Malaysian retail sector, POS has been identified as crucial for sustaining staff morale, particularly during times of organizational transition, uncertainty, or economic strain (Katsaros, 2024). Notwithstanding these advantages, the existing literature on POS is deficient in retail-focused research, especially in culturally complex contexts where values like collectivism and respect to authority may influence workers' reactions to support systems.

2.2 Types and Drivers of Employee Motivation (EM)

Employee motivation may be categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic motivation originates from the internal gratification people get from participating in significant and demanding activities, while extrinsic motivation is driven by concrete incentives such as compensation, advancements, and acknowledgment. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959) differentiates between motivators elements that significantly boost motivation, such as accomplishment and personal development and hygiene variables, like remuneration and working circumstances, which mitigate unhappiness but do not inherently foster drive. Recent studies in retail employment indicate that although hygiene factors are essential, intrinsic motivators such as recognition, learning opportunities, and career development are vital for promoting sustained engagement (Kalyanasundaram et al., 2025; Robbins & Judge, 2020). Nonetheless, neglecting hygienic elements may lead to demotivation and discontent, particularly in high-pressure professional settings.

2.3 Integration: Linking POS and Motivation in Retail

Recent research progressively substantiates that perceived organizational support (POS) substantially enhances both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of employee motivation (EM) by fostering a psychologically secure and inclusive workplace. Ompok and Teo (2021) discovered a favorable correlation between POS and increased employee engagement and volunteer effort among retail personnel in Malaysia. Fetriah and Herminingsih (2023) also emphasized the significance of inclusive leadership, continuous feedback, and transparent communication in strengthening the link between perceived organizational support (POS) and motivation. Nevertheless, the majority of current research neglects the impact of cultural and contextual elements, such as Malaysia's collectivist ideals and hierarchical workplace norms, on the efficacy of POS

procedures in retail environments. This research seeks to rectify that constraint by examining the relationship between POS and motivation within Kuala Lumpur's urban retail context, providing culturally relevant insights for human resource strategies in Malaysia.

Collectively, these studies indicate that perceived organizational support plays a critical role in shaping employee motivation. However, cultural factors such as collectivism, respect for hierarchy, and interpersonal harmony—prevalent in Malaysian workplaces—may influence how organizational support is perceived and reciprocated. In retail environments where emotional labour and customer interaction are intensive, supportive organizational practices may be particularly influential in sustaining employee motivation. This highlights the need for context-specific investigation within Malaysia's retail sector.

3 Theory

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation offers a fundamental framework for analyzing employee motivation (EM) in the workplace. Herzberg categorizes workplace elements into two types: hygienic factors and motivators. Hygiene variables are external considerations, including remuneration, job stability, organizational policies, oversight, and work environment. Their absence may result in unhappiness, but their presence alone does not inherently inspire employee motivation (EM). According to Gimpl (2025), although the absence of hygiene elements leads to dissatisfaction, their presence does not always improve engagement or performance.

Conversely, motivators are inherent elements intimately associated with human development and satisfaction, including success, acknowledgment, purposeful labor, and possibilities for progress. These factors directly enhance work satisfaction and ongoing motivation (Ozsoy, 2019). Consequently, a really motivated workforce emerges from a purposeful amalgamation of hygienic factors and intrinsic motivation. Herzberg's thesis is especially pertinent to firms aiming to motivate people sustainably. Pandya (2024) asserts that achieving great performance requires a balance between alleviating unhappiness and cultivating internal motivation. Fishbach and Woolley (2021b) assert that meaningful work is crucial for sustained commitment, indicating that well-handled internal motivators may substantially improve engagement and loyalty. A successful motivation plan must blend external support systems and internal psychological factors to sustain high performance and employee happiness.

4 Conceptual Framework

This research utilizes Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation as the theoretical basis for its conceptual framework. Perceived organizational support (POS) is regarded as the independent variable, whilst employee motivation (EM) is considered the dependent variable. The theory asserts that both hygienic variables (e.g., organizational policies, work environment) and motivational elements (e.g., recognition, development chances) influence workers' motivating outcomes.

Herzberg's theory posits that whereas hygienic considerations may avert unhappiness, only motivators can enhance satisfaction and performance. In this context, POS includes both aspects-providing equitable treatment, resources, and acknowledgment that may concurrently avert unhappiness and foster motivation.

Empirical studies substantiate this conceptual connection. Mayende and Musenze (2020) discovered that POS was substantially correlated with elevated levels of job engagement, an essential element of motivation. This concept posits that increased perceived organizational support correlates with elevated employee motivation in the retail industry.

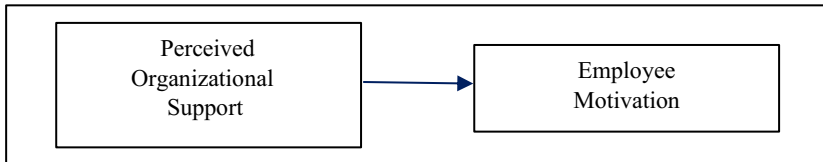


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework

This framework directs the study's design, data collecting, and analysis, providing a systematic method to investigate the impact of supportive organizational behaviors on employee motivation.

5 Methodology

5.1 Introduction

This research used a cross-sectional survey methodology to investigate the correlation between perceived organizational support and employee motivation within the retail sector. Thomas (2020) asserts that cross-sectional research gathers data from a substantial number of participants at one specific moment, making it appropriate for examining contemporary attitudes and actions. This methodology is extensively used in several fields such as psychology, economics, and business research because of its cost-effectiveness, time efficiency, and capacity to provide prompt insights (Cherry, 2024). Self-report questionnaires provide the fast accumulation of extensive data and enable the examination of trends across various demographic groupings.

5.2 Research Approach

This research used a descriptive quantitative methodology, entailing the systematic gathering and analysis of numerical data to observe and quantify variables without direct involvement. This strategy is optimal for delineating the present condition of phenomena and resolving 'what' inquiries rather than 'how' or 'why' (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The study included the distribution of a 13-item questionnaire to 251 store workers at Sunway Velocity Mall, EkoCheras Mall, and MyTown in Kuala Lumpur. This methodology allowed the researchers to get a snapshot of employee motivation and perceived organizational support.

5.3 Research Design

A systematic survey using a five-point Likert scale was used to collect data about perceived organizational support (POS) and employee motivation (EM). This approach facilitates quantitative data analysis and guarantees consistency in replies (Hair, Page, & Brunsveld, 2021). The gathered data underwent statistical analysis, using Pearson correlation and regression analysis, to evaluate the link between the independent variable (POS) and the dependent variable (EM). This methodology is extensively used in business and management research to develop evidence-based correlations between constructs (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2022).

5.4 Population and Sample

The target audience consisted of retail personnel employed at three prominent shopping malls in Kuala Lumpur: Sunway Velocity Mall, EkoCheras Mall, and MyTown. The retail sector was selected because of its dynamic characteristics and dependence on ongoing performance, engagement, and motivation (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). The study did not impose restrictions based on gender or employment tenure; yet, all participants were mandated to be a minimum of 18 years old to comply with ethical research guidelines.

A purposive (non-probability) sampling strategy was used to guarantee that participants fulfilled certain criteria pertinent to the study aims. This method is often used in quantitative research to identify respondents with direct knowledge with the variables being examined (Etikan, 2020). A sample size of 251 was considered enough for performing correlation and regression analysis, providing a compromise between statistical power and feasibility (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2021). Participants were apprised of the study's voluntary nature, guaranteed anonymity of their replies, and given the chance to withdraw at any moment. Ethical research methods were adhered to, including the acquisition of informed permission, in alignment with the standards established by Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2022).

The selected malls were chosen due to their high retail density, diverse store formats, and large workforce population, making them suitable representations of urban retail employment in Kuala Lumpur. While purposive sampling may limit generalizability, this approach ensured that respondents possessed direct experience relevant to the study variables. Potential response bias was minimized through anonymity and voluntary participation.

5.5 Research Instrument

The primary data collection tool employed was a structured questionnaire, divided into three sections as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Research Instrument

Section	Descriptions	Number of Items
Section A: Demographic Information	<p>Captures data such as age, job position, work experience, type of retail store, and employment status.</p> <p>A1. What is your age group? A2. What is your current job position? in the retail industry? A3. How long have you been working? in the retail industry? A4. What type of retail store do you? work in? A5. What is your current employment? status?</p>	5
Section B: Employee Motivation	<p>This section has several types of questions related to employee motivation and readiness to do the job well.</p> <p>B1. I feel motivated to complete me job tasks efficiently and contribute to my organization's success. B2. I am willing to put in extra effort when needed to achieve work goals and expectations. B3. I feel a strong sense of commitment and enthusiasm toward my job and organization. B4. My level of motivation at work remains consistent, even during demanding work periods.</p>	4
Section C: Perceived Organizational Support (POS)	<p>Assesses the extent to which employees feel supported by their organization.</p> <p>C1. The company always appreciates any extra effort from me. C2. The company would consider any complaint from me. C3. Help is available from the company when I have a problem. C4. The company really cares about my well- being.</p>	4

5.6 Data Collection

Data gathering was performed with Google Forms. The questionnaire was sent to retail workers at MyTown, Sunway Velocity Mall, and EkoCheras Mall by email and in-store advertising, with the collaboration of shop managers. Employees were allowed several weeks to answer at their leisure, with participation encouraged via reminders and the possible provision of minor incentives to enhance response rates.

The data gathering approach emphasized confidentiality and voluntary involvement. Honest feedback is crucial for firms to comprehend the aspects affecting employee motivation and to guide future enhancements in workplace practices.

5.7 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed with SPSS version 18. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the data. The analysis focused on two critical areas of the questionnaire: Section B, which addresses employee motivation (EM), and Section C, which examines perceived organizational support (POS), to evaluate the reported levels of motivation and support among respondents.

The following table summarizes the analysis techniques, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Data Analysis

	Section	Analysis Method
To investigate the degree of employee motivation among retail workers in Kuala Lumpur	Section B (Items 1–4) Employee Motivation (EM)	Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation
To evaluate the degree of perceived organizational support (POS) among retail personnel	Section C (Items 5–8) Perceived Organizational Support (POS)	Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation
To examine the correlation between perceived organizational support and employee motivation	Sections B & C	Pearson correlation and regression analysis

5.8 Validity and Reliability

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha to determine internal consistency. The thresholds used to interpret reliability were as follows:

Table 3. Shows Cronbach's Alpha Values and Internal Consistency

Cronbach's Alpha Value	Reliability Interpretation
> 0.90	Excellent / Very Highly Reliable
0.80 – 0.89	Good / Highly Reliable
0.70 – 0.79	Acceptable / Reliable
0.60 – 0.69	Marginally Reliable
< 0.60	Unacceptably Low Reliability

(Source: Lee Cronbach, 1951)

This reliability check ensured that the items in the questionnaire were consistent and valid for measuring the intended constructs.

5.9 Instrument Validity

The questionnaire was evaluated for content validity by three academic specialists in human resource management and organizational behavior. Their comments were used to enhance the phrasing, order, and pertinence of the items. A pilot test with 20 store personnel was undertaken to assess clarity and understanding. Minor tweaks were made to enhance the instrument's accuracy based on their replies.

6 Findings and Discussion

6.1 Demographic Profile

Table 4. Age Group of Respondents

Age Group	Percentage (%)	Respondents (n)
18–24 years	39.4	99
25–34 years	29.1	73
35–44 years	20.3	51
45–54 years	11.2	28
Total	100	251

The findings reveal that a substantial percentage (68.5%) of the participants were aged between 18 and 34 years. This illustrates the youth-centric workforce typical of the

Malaysian retail industry, where young individuals are often hired owing to the rapid and service-oriented nature of retail operations.

Table 5. Current Job Position

Job Position	Percentage (%)	Respondents (n)
Sales Associate/Cashier	43.0	108
Supervisor/Team Leader	20.7	52
Store Manager	17.9	45
Warehouse/Logistics Staff	18.3	46
Total	100	251

The predominant group of responses (43%) were frontline sales associates or cashiers, reflecting the staffing configuration typical in most retail establishments where operational tasks are prevalent. The managerial cohort constituted the smallest segment, indicative of the prevalent organizational structure in retail settings.

Table 6. Duration of Experience in Retail Industry

Years of Experience	Percentage (%)	Respondents (n)
Less than 1 year	25.9	65
1–3 years	35.5	89
4–6 years	22.7	57
More than 6 years	15.9	40
Total	100	251

A majority of responders (61.4%) had less than three years of experience, indicating a mostly junior workforce. This may suggest elevated turnover rates or the fundamental nature of several retail roles.

Table 7. Type of Retail Store

Retail Sector	Percentage (%)	Respondents (n)
Fashion/Clothing Stores	30.3	76
Supermarkets/Hypermarkets	28.3	71
Electronics Stores	21.5	54
Convenience Stores	19.9	50
Total	100	251

Fashion and supermarket merchants comprised the bulk of responders. This distribution illustrates the significance of different retail categories in metropolitan locales like Kuala Lumpur.

Table 8. Current Employment Status

Employment Status	Percentage (%)	Respondents (n)
Full-Time	64.5	162
Part-Time	21.1	53
Contract/Temporary	12.0	30
Internship/Trainee	2.4	6
Total	100	251

A majority of respondents were employed full-time (64.5%), indicating a generally steady core workforce. The existence of part-time and contract personnel underscores the flexible employment frameworks often used in retail to address variable demand and operating expenses.

6.2 Descriptive Analysis

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Employee Motivation (EM)	3.94	0.73
Perceived Organizational Support (POS)	3.82	0.80

Respondents indicated elevated levels of employee motivation and perceived organizational support on a five-point Likert scale. The somewhat elevated mean for motivation indicates that workers typically experience motivation, even in the absence of optimal organizational support. This underscores the existence of intrinsic motivators, including personal accomplishment and occupational happiness. Nevertheless, the elevated POS score underscores the significance workers attribute to receiving assistance, appreciation, and recognition from their businesses.

6.3 Reliability and Correlation Analysis

Prior to doing correlation analysis, the constructs' reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha. Table 10 indicates that both Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and Employee Motivation (EM) had good internal consistency, with values beyond the suggested level of 0.70 (Hair, Page, & Brunsveld, 2021). The findings validate the reliability of the measuring items for both constructs for further statistical analysis.

Table 10. Reliability Analysis for POS and EM

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Perceived Organizational Support (POS)	0.940
Employee Motivation (EM)	0.880

A Pearson correlation test was conducted subsequent to the reliability study to investigate the link between POS and EM. Table 11 illustrates that the correlation coefficient between POS and EM is 0.611, indicating a moderate to strong positive association. This indicates that individuals who recognize more organizational support are more inclined to demonstrate elevated motivation levels. The association is statistically significant and corroborates the study's premise, strengthening previous research on the influence of organizational support on employee attitudes and actions (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2022).

Table 11. Correlation Matrix

Variable	POS	EM
Perceived Organizational Support (POS)	1.00	0.611
Employee Motivation (EM)	0.611	1.00

The positive relationship between perceived organizational support and employee motivation suggests that retail organizations can enhance motivation by strengthening support mechanisms such as recognition, fair treatment, and access to assistance when challenges arise. Retail managers may leverage these findings by implementing transparent communication practices, providing regular feedback, and offering opportunities for skill development. Such initiatives may contribute to reduced turnover, improved service quality, and stronger employee commitment.

7 Conclusion

This research examined the correlation between perceived organizational support (POS) and employee motivation (EM) in Malaysia's retail industry. The results indicate a statistically significant positive association, indicating that workers who see their companies as supportive-feeling appreciated and cared for-are more inclined to demonstrate elevated motivation levels. This result corroborates Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which asserts that organizational support serves as both a hygiene element and a motivator, particularly in dynamic, people-centric settings such as retail.

Theoretically, the research contributes to the expanding literature highlighting the crucial significance of POS in enhancing workplace motivation. It confirms that workers are more inclined to engage with their responsibilities and maintain loyalty to their businesses when they get regular feedback, acknowledgment, and resources that correspond with their contributions and welfare.

The findings provide significant insights for retail managers and human resources specialists. By augmenting organizational support mechanisms—such as providing consistent feedback, incentive systems, training opportunities, and compassionate leadership—employers may cultivate a more motivated, loyal, and productive staff. These tactics enhance individual work happiness while simultaneously reducing attrition rates, improving service quality, and strengthening overall organizational performance.

In an increasingly competitive and rapidly evolving retail landscape, particularly in post-pandemic contexts, cultivating a supportive organizational culture can serve as a critical differentiating factor. Retail organizations that invest in employee support systems are more likely to achieve higher levels of employee engagement, improved customer service, and sustainable organizational growth.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The research focused solely on the retail sector, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other industries such as hospitality, logistics, or manufacturing. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data may have introduced response bias. Future research is encouraged to adopt longitudinal or mixed-method approaches, examine additional mediating or moderating variables, and extend investigations to other service industries to enhance the generalizability and depth of understanding of perceived organizational support and employee motivation.

Overall, this research underscores the critical importance of perceived organizational support in enhancing employee engagement within the retail industry. Furthermore, it provides a foundation for organizations and policymakers to develop interventions and strategies that foster a supportive workplace culture - one that empowers, retains, and motivates employees, thereby contributing to long-term organizational resilience and success.

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