

Research Proposal Submission

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*Title:* Trouble at work: A model testing relationships among job strain, social support, cooperativeness, and well-being

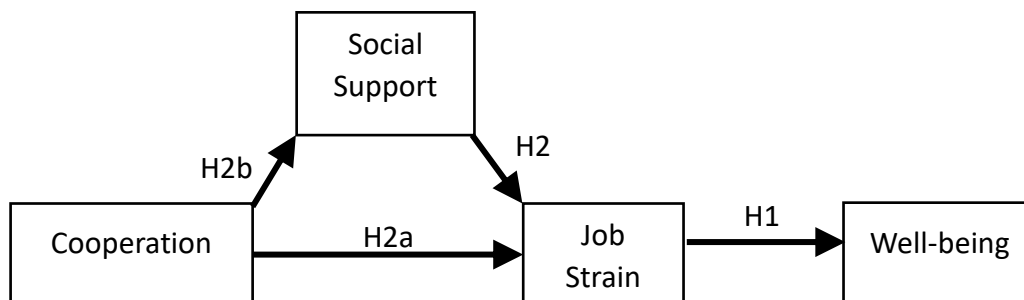
*Abstract:* The present study seeks to investigate the nature of the relationships among cooperativeness, job strain, social support, and mental well-being. Job strain, as conceptualized in Karasek's Job Demands-Control model (1979), is the outcome resulting from a prolonged experience of high job demands and low job control. First, it is investigated if job strain affects employee mental well-being. Second, the model also proposes that an employee's cooperativeness affects how strained an individual may feel at work (i.e. job strain). Finally, as cooperativeness is inherently social (Ross, Rausch & Canada, 2003), the present study investigates the role of social support as a potential mediator between cooperativeness and job strain. A survey measuring each variable (well-being, job strain, cooperation, and social support) will be administered. Participants of the study will be MTSU undergraduate students and the results will be analyzed using structural equation modeling.

## Introduction

The present study seeks to investigate the nature of the relationships among cooperativeness, job strain, social support, and mental well-being. Job strain, as conceptualized in Karasek's Job Demands-Control model (1979), is the outcome resulting from a prolonged experience of high job demands and low job control. The present study first investigates whether job strain affects employee mental well-being. Second, the model also proposes that an employee's cooperativeness affects how strained an individual may feel at work (i.e. job strain). Finally, as cooperativeness is inherently social (Ross, Rausch & Canada, 2003), the present study investigates the role of social support as a potential mediator between cooperativeness and job strain. The present study seeks to provide conceptual clarity on the relationships among these variables in hopes of further understanding how organizations can positively affect employee well-being in the future.

### Hypothesis:

- *Hypothesis 1:* High job strain predicts negative mental well-being.
- *Hypothesis 2:* Cooperativeness is negatively correlated with job strain, as mediated by social support.
  - *H2a:* Cooperativeness is negatively correlated with job strain.
  - *H2b:* Cooperativeness is positively correlated with social support.
  - *H2c:* Social support is negatively correlated with job strain.



## Methods

### Participants

A total of 200 undergraduate students will be recruited from general psychology courses at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) through SONA systems.

### Procedures

To test the proposed model, a survey comprised of four sections will be administered. The survey will begin with three sequential sections, measuring cooperativeness, social support and job strain, and end with a demographics section.

### Measures

*Job Strain.* To measure job strain, the short form version of the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ; Pejtersen et al. 2010) will be used. The COPSOQ-SF measures the following dimensions: job satisfaction ( $\alpha = .75$ ), behavioral stress symptoms ( $\alpha = .65$ ) and cognitive stress symptoms ( $\alpha = .85$ ).

*Social Support.* To measure social support within the workplace, items contained within the social support dimensions of the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire will be used. Social support will be assessed using items from the following dimensions: social support from supervisor ( $\alpha = .79$ ), social support from colleagues ( $\alpha = .70$ ), and social community at work ( $\alpha = .85$ ).

*Cooperativeness.* As there is a shortage of surveys measuring cooperativeness that do not juxtapose it against competition or other constructs unrelated to the present study, a measure of prosocial behavior is used to conceptualize the cooperative behaviors of interest in the present study. The Prosocialness Scale for Adults (Caprara, Steca, Zelli & Capanna, 2005), is used, which has a Cronbach's alpha  $\alpha$  for the entire set of .91.

*Mental Well-being.* To measure psychological health, the Mental Health Continuum-Short Form will be used (Keyes, 2006; Keyes, Wissing, Potieger, Temane, Kruger & van Rooy, 2008). The scale consists of 14 items, wherein respondents rate items between 0 and 5. See the appendices for the items and respective anchors used. Higher scores represent a higher level of emotional well-being. The scale assesses psychological health on three dimensions: emotional, social and psychological well-being. The measure has shown high internal validity, reliability, and discriminant validity (Keyes, 2006; Keyes, et al., 2008).

## Results

To assess the proposed model, structural equation modeling will be used.