

# **THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT ON EMPLOYEE'S BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE**

## **AN EMPIRICAL STUDY IN TAIWAN**

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### **Abstract**

*For decades, modern organizations have initiated changes to enhance their competitive positions and their survivability in competitive markets. However, there are countless companies fail to implement organizational changes. Therefore, they are increasingly dependent upon employees' supportive attitudes and behaviour to ensure the success of planned changes. Given that empirical research on the perceived social support in a change context per se has been scarce, this study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the inner workings of social support and organizational change. The results from a sample of 309 respondents, which were collected from 5 local manufacturing companies in Taiwan, revealed that social support not only affects directly employees' behavioural support for change, but also exerts its indirect effects via affective commitment to the organization and affective commitment to change. Practical implications, contributions and limitations of this study are discussed with suggestions for future research proposed.*

*Keywords: Social support; affective commitment to organization; affective commitment to change; behavioural support for change*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Given the fact that modern organizations pursue changes to enhance their competitive positions and their survivability in competitive markets (Higgs & Rowland, 2005), the successful implementation of organizational change has become an important task for these organizations as well as management. However, countless companies have failed to implement organizational

changes (Higgs & Rowland, 2005; Jaros, 2010; Judge, Thoresen, Pucik, & Welbourne, 1999). These failures, according to Kotter and Cohen (2002), are commonly related to human issues, not technical issues (cf. Self, Armenakis, & Schradeder, 2007).

Although there is a growing interest in understanding how change is experienced and perceived by individual employees (Judge et al., 1999), very little research has investigated the process of organizational change from a psychological perspective (Judge et al., 1999). This situation indicates the urgent need for researchers to investigate the impact of the affective reactions of employees on change (Parish, Cadwallader, & Busch, 2007), given that individuals are the most important unit in organizational change (Graetz & Smith, 2010). Thus, this study aims to explore insights into the “human side” during change (Graetz & Smith, 2010) and related opportunities for improving the success of organizational changes (Parish et al., 2007).

Indeed, the successful implementation of organizational change often requires employees’ acceptance and support (Fedor, Caldwell, & Herold, 2006; Miller, Johnson, & Grau, 1994). In other words, employees’ positive attitudes and supportive behavior to change are a necessary condition for successful planned change (Fedor et al., 2006; Meyer, Srinivas, Lai, & Topolnytsky, 2007; Miller et al., 1994; Parish et al., 2007). However, there is limited understanding of the numerous factors associated with a person’s decision to support organizational change (Lamm & Gordon, 2010). In addition, past studies tended to investigate employee affective and attitudinal responses to organizational change more than behavioral responses (Lamm & Gordon, 2010). Accordingly, it is both important and beneficial to gain an understanding of the drivers of employees’ supportive attitudes and behavior to change. In short, there is a need for a systematic empirical investigation into why and how employees develop behavior supportive to organizational change in addition to affective and attitudinal responses to organizational change.

Humans tend to want to reduce uncertainty and maintain a stable self-concept propelled by consistency in their actions at their workplace; this allows individuals to better manage relationships at work that are predictable and stable (Leana & Barry, 2000). However, during the process of organizational change, employees were skeptical about change and concerned about its outcomes (Lau & Woodman, 1995). As such, organizational change is stressful as it causes changes to, and demands readjustment of, an average employee’s normal routine. In this regard, social support is important during organizational change as it is thought to buffer job stress (House, 1981).

When it comes to resources in the workplace, social support can be viewed as a means of control over some aspect of work demands, which in turn enhances self-efficacy, through the supportive actions of the supervisor and/or coworkers (Ashford, 1988; Daniels & Guppy, 1994 ).

Thus, this study reasons that an individual who receives social support in the workplace can gain an enhanced sense of his/her belonging (Sundin, Bildt, Lisspers, Hochwalder, & Setterkubd, 2006) and self-efficacy over time. Particularly, as suggested, people who are confident in their abilities can mitigate the stressful effects of demanding jobs (Schaubroeck & Merritt, 1997) during change which, in turn, might generate behavior supportive to organizational change.

In summary, as increasing frequency and severity of organizational changes become the norm, improving our understanding of how employees' behaviors are supportive to changes becomes increasingly important (Fedor et al., 2006). In addition, most change research has focused on macro-level (e.g., organization-level) phenomena, as opposed to focusing on individuals (Lamm & Gordon, 2010; Wanberg & Banas, 2000). Thus, this study aims to answer calls for developing a greater understanding of the complexities of employees' affective reactions during organizational change (Herold, Fedor, & Caldwell, 2007). In short, the main aim of this study is to investigate the mechanisms and processes through which social support influences individual's behavioral support for organizational change.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Social Support and Organizational Change

Social support is defined as the "actions of others that are either helpful or intended to be helpful" (Deelstra et al., 2003, p. 324) and is conceived to be information leading an individual to believe that he/she is cared for, loved, esteemed and valued, and that he/she belongs to a network of communication and mutual obligation (Cobb, 1976). According to this definition, an important feature of social support is social interaction and the process between the provider and the recipients of social support (Sundin et al., 2006).

It is suggested that social support has two basic elements: (a) the perception that there is a sufficient number of available others to whom one can turn in times of need and (b) a degree of satisfaction with the available support (Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983). In this sense, social support can be seen as a flow of emotional concern, instrumental aid, information and/or appraisal between people (i.e., supervisor and coworkers) (Sundin et al., 2006).

It is well accepted that organizational changes are viewed as a formidable stressor in organizational life (Allen et al., 2007; Judge et al., 1999). Functionally speaking, as Caplan (1974) suggested, social support implies an enduring pattern of continuous or intermittent ties that play a significant part in maintaining the psychological and physical integrity of the individual over time. Specifically, social support functions to help reduce one's stress (House,

1981; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000) through the exchange of verbal and non-verbal messages that convey emotion, information, or referral (Joe, 2010). In this context, social support functions to help reduce employees' stress (House, 1981; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000) through the exchange of verbal and non-verbal messages that convey emotion, information, or referral (Joe, 2010).

With respect to the source of social support, social support is usually defined as the existence or availability of people upon whom we can rely, people who let us know that they care about, value, and love us (Sarason et al., 1983). Specifically, social support at workplace is defined by Karasek and Theorell, (1990) as the "overall levels of helpful social interaction available on the job from coworkers and supervisors" (p. 69). As such, the changes (i.e., adopting new information systems) experienced by employees are best represented by the new situations affecting their current jobs, which are governed by their immediate supervisors and shared by their coworkers.

Supervisor support is characterized by the human relations ability of supervisors, and is displayed in terms of trust, respect, friendship and a deep concern for subordinates' needs (Iverson, 1996). In the workplace, supervisors play an important role in structuring the work environment, providing information and feedback to employees (Griffin, Patterson, & West, 2001) and controlling the powerful rewards that recognize the employee's personal worth (Doby & Caplan, 1995). In accordance with this view, Wayne, Shore and Liden (1997) suggested that the social interaction between an employee and his/her immediate supervisor is the primary determinant of an employee's attitude and behavior in the workplace.

In addition to supervisor support, coworker support also involves the interpersonal transfer of instrumental or emotional resources (House, 1981). Coworker support generally refers to having close friends at work who are willing to listen to job-related problems, are helpful in assisting with the job and who can be relied upon when things become difficult at work (Iverson, 1996). In this case, as Hobfoll (1988) argued, coworkers also serve as a key resource for employees in the process of adopting new information systems.

### **Social Support (SS) and Behavioral Support for Change (BSC)**

Behavioral support for change refers to behaviors that are consistent with the goals of the change (Orth, 2002). According to Herscovitch and Meyer (2002), there are three kinds of behavior which are supportive to change: compliance, cooperation and championing. Compliance refers to employees' willingness to do what is required of them by the organization in implementing the change. Cooperation refers to employees' acceptance of the "spirit" of the change and willingness to do little extras to make it work. Finally, championing refers to employees' willingness to embrace the change and "sell" it to others.

According to the concept of personification of organization (Levinson, 1965), the immediate supervisor's behaviors are likely to be perceived by employees as representative of organizational decisions (Griffin et al., 2001), and supportive treatment by the employees' supervisors is interpreted as the organization's benevolent or malevolent orientation towards them. As such, a supportive leader is more likely to have a greater influence on employee's supportive behavior for change via perceiving organizational support.

On the basis of the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), employees, once they have perceived organizational support, develop a generalized felt obligation to care about the organization's welfare and help the organization achieve its objectives (e.g., success of change) (Eisenberger et al., 2001). That is, employees who perceive supervisor support not only tend to interpret the organization's gains and losses as their own, but also tend to perceive the outcomes of organizational change positively (Fedor et al., 2006) which, in turn, will enhance their behavioral support for change.

Psychologically, social support (e.g., feeling valued, cared for and supported by one's supervisor and coworkers) makes a work environment seem more pleasant or less stressful. Moreover, supervisory support is displayed in terms of trust and a deep concern for their subordinates' needs. Perceptions of trust have been found to play an important role in influencing employees' behavior (Allen, Jimmieson, Bordia, & Irmer, 2007). From this perspective, employees who, because of trust in the organization via perceived supervisor support, have positive perceptions of the outcomes of organizational change tend to demonstrate behavior supportive to change.

Further, under the condition that coworkers are willing to listen to job-related problems, are helpful in assisting with the job, can be relied upon when things become difficult on the job and share worries and concerns with each other, group cohesion at work is enhanced (Iverson, 1996) and all these appear to be effective in improving behavior which is supportive to organizational change.

In summary, the availability of social support at workplace enhances the capacity to withstand and overcome frustrations and problem-solving challenges, in addition to cultivating a more optimistic view of the future (Sarason et al., 1983). Consequently, individuals who have an optimistic view of the future during organizational change, and the capacity to withstand and overcome frustrations and problem-solving challenges resulting from organizational change, might demonstrate stronger behavioral support for change. Accordingly, on the basis of the inferences made above, hypothesis 1 is stated as:

**H1:** *There is a direct positive relationship between social support and behavioral support for change.*

### **Social Support and Affective Commitment to Organization (ACO)**

Organizational commitment was defined as a strong belief in the organization's goal and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a strong desire to remain a member of the organization (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). Today, most measures of organizational commitment assess affective commitment (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001) which has been defined as an emotional attachment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This refers to the degree to which employees identify with the company and make the company's goals their own (Colquitt et al., 2001). In this study, we focus on affective commitment, because this construct best reflects employees' alignment with a change initiative (Herold, Fedor, Caldwell, & Liu, 2008).

As Eisenberger et al. (1990) suggested, perceived organizational support (POS) meets the employees' socio-emotional needs. This study argues the same is true with social support for social support implies an enduring pattern of continuous or intermittent ties that play a significant part in maintaining the psychological and physical integrity of the individual over time (Sarason et al., 1983). That is, social support functions in the same way by providing the employees' socio-emotional support including involvement, shared values and identification.

In addition, social exchange theory indicates the importance of supervisor support in influencing employees' work attitudes (Liu & Ipe, 2010). Consequently, when individuals perceive support from their supervisors, whilst it is perceived as "support from the organization", they might feel obligated to repay the organization by becoming affectively committed (Witt, Kacmar, & Andrews, 2001).

Moreover, individuals in organizations strive for self-esteem and a positive self-concept (Michel, Stemaier, & Salvador, 2010). According to Michel et al. (2011), self-concept is derived from group memberships and from the way in which the group to which one belongs is valued by others (supervisors and co-workers). That is, social support can create a sense of belonging for an individual at the emotional level (Sundin et al., 2006). Accordingly, it is plausible to assume that social support encourages individuals to involve themselves in, orientates them to recognize the value relevance of, or fosters them to derive their identity form association with the organization (i.e., ACO). Thus, hypothesis 2 is stated as:

***H2: There is a direct positive relationship between social support and affective commitment to organization.***

### **Affective Commitment to Organization and Affective Commitment to Change**

Conceptually, an employee's perception that a change initiative is consistent with an organization's vision would enable them to commit to that change (Dvir, Kass, & Shamir, 2004).

Individuals who identify with their organizations are more likely to engage in favor of the collective goals (Michel et al., 2010), as an employee with high emotional attachment to an organization would strongly identify with the vision of the organization and the goals and values of change initiatives. In other words, employees with strong affective commitment to an organization are likely to see the value of organizational change (Meyer et al., 2007) which, in turn, would enhance their affective commitment to change.

Moreover, employees with strong affective commitment to an organization are likely to do more than is required of them, even if it involves some degree of personal sacrifice (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Michel et al., 2010). Also, empirical evidence from previous research shows that affective commitment to an organization plays a vital role in employees' acceptance of change (Iverson, 1996; Yousef, 2000). In short, it is likely that affective commitment to organization is positively related to affective commitment to change because employees who identify with their organizations may take the organization's perspective and integrate organizational goals and interests with their self-concept and are likely to assess the change efforts as necessary and beneficial (Michel et al., 2010). Accordingly, it is plausible to believe that employees with strong ACO would be more likely to demonstrate ACC. Thus, hypothesis 3 is stated as:

***H3: Affective commitment to organization is positively related to affective commitment to change.***

### **Affective Commitment to Change and Behavioural Support for Change**

Conceptually, commitment to change is distinctive from commitment to an organization (Fedor et al., 2006) and, more importantly, commitment to a change is a better predictor of behavioral support for a change than is organizational commitment (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). In particular, with respect to the relationship between ACC and BSC, as suggested, those who buy-in to the change and want to make efforts to ensure its success (i.e., strong ACC) should be willing to do more than is required of them, even if it involves some personal sacrifice (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Meyer et al., 2007).

Furthermore, commitment to change has been found to be a better predictor of specific change-related behaviors (Fedor et al., 2006; Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Specifically, affective commitment to change has been found to be positively related to both non-discretionary behavior (i.e., compliance behavior) and discretionary behavior (i.e., cooperation and championing behaviors) (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Meyer et al., 2007). Thus, hypothesis 4 is stated as:

***H4: Affective commitment to change is positively related to behavioral support for change.***

## **Mediating Roles of Affective Commitment to Organization and Affective Commitment to Change**

### ***Social Support and Affective Commitment to Change (ACC)***

With respect to commitment to organizational change, similar to Meyer and Allen's (1991) Three-Component Model (TCM), commitment to change also has three components: affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment to change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Specifically, in regard to affective commitment to change, they argued that the mindset of affective commitment to change can reflect a desire to provide support for the change based on a belief in its inherent benefits.

Organizational change is intended to alter key organizational variables that then affect the members of the organization and their work-related attitudes and behaviors (Jimmieson, Terry, & Callan, 2004). In general, the changes experienced by employees are best represented by the new situations affecting their current jobs, which are governed by their immediate supervisors, and influenced by their co-workers. In particular, the impact of organizational change on employees' commitment to such change and their re-examination of their ongoing commitment to the organization are expected to be based on their interaction and experience with their immediate supervisors and their co-workers.

Specifically, the organizational change process creates fear, uncertainty and doubt (Graetz & Smith, 2010; Jaskyte, 2003). In this regard, high-social-support individuals not only might have a more optimistic view of the future, but also enhanced capacity to withstand and overcome frustrations and problem-solving challenges (Sarason et al., 1983). In that event, social support might influence subordinates' attitudes toward organizational change (Liu & Ipe, 2010). Accordingly, it is plausible to assume that there is a positive relationship between social support and affective commitment to change.

### ***Affective Commitment to Organization and Behavioral Support for Change***

With respect to the relationship between affective commitment to organization and Behavioral support for change, employees with strong affective commitment to an organization are likely to do whatever is required to benefit the target of that action (e.g., organizational change) (Meyer et al., 2007), since their mindset directs attention to the intended outcome and thereby allows them to regulate their activity to achieve that outcome (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001) for their organizations.

According to Herscovitch and Meyer (2002), the nature of the commitment is important in explaining employees' willingness to go beyond these minimum requirements (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). That is, employees who strongly identify with a company and perceive the



company's goals as their own (i.e., strong ACO), should be willing to do more than is required of them, even if it involves some personal sacrifice (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Meyer et al., 2007). Thus, this study assumes that affective commitment to organization is positively related to behavioral support for change.

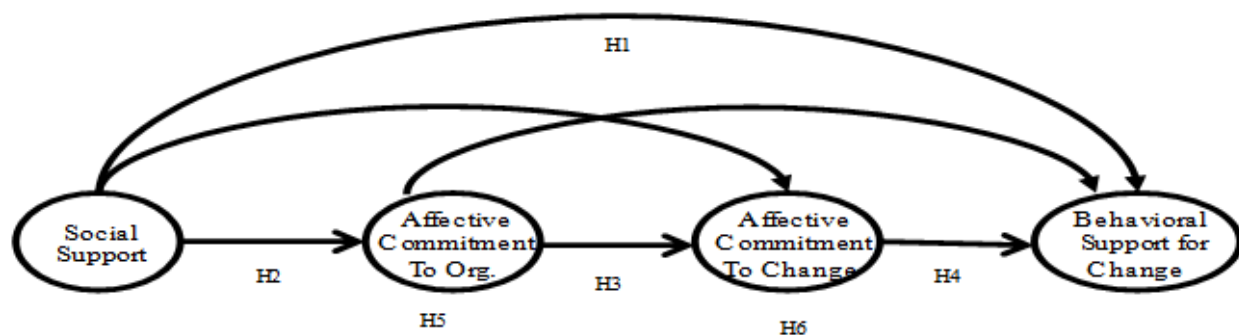
According to Baron and Kenny's (1986) assertion, the role of the mediator of an independent variable–dependent variable relationship is supported, in part, by the links between: (1) independent variable and mediator, (2) independent variable and dependent variable and (3) mediator and dependent variable. Thus, on the basis that all of the inferences previously discussed for the simple bivariate associations incorporated in the initial hypotheses, hypotheses 5 and 6 are stated as:

**H5:** *Affective commitment to organization mediates the relationship between social support and affective commitment to change.*

**H6:** *Affective commitment to change mediates the relationship between Affective commitment to organization and behavioral support for change.*

The hypothesized model presented in this study is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Hypothesized Model**



## RESEARCH METHOD

### Participants

Today, almost all organizations in Taiwan are experiencing internal pressures to carry out organizational change under pressure to compete in both external and internal markets. This is particularly the case for the local manufacturing companies in Taiwan as external pressure mounts to maintain their competitiveness. Consequently, they have initiated organizational change in order to improve efficiency, quality of service and client responsiveness, as well as reducing operation costs.

Invitations for participation were sent to 12 managers who attended a management training program. After consulting with their companies, five agreed to participate in the questionnaire survey. All five companies were located at Hsinchu County, Taiwan. A total of 500 questionnaires were sent to these five companies. Attached to each questionnaire was a cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey and a return envelope to ensure that participants could send back their replies independent of their organizations. A total of 333 questionnaires were returned (67% response rate), with 309 valid questionnaires (62%) after screening out 24 questionnaires due to missing values.

Descriptive statistics for the valid respondents are presented in Table 1.

Gender	Male	52%
	Female	48%
Job Rank	Managerial position	15%
	Non-managerial position	85%
Age (years)	< 30	35%
	31-40	47%
	41-50	14%
	> 50	4%
Seniority (years)	> 15	9%
	11-15	12%
	5-10	21%
	< 5 years	58%
Education Level	Masters	25%
	University Degree	56%
	Diploma	11%
	High school	8%
Annual income (NT\$)	> 1,200,000	1%
	800,001 – 1,200,000	4%
	400,001 – 800,000	33%
	< 400,000	62%

## Measures

Unless otherwise stated, all responses were made on a 6-point scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (6) strongly agree.

### ***Social support (SS)***

Social support was assessed by using ten items including 7 items of perceived supervisor support (PSS) which were developed by Cummings and Oldham (1997); 3 items of perceived coworker support (PCS) which were developed by Yoon and Thye (2000). The internal consistency of this 10-item scale was .93 in the current sample.

### ***Affective Commitment to Organization (ACO)***

Affective commitment to organization was measured using the six items developed by Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993). The internal consistency of this six-item scale was .94 in the current sample.

### ***Affective Commitment to Change (ACC)***

Affective commitment to change was measured with the six items developed by Herscovitch and Meyer (2002). The internal consistency of this six-item scale was .85 in the current sample.

### ***Behavioral Support for Change (BSC)***

Behavioral Support for change was measured with the 17 items developed by Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) (e.g. “I adjust the way I do my job as required by this change”. [compliance]; “I work toward the change consistently”. [cooperation]; and “I encourage the participation of others in the change”. [championing]). The internal consistency of this six-item scale was .95 in the current sample.

Overall, the strength of the internal consistency estimates of the variables in this study suggests homogeneity of the scale items

## **ANALYSIS**

Before testing the study hypotheses, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted with AMOS software (Arbuckle, 2003) to examine the convergent and discriminant validity of study measures. Given the large number of items (39) relative to the sample size (309), the procedures recommended by Mathieu and Farr (1991) were followed by creating three composite indicators for ACO and ACC. For the indicators of social support and BSC, two sub-dimensions (i.e., PSS and PCS) and three sub-dimensions (i.e., compliance; championship and cooperation) respectively were used in order to maintain an adequate sample-size-to-parameter ratio (Landis, Beal, & Tesluk, 2000).

Following the approach recommended by Andersen and Gerbing (1988), convergent validity is demonstrated when the path loading ( $\lambda$ ) from an item to its latent construct is significant and exceeds 0.50. All path loading ( $\lambda$ ) in this study, as shown in Table 2, was above 0.50 (0.69-0.94). In addition, convergent validity is also adequate when the constructs have an average variance extracted (AVE) of at least 0.50 and composite reliability (CR) is greater than 0.6 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 2006). As shown in Table 2, the AVEs of all four constructs in this study exceeded 0.50 (0.55-0.79); CRs of all four constructs exceeded 0.6 (0.71-.91). Thus, all constructs in our study demonstrate adequate convergent validity.

To assess discriminant validity, the procedures outlined by Fornell and Larcker (1981) were employed to examine whether the square root of AVE for two constructs should exceed the correlation between the constructs. As shown in Table 2, the square root of AVE for two constructs exceeded the correlation between the constructs. Thus, all tests of reliability and validity lead to the conclusion that the measures used in later statistical analyses fall within acceptable reliability and validity criteria.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Cronbach $\alpha$	CR	Item loading ( $\lambda$ ) (min.-Max.)	1	2	3	4
1. SS	4.53	.76	.93	.71	(.69 - .79)	<b>(.74)</b>			
2. ACO	4.46	.90	.94	.91	(.88 - .89)	.70**	<b>(.89)</b>		
3. ACC	4.28	.70	.85	.85	(.79 - .85)	.57**	.59**	<b>(.81)</b>	
4. BSC	4.50	.69	.95	.89	(.76 - .94)	.72**	.73**	.71**	<b>(.86)</b>

Note:

1. SS=social support; ACO= affective commitment to organization; ACC= affective commitment to change; BSC= behavioral support for change; CR = composite reliability.
2. Item loading ( $\lambda$ ) is standardized.
3. Values along the diagonal represent the square root of average variance extracted (AVE).

In addition, given that the data were collected from a single source, the procedures of Harman's one-factor test recommended by Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee and Podsakoff (2003) were conducted to examine whether the hypothesized four-factor model was superior to the one-factor model in order to rule out the influence of common-method bias. The result shows that the four-factor model (GFI = .95; CFI = .98; TLI = .97; RMSEA = .066) had a better fit than the single-factor model (GFI = .76; CFI = .85; TLI = .80; RMSEA = .17). Thus, although the present data may have common-method variance, the common-method bias does not seem to be a serious problem in this study.

### Hypothesis Testing

The mean, standard deviations, and correlations between the research variables are shown in Table 2. As predicted, social support (SS) is positively correlated with ACO (0.70,  $p < 0.01$ ), ACC (0.57,  $p < 0.01$ ) and BSC (0.72,  $p < 0.01$ ); ACO is positively correlated with ACC (0.59,  $p < 0.01$ ) and BSC (0.73,  $p < 0.01$ ); and ACC is positively correlated with BSC (0.71,  $p < 0.01$ ). By and large, the pattern of correlations is consistent with the hypothesized relationships.

Next, structural equation modelling was performed using AMOS 5.0 (Arbuckle, 2003). According to Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) recommendation, the measurement model was tested before actually testing the hypothesized model. The full measurement model was tested

whereby all latent variables in this study were allowed to correlate. The fit, according to Hu and Bentler's (1999) argument, was a good fit in comparison with relative fit indices. With the fitness of the measurement model confirmed, the hypothesized model was then tested.

The last step is to test the mediating roles of affective commitment to organization and affective commitment to change in the relation between social support and behavioral support for change. Bootstrapping was employed to test directly for the mediators with AMOS software since bootstrapping is currently regarded as a more powerful tool for testing the mediating effects in comparison with Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The standard estimated indirect effect of social support on behavioral support for change thus obtained was 0.61 (95% CI: 0.427-0.744), the standard estimated indirect effect of social support on affective commitment to change was 0.69 (95% CI: 0.535-0.796), and the standard estimated indirect effect of affective commitment to organization on behavioral support for change was 0.70 (95% CI: 0.526-0.805). These results confirm the mediating roles of affective commitment to organization and affective commitment to change in the hypothesized relations.

Further, in order to test whether a fully mediating relationship exists between perceived supervisor support and behavioral support for change, a competitive modeling test was conducted. Table 3 presents fit indices for the hypothesized model, along with three alternative models. Results of comparison show that Alternative Model 1 is the most adequate for explaining the data as indicated by a RMSEA of 0.072, a CFI of 0.975, a GFI of 0.944, and a TLI of 0.965, whereas the other two alternative models indicate a non-significant relationship between affective commitment to organization and affective commitment to change and relationship between affective commitment to change and behavioral support for change albeit these two models demonstrate better indices than Alternative Model 1.

Table 3: Competitive Model Test

	X <sup>2</sup>	df	X <sup>2</sup> /df	ΔX <sup>2</sup>	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	GFI
Hypothesized model	199.94	41	4.88		.112	.937	.915	.898
Alternative Model 1	104.09	40	2.60	95.86	.072	.975	.965	.944
Alternative Model 2	88.54	39	2.27	111.40	.064	.980	.972	.951
Alternative Model 3	88.48	38	2.33	111.46	.066	.980	.971	.951

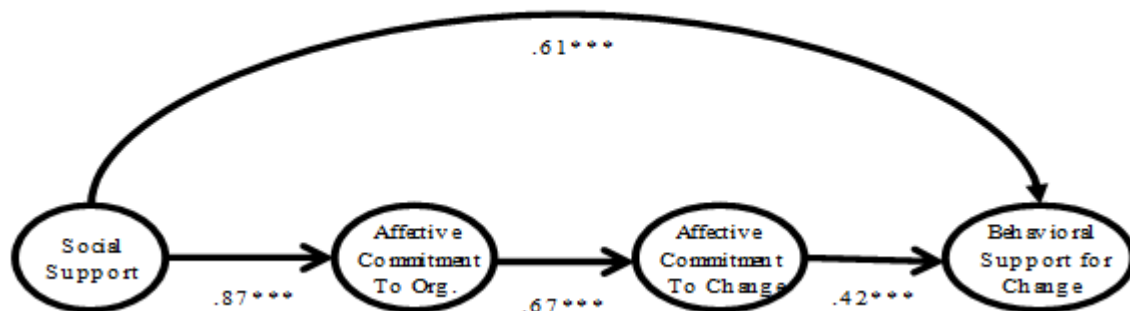
**Alternative Model 1** only added the direct path from social support to behavioral support for change.

**Alternative Model 2** added (1) the direct path from social support to behavioral support for change. (2) the direct path from social support to affective commitment to change.

**Alternative Model 3** added (1) the direct path from social support to behavioral support for change. (2) the direct path from social support to affective commitment to change. (3) the direct path from affective commitment to organization to behavioral support for change.

Standardized parameter estimates for the best-fitting model (Alternative Model 1) are shown in Figure 2. For ease of presentation, only the structural model is presented rather than the full measurement model. Examination of the path coefficients reveals that social support is uniquely related to affective commitment to organization in the positive direction and has significant direct associations with behavioral support for change; affective commitment to organization is related to affective commitment to change in the positive direction, and affective commitment to change is related to behavioral support for change in the positive direction. Thus, all hypotheses are supported.

**Figure 2: Final Model**



In summary, the results of this study indicate that social support has positive association with affective commitment to change and behavioral support for change, whereas both affective commitment to organization fully mediated the relationship between social support and affective commitment to change, and affective commitment to change fully mediated the relationship between affective commitment to organization and behavioral support for change.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Lu and Gilmour's (2004) findings indicated that Chinese in both Taiwan and Mainland China scored higher on socially oriented conceptions. Social support in the workplace represents the amount of care that is evident between the supervisor and co-workers, through demonstrations of "human-heartedness" (Lu, Gilmour, & Kao, 2001). Social support, in this study, supports the view that it functions as a means of control over some aspects of work demands, which in turn encourages behavioral support for change, through affective commitment to an organization and to change. That is, this study supports the efficacy of social support in developing employees' attitudes and behaviors toward change.

The results of this study are also consistent with the assertions of Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) and Ford et al. (2006) which suggest that commitment to change is conceptually and empirically distinct from commitment to an organization. Moreover, the results are in agreement with the findings of Iverson (1996) and Yousef (2000) that there is a positive relationship between affective commitment to organization and affective commitment to change ( $r = .59, p < .01$ , Table 2). That is, the more the employees are loyal to the organization, the greater their willingness to accept change.

Furthermore, this study revealed implicitly that, based on the norm of reciprocity, a supportive supervisor and/or coworkers are likely to strengthen affective commitment to organization by enhancing followers' "felt obligation" which, in turn, promotes their affective commitment to change. In short, social support may promote individuals' willingness to exert their efforts to contribute to their organization's successful implementation of change through affective commitment to organization and affective commitment to change.

With respect to practical implications, this finding demonstrates the efficacy of social support in developing subordinates' work attitudes and behaviors toward organizational change, and suggests that, to a certain extent, the success of organizational change efforts lies in social support within an organization. From a behavioral viewpoint, managers and HR experts "should make decisions that account for specific circumstances, focusing on those which are most directly relevant and intervening with the most appropriate actions" (Graetz & Smith, 2010; p.143). Therefore, proving such linkages exist implies that management and HR practitioners should focus their efforts on developing a climate of social support with the ultimate intention of enhancing affective commitment to change and behavior supportive to change as well, given that the available knowledge of how HR professionals perform as "change agents" is relatively limited (Alfes, Truss, & Gill, 2010).

Moreover, although affective commitment to change plays a critical role in the successful implementation of change (Parish et al., 2007) and, as shown in this study, does a better job of predicting specific change-related behaviors than does affective commitment to organization (Ford, Weissbein, & Plamondon, 2003), affective commitment to organization, on the other hand, acts as both a determinant of affective commitment to change, and a mediator between social support and affective commitment to change. In that event, promoting affective commitment to organization must be integral to any change strategy (Iverson, 1996) in order to enhance the possibility of successful implementation of organizational change. In other words, organizations, when adopting new information systems, should also pay particular attention to enhancing their employees' affective commitment to organization.

Like other studies, this research is also affected by limitations. First, the sample is confined to a limited number of companies (5) in Hsinchu County, Taiwan and 309 participants. Thus, caution must be exercised in any attempt to generalize these findings directly to organizational setting. Second, this approach introduces potential problems with common-method bias as the measures of research variables were gathered from the same source because such measures are prone to response artifacts such as social desirability bias and consistency effects that create spuriously high intercorrelations (Basozzi & Yi, 1990). Third, one must be cautious when interpreting the findings of this study due to the possible constraint of non-response bias, such that non-respondents might hold different views with respect to the variables in question, leading to survey estimates that could be biased. Finally, this study suffers from the common limitations of cross-sectional field research, including the inability to make causal inferences.

Regarding the direction for future research, as noted by Podsakoff et al. (2003), using self-reported measures for both constructs may inflate their correlations due to self-reporting bias. Thus, future research is needed to focus on supervisory and/ or coworker's ratings of affective commitment and behavioral support for change in order to further validate the use of individuals' self-reported perceived social support and affective commitment measures and gain a better understanding of the effects of social support on supportive behavior to change. Finally, although the relationships proposed here are sustained both theoretical and empirical evidence, longitudinal studies should be pursued for the sake of causal interpretation.

## CONCLUSION

In spite of the above mentioned limitations, this study has a number of strengths. First, as noted earlier, the role of social support in a change context per se has been an area that lacks empirical research. In this regard, the present study fills the gap by conducting an empirical research and the results indicate that social support has significant and powerful influence on employees' supportive behavior for change through affective commitment to their organization and towards organizational change.

Second, as noted, improving the understanding of the relationship between social support and employees' reactions (i.e., attitudes and behaviors) to organizational changes has become increasingly important given that countless companies fail to implement organizational changes. In this regard, this study extends prior research by focusing on detecting a complex set of relations between social support, affective commitment to organization, affective commitment to organization to change and behavioral support for change. Specifically, the contribution of this study is to provide additional insights into the mechanism through which social support influences behavioral support for change.



Third, given that the vast majority of organizational change-related studies and leadership have been conducted in North American and other Western countries, the results of this research conducted in Taiwan, a representative of the Chinese context, adding to our understanding about the relationship of social support with employees' behavioral support for change. In this regard, by conducting such investigations, we can accumulate knowledge that will enable us to enhance our ability to predict the effectiveness of organizational change efforts (Self, Armenakis, & Schradeder, 2007).

In summary, although personal feelings and emotions are seen as the most important contributors to the management of organizational change (Graetz & Smith, 2010; Kool & van Dierendonck, 2012), little is known, to date, about the differential effects of various aspects of organizational change on different aspects of the attitudes of those individuals affected by the change (Fedor et al., 2006). In this regard, social support in this study was found to be positively related to behavioral support for change. Further, proving such linkages exist not only provides additional insights into the mechanism through which social support influences followers' affective commitment to organization, affective commitment to change and behavioral support for change, but also implies that management and HR practitioners should focus their efforts on developing a supportive climate (i.e. supervisory support and coworker support) with the ultimate intention of enhancing the possibility of successful change.

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