

A Study on the Impact of Relationship Distance (Long-Distance vs. Short-Distance) and Perceived Family Support on Employee Work Productivity

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of relationship distance (long-distance vs. short-distance) and perceived family support on employee work productivity. In a modern work environment marked by remote work and geographic mobility, the interplay between personal relationships and professional performance is increasingly significant. The study employed a quantitative, correlational, and comparative design, surveying 100 full-time employees equally divided into long-distance and short-distance romantic relationship groups. Standardized tools, the Perceived Social Support Family Scale (PSS-Fa) and the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) measured family support and productivity. Results indicated that individuals in long-distance relationships exhibited higher productivity, likely due to greater autonomy and fewer daily interpersonal demands. Additionally, perceived family support was strongly and positively associated with work productivity, highlighting its role as an emotional buffer that promotes engagement and reduces stress. Regression analysis confirmed that both relationship distance and family support significantly predicted productivity, together accounting for a notable portion of its variance. The study offers valuable insights into how relational dynamics and emotional support systems influence workplace performance, with implications for employee well-being and organizational development.

Keywords: *Relationship distance, perceived family support, employee productivity, work engagement, emotional support, workplace performance, organizational psychology.*

1. Introduction

In today's globalized professional world, employee productivity is shaped not only by organizational factors but also by personal and relational domains. One overlooked influence is the nature of an employee's romantic relationship, particularly geographical distance between partners. Long-distance relationships (LDRs), increasingly common due to relocation, academics, and remote work, raise important questions about how relationship distance and family support affect productivity.

Within Industrial and Organizational (I/O) Psychology, the intersection of personal and professional domains is central to work-life balance and well-being. Productivity, defined as the efficient execution of tasks, is influenced by emotional stability, psychological resources, and social support. Relationship distance may affect stress and focus, while family support can buffer work strain. These dynamics are especially relevant in collectivist contexts like India, where family ties strongly shape emotional health and decision-making.

Theoretical perspectives shed light on these mechanisms. Social Support Theory (House, 1981) highlights how perceived support improves coping and performance. Work-Family Border Theory (Clark, 2000) emphasizes negotiation between work and home roles, which may be strained in LDRs. Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989) explains how emotional resources are either depleted in demanding relationships or bolstered by strong family support.

This study investigates how relationship distance (LDR vs. SDR) and perceived family support independently and jointly influence productivity. Unlike prior work focusing on either relational stressors or family support, it adopts an integrative approach and addresses the lack of research in the Indian socio-cultural context, where interdependence and family bonds play a key role. Using standardized instruments and a quantitative design, the study aims to advance theory and practice by informing HR strategies, employee assistance programs, and policies that enhance well-being and performance in diverse workplaces.

2. Review of Literature

Relationship Distance and Work Productivity

Relationship distance, particularly in long-distance romantic relationships (LDRs), introduces emotional and logistical challenges that may influence professional functioning. Brook and Ditchburn (2023) examined the impact of fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) employment arrangements in Australia and found that geographical separation exacerbates work-family conflict. Although flexible schedules helped some, the overall implication was that distance-induced stress compromises relationship quality and, indirectly, workplace focus.

Similarly, Valk (2012) observed that employees working remotely developed abstract and transactional perceptions of their organizations, in contrast to short-distance employees who reported stronger identification and relational engagement. This psychological distance was found to diminish motivation and productivity. Li and Chen (2019) supported this, noting that workers with weak organizational attachment due to physical separation demonstrated limited productivity and engagement.

Conversely, Priastuty et al. (2023), in a review of long-distance marital relationships, identified protective factors such as commitment, trust, and communication, which helped couples maintain emotional intimacy and stability. These coping mechanisms, while helpful, require continuous emotional labor, which may tax the cognitive resources needed for high job performance.

Montazer and Young (2024) offered a nuanced view by showing that the psychological impact of commuting or distance is moderated by individual and contextual variables. Their study of working parents in Toronto revealed that while commute length did not directly predict distress, it interacted with other stressors like long work hours to affect well-being, suggesting that relationship distance alone may not fully explain productivity outcomes.

Perceived Family Support and Employee Performance

Perceived family support defined as the emotional, instrumental, and moral support individuals feel from their families has been consistently associated with better work outcomes. Le et al. (2023) found that family support significantly enhanced employee well-being through its positive effect on psychological capital. These effects were amplified when organizational support was also present.

Similarly, Deng et al. (2024) studied expatriate workers in China and found that perceived family support, especially emotional and decision-making support, was a strong predictor of job performance. Baruch-Feldman et al. (2002) also highlighted that family support reduced burnout and indirectly improved productivity, particularly among high-stress professions like law enforcement.

Shin et al. (2021), using a longitudinal design during the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrated that family support prior to the crisis predicted job performance and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) months later, underscoring the long-term value of emotional resources from family.

However, results have not always been consistent. Asbari et al. (2021), in a study of female employees in Indonesia, reported that while peer and supervisor support had significant effects on work performance, family support did not. This suggests that cultural norms, gender roles, and job contexts may moderate the influence of familial support on productivity.

Work-Family Dynamics and Organizational Psychology

In the field of Industrial and Organizational (I/O) Psychology, the interdependence between personal life and work outcomes is well-established. According to Clark's (2000) Work-Family Border Theory, work and family are separate domains that individuals continuously navigate. When relational demands increase in long-distance relationships the border between work and home becomes harder to manage, leading to emotional strain and reduced focus at work.

Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory provides a complementary explanation. The theory posits that individuals strive to retain, protect, and build emotional and psychological resources. Stress arises when these resources are threatened or depleted. Long-distance relationships may require higher emotional investment, increasing the risk of resource loss, whereas strong family support can serve as a buffer (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

Further, research suggests that when organizations adopt family-supportive policies or leadership styles, the positive effects of family support are magnified (Katsamba, 2023; Zhang & Hou, 2019). This implies that productivity outcomes are shaped not just by personal relationships, but also by the organizational context in which those relationships are embedded.

2.1 Research Gaps

Despite a growing body of literature, several research gaps remain:

Underexplored link between relationship distance and productivity. Existing studies often examine relational dynamics (Brook & Ditchburn, 2023; Valk, 2012) or work performance independently, without directly assessing how proximity in romantic partnerships impacts measurable productivity.

Fragmented examination of family support and relational factors. While perceived family support has been studied extensively (Le et al., 2023; Deng et al., 2024), few studies investigate how it interacts with relationship distance to affect professional outcomes.

Cultural limitations in existing research. Much of the available research is based on Western or East Asian populations (e.g., Shin et al., 2021; Priastuty et al., 2023), limiting generalizability to collectivist societies like India, where familial support and relationship roles differ significantly.

Lack of integrated models. Few studies apply multi-variable frameworks combining relationship dynamics and social support to predict productivity. There is a need for theoretically grounded, contextually relevant models using tools like the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) to empirically assess these factors.

Hence, this study seeks to address these gaps by integrating relationship distance and perceived family support into a cohesive predictive model of employee productivity, grounded in the Indian socio-cultural context.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Aim

The primary aim of this study is to examine the impact of relationship distance (long-distance vs. short-distance romantic relationships) and perceived family support on employee work productivity among full-time professionals in India.

3.2 Research Questions

1. Does employee productivity differ significantly between individuals in long-distance and short-distance romantic relationships?
2. What is the relationship between perceived family support and employee productivity?
3. To what extent do relationship distance and perceived family support jointly predict employee productivity?

3.3 Research Objectives

1. To compare employee productivity based on relationship distance (long-distance vs. short-distance).
2. To assess the correlation between perceived family support and employee productivity.
3. To examine the combined predictive value of relationship distance and perceived family support on work productivity.

3.4 Variables

- **Independent Variables:**
Relationship Distance (categorical: long-distance or short-distance)
Perceived Family Support (continuous)
- **Dependent Variable:**
Employee Work Productivity (continuous)

3.5 Hypotheses

- **H1:** There is a significant difference in employee work productivity between individuals in long-distance and short-distance romantic relationships.
- **H2:** Perceived family support is positively correlated with employee work productivity.
- **H3:** Relationship distance and perceived family support jointly predict employee productivity.

3.6 Sample

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 100 participants, comprising 50 individuals in long-distance relationships (LDRs) and 50 in short-distance relationships (SDRs). Participants were recruited from various professional sectors including education, IT, healthcare, finance, and commercial services.

3.7 Inclusion Criteria

- Full-time employed individuals
- Currently in a romantic relationship (LDR or SDR) for at least six months
- Aged between 22 and 45 years
- Ability to read and respond in English or Tamil

3.8 Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals who are single, divorced, or recently separated
- Freelancers, part-time workers, or unemployed individuals
- Those in relationships less than six months in duration
- Individuals undergoing recent personal loss or trauma

3.9 Procedure

Data was collected using a Google Form disseminated via professional networks, WhatsApp groups, LinkedIn, and email. A snowball sampling strategy was also employed. Participants were briefed on the study's purpose and confidentiality protocols through an informed consent form at the beginning of the questionnaire. Only those who provided digital consent were allowed to proceed. The form included:

- A demographic questionnaire
- The Perceived Social Support – Family Scale (PSS-Fa)
- The Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ)

Data collection was conducted entirely online to accommodate participants across multiple Indian states, enhance accessibility, and ensure anonymity.

3.10 Tools Used

a) Demographic Information Sheet

A self-designed form was used to collect background details such as age, gender, education, employment sector, job role, income bracket, relationship duration, and distance from partner.

b) Perceived Social Support – Family Scale (PSS-Fa)

Developed by Procidano and Heller (1983), this 20-item Yes/No scale assesses the degree of perceived emotional and practical support from family. The scale has high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85-.90$).

c) Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ)

Developed by Koopmans et al. (2014), this 18-item instrument assesses employee productivity across three subdomains: task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The IWPQ has been widely validated in occupational settings.

4. Results

This section presents the statistical findings based on the research objectives and hypotheses. Analyses were performed using SPSS (version 25). Descriptive statistics, normality tests, correlation, Mann–Whitney U test, and multiple linear regression were used as appropriate.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for the main variables employee productivity, perceived family support, and relationship distance are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 *Descriptive Statistics for Main Variables (N = 100)*

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Std. Error
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Employee Productivity	1	5	3.38	1.48922	-0.23	1.396	0.478
Relationship Distance	1	5	3.14	1.31825	-0.317	-1.127	0.478
Perceived Family Support	1	5	3.12	1.26555	-0.169	-0.908	0.478

Interpretation

The data captures central tendencies and patterns across employee productivity, relationship distance, and perceived family support. All three variables lean toward the higher end of the scale, with distributions that spread broadly and slightly tilt leftward.

Employee Productivity

Participants rate their productivity fairly high, with an average score of 3.38. Responses vary widely, as shown by a standard deviation of 1.49. More individuals reported higher productivity, reflected in the slight left skew. The flatness in the distribution suggests that high and low scores appear with similar frequency.

Relationship Distance

The average score of 3.14 reveals that many relationships sit somewhere between emotional closeness and distance. A standard deviation of 1.32 points to diverse relationship dynamics. The distribution leans left, with many experiencing shorter perceived distances. The broad spread of responses highlights the range of relational experiences in the group.

Perceived Family Support

Support from family holds steady at a mean of 3.12. The responses cluster less tightly, with a standard deviation of 1.27. A near-symmetric curve shows consistency in perception, and the soft peak indicates a wide range of support levels reported by participants.

4.2 Test of Normality

Normality tests were conducted using both Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk statistics.

Table 2 *Normality Test Results*

	Kolmogorov-				
	Statistic	df	Sig	Statistic	df
Employee Productivity	0.242	100	0	0.84	100
Relationship Distance	0.243	100	0	0.881	100
Perceived Family Support	0.162	100	0	0.908	100

Interpretation

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were used to assess normality for employee productivity, relationship distance, and perceived family support. These tests help determine the suitability of parametric statistical methods.

Employee Productivity

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov value is 0.242 ($p = 0.000$), and the Shapiro-Wilk value is 0.840 ($p = 0.000$), confirming significant deviation from normality. This supports earlier findings of negative skew and platykurtic distribution, suggesting that parametric tests like t-tests or ANOVA may not be suitable without transformation or the use of non-parametric alternatives.

Relationship Distance

With a Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic of 0.243 ($p = 0.000$) and Shapiro-Wilk statistic of 0.881 ($p = 0.000$), this variable also departs from normality. These results align with descriptive statistics and point to varied participant experiences, indicating non-parametric methods are more appropriate.

Perceived Family Support

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov value is 0.162 ($p = 0.000$), and the Shapiro-Wilk value is 0.908 ($p = 0.000$), indicating significant, though less extreme, non-normality. This supports earlier observations of a slightly skewed, broad distribution, again pointing to the need for non-parametric analysis.

4.3 Spearman's Correlation analysis

Table 3 *Spearman's Correlation analysis*

						statistics	
Model	B	Std error	Beta	t	Sig	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	0.259	0.238		1.089	0.279		
Relationship Distance	0.613	0.104	0.543	0.91	0	0.3%	2.523
Perceived Family Support	0.383	0.108	0.325	3.542	0.001	0.396	2.523

Interpretation

The regression analysis shows a highly significant model predicting employee productivity based on relationship distance and perceived family support ($F = 100.91$, $p < .000$). Together, these variables explain 67.5% of the variance in productivity. Both predictors show moderate multicollinearity ($VIF = 2.523$; tolerance = 0.396), which is acceptable but reflects their strong correlation ($r = 0.777$). Relationship distance emerges as the stronger predictor ($\beta = 0.543$, $p < .001$) compared to family support ($\beta = 0.325$, $p = .001$). Despite some shared variance, both contribute meaningfully and significantly to the model. The results suggest that relational distance has a greater impact on productivity than family support, although both are important.

5. Discussion

This study examined the influence of relationship distance (long- vs. short-distance) and perceived family support on employee productivity among full-time workers in India. The findings highlight how interpersonal and family dynamics shape professional performance, particularly within a collectivist context where emotional interdependence is central.

5.1 Relationship Distance and Productivity

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, individuals in long-distance relationships reported higher productivity than those in short-distance ones. Though counterintuitive, this supports research showing that distance can provide autonomy, fewer daily obligations, and greater work focus (Brook & Ditchburn, 2023; Valk, 2012). Work-Family Border Theory (Clark, 2000) explains this by suggesting that clearer boundaries between personal and professional life reduce role

interference. However, these benefits depend on coping strategies, relationship quality, and communication access (Montazer & Young, 2024; Stafford, 2015).

5.2 Perceived Family Support and Productivity

Hypothesis 2 was also supported, perceived family support positively correlated with productivity. Social Support Theory (House, 1981) emphasizes how emotional, informational, and instrumental support enhance well-being and performance. Prior studies show that employees with strong family support experience lower stress, higher satisfaction, and better productivity (Deng et al., 2024; Baruch-Feldman et al., 2002; Shin et al., 2021). In India, where extended family often influences personal and professional life, support may provide emotional stability, practical help, and encouragement. This contrasts with Asbari et al. (2021), who found no link in Indonesia, highlighting the role of cultural context.

5.3 Joint Influence of Relationship Distance and Family Support

Hypothesis 3 was confirmed, both factors significantly predicted productivity, explaining over 30% of variance. While family support was the stronger predictor, relationship distance contributed independently. This aligns with Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), which posits that individuals draw on multiple resources to sustain performance. Romantic and familial resources together enhance engagement; when one is lacking, the other can compensate, but lacking both may cause emotional depletion and reduced functioning. These results reinforce the need for workplace wellness programs to consider personal and family systems, as social and emotional resources are vital for managing professional demands (Gabardo-Martins et al., 2023; Zhang & Hou, 2019).

6. Conclusion

This study examined how relationship distance and perceived family support influence employee work productivity in a sample of full-time working adults in India. The results showed that individuals in long-distance romantic relationships reported significantly higher productivity than those in short-distance relationships. Additionally, perceived family support was found to be a strong positive predictor of work productivity. Together, these two interpersonal factors explained a significant proportion of the variance in productivity levels, supporting the notion that personal and emotional environments significantly shape professional outcomes.

The findings suggest that relationship distance may serve as a boundary-enhancing mechanism that allows individuals to better compartmentalize personal and professional responsibilities. At the same time, family support offers a valuable emotional resource that helps individuals manage work-related stress and sustain high performance.

6.1 Implications

The study offers several important implications:

- **Organizational Policies:** Human resource departments should incorporate family-friendly and relationship-sensitive policies into employee well-being programs. These may include remote work flexibility, mental health support, or communication and stress management workshops.
- **Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs):** Programs can be designed to address the emotional toll of long-distance relationships and lack of support systems. Interventions that build coping resources and emotional resilience may be particularly effective.
- **Leadership Sensitivity:** Managers and supervisors should be trained to recognize the impact of interpersonal stressors on work performance and respond with empathy and flexibility.
- **Cultural Context:** In collectivist societies like India, family support remains a dominant force in an individual's psychological and functional stability. This study reinforces the need to account for cultural nuances in workplace productivity frameworks.

6.2 Limitations

Despite the promising findings, several limitations should be noted:

- **Sampling Method:** The use of purposive and snowball sampling may limit the generalizability of the findings. The sample may not represent the full diversity of the Indian workforce.
- **Self-report Bias:** All measures were self-reported, which increases the risk of social desirability bias or common method variance.

- **Cross-sectional Design:** The data was collected at a single point in time, limiting causal interpretations between variables.
- **Unmeasured Moderators:** Factors such as personality traits, relationship satisfaction, and coping strategies were not assessed and may influence the observed outcomes.

6.3 Scope for Future Research

Future research can build on this study in the following ways:

- **Longitudinal Studies:** Tracking employees over time would help clarify causal relationships and dynamic interactions between relationship distance, support systems, and productivity.
- **Broader Populations:** Including diverse occupational sectors, age groups, and relationship types (e.g., cohabiting, engaged, newly married) would enhance generalizability.
- **Moderation and Mediation Models:** Exploring variables such as emotional intelligence, communication frequency, job autonomy, or psychological flexibility could yield deeper insights.
- **Comparative Cultural Studies:** Cross-cultural comparisons would help determine the extent to which these findings apply in individualistic versus collectivist societies.

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