

Master Thesis

Stimulating personal initiative:

The role of geographic distance and perceived organizational support from HQ

“The practical success of the idea, regardless of its inherent advantages, depends on the attitude of people. If it suites the time, it is accepted.”

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Abstract

The results of this study reveal that geographic distance negatively affects personal initiative of field workers. The research was conducted thanks to 184 employees of Dutch company MAAS International B.V. based in Eindhoven. The data for this research was gathered using online questionnaire and results have been analysed using well recognized and widely accepted statistical methods. This study contributes to the current literature by examining the effect that geographical distance between the HQ and employee's work place has on a personal initiative of an individual employee. It also examines the effect of geographic distance on a perceived organizational support and the mediating effect of perceived organizational support. The practical implication of this study should help companies and their managers to better understand the organizational context in which field workers operate. By reducing the effect of geographic distance managers could help their employees to take more initiatives.

Keywords: field workers, personal initiative, geographic distance, perceived organizational support.

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1. Introduction

Many employees develop ideas about the job and organizational improvements. Some take the initiative to share their ideas and to implement them and others do not. Most initiatives are never put to work. The most obvious reason why an idea does not get implemented is because it probably did not get the right attention of the management or the idea is not feasible. If employees do not take an initiative that does not have to mean that they have no ideas. The employees may lack the right organizational context that stimulates, encourages and supports idea creation and personal initiative (PI). The urgency for creating a fertile organizational context for employee initiatives is based on two reasons. First, every company needs new ideas and initiatives to preserve and gain competitive advantage. Second, every company's success depends on the engaged and committed employees. Therefore, every company should take measures to insure the generation of new ideas, because neglecting the ideas and initiatives could prove very costly. Especially initiatives proposed by field workers are of the great importance to any company because they have customer facing roles and are generally seen by customers as the face of the company and even as company's brand (Biedenbach et al. 2011). Field workers are all employees that work outside the Head Quarters' premises. The field workers are of the importance for every company for two reasons. Firstly, the way customer's experience is being created through their interactions with field workers and secondly, the way that those field workers experience their customers, markets, competition and vendors.

It could be expected that for field workers would be difficult to get the attention of the headquarters (HQ) to promote / sell their ideas. One obvious reason is that they work out 'in the field' and because of the geographic distance (GD) between HQ and their work place, they have relatively limited contact, thus limited opportunity to share ideas with the company's HQ. Inability of the field workers to express their ideas, could be experienced by field workers as demoralizing and incomprehensible. As a result, the employees could stop taking initiatives or leave the company and company will lose an important competence. Due to their frontline work and frequent interactions with customers, field workers should be able to express their ideas that may help to improve service efficiencies, service or product improvements and lead to novel business models. That and expensive corporate training make the field workers very valuable company asset. Therefore, minimizing turnover of the field workers should be seen as a priority. To insure employees' engagement companies need to create a supportive organizational context in which an employee will feel secured, supported and encouraged to express itself and to challenge the status quo. Positively perceived organizational support by an employee will in return have a positive influence on a degree of personal initiative an employee takes.

The aim of this paper is to make scientific contribution to this topic by answering the following question: What is the relationship between geographic distance and personal initiative of the field workers and how does perceived organizational support mediates this relationship?

A theoretical model is developed and empirically tested thanks to 184 Dutch field workers in a single organization. The theoretical model seeks to explain the influence of geographical distance on a degree of personal initiative of field workers. It suggests that not only geographic distance influences a degree of personal initiative, but that the effect could be mediated by the amount of organizational support an employee perceives. A higher perceived organizational support (POS) should lead to more personal initiative and should decrease the influence of geographic distance between HQ and individual employee's work place.

This study contributes to the current literature by examining the effect that geographical distance between the HQ and employee's work place has on a personal initiative of an individual employee. It also examines the effect of geographic distance on a perceived organizational support and the mediating effect of perceived organizational support. By presenting the results of empirical research this paper contributes to scientific understandings in the field of organizational behaviour theory. This study is undertaken because the current literature does not provide the insights of the effects that geographic distance has on the personal initiative and perceived organizational support. The practical implication of this study should help companies and their managers to better understand the organizational context in which field workers operate. By reducing the effect of geographic distance managers can help their employees to take more initiative.

The following chapter provides a literature review on the topics of "Field Workers", "Personal Initiative", "Geographic Distance" and "Perceived Organizational Support". It also explains the conceptual model and development of hypotheses. The third chapter explains used methods for data collection, validity of constructs and measurement instruments. Chapter "Analyses & Results" gives an insight in the empirical data. Finally, conclusions, discussion and implications for further research are presented in chapter 5.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

This chapter gives an overview of the current literature on the topics and provides the definitions of "Field Workers", "Personal Initiative", "Geographic Distance" and "Perceived Organizational Support". The organizational context and the necessity to conduct the research are explained. The conceptual model and hypotheses are presented.

2.1 Field Workers

Let us first define what is a “field worker”. In Dutch organizational language the phrase “buitendienst medewerker” refers to all employees and their job requirements that conduct their work in the field or at their customer’s premises. The term actually refers to anybody who is not working at the company’s premises. There is no single word or term in Anglo Saxon organizational language that translates into “buitendienst medewerker”. Some of the synonyms are: field worker, sales representative, external employee, field representative, field service employee, field engineer, field technician, field staff, virtual worker, dispersed worker, peripheral worker and mobile worker. These employees are also referred to as employees with client facing roles. Brown & O’Hara (2002) describe mobile workers as individuals that potentially work at a different desk each day, with that desk being both on other organizations’ sites as well as within their own organizations at potentially numerous locations. For the purpose of this paper field workers are defined as: *“employees whose workplace is outside of the offices of their employer”*. We find field workers in almost every industry and company, mainly in services, pre and after sales roles. Davies et al. (2010) state that employees within a service organization are the face of the organization, as the employees interact with the customer in service engagement. Rayport & Jarowski (2004) state that in the past, companies had a small number of total workforce in client facing roles and could choose the best employees for this role. Today, because of a competitive labour market, companies have difficulties to recruit and retain motivated and presentable individuals for frontline positions (Rayport & Jarowski, 2004). Despite the large number of field workers, literature on the role of field workers in organizations is practically non-existent. Literature research using the above-mentioned synonyms, were not of any use to clarify the research questions. An alternative was found in the abundant literature about the relationship between headquarters i.e. Multi-National Companies (MNCs) and their subsidiaries’ initiatives (Birkinshaw *et al.* 1998; Ambos and Birkinshaw 2010; Govindarajan & Ramamurti, 2011; Vaccaro et al. 2010; Barlett and Ghoshal, 1998; Nohria and Ghoshal, 1994; Birkinshaw, 1997, 2000; Delany, 2000). The literature on MNCs was seen as a good alternative because it covers the relationship between the HQ and subsidiaries which is characterized by distance and hierarchy between them. Subsidiary refers to an organization unit under the control of headquarters. Even though a field worker and subsidiary are two different organizational subjects, there is a great similarity between them. Both are under the control of and report to headquarters. There is a certain geographic distance that separates them from the headquarters. Because they are separated from the HQ both, field workers and subsidiaries, have a certain autonomy, they get involved with customers and local markets, experience less control and support, receive less attention and are less blinded by corporate blind spot. Because of this similarity and the fact that it was hard to find any research on the subject of field workers, for the purpose of this paper it was chosen to consult the

literature on MNC's headquarters-subsidary relationships. At this point it is necessary to make one important footnote and to distinguish general literature on MNCs - subsidiaries and headquarters – field workers. Mainstream literature is preoccupied explaining the organizational context of MNCs and their foreign subsidiaries with their local markets which brings all kinds of socio-cultural, administrative-political, geographic and economical aspects in to their relationship (Ghemawat, 2001) with headquarters. This paper refers to national companies and their national subsidiaries' employees. Considering Ghemawat's CAGE distance model, only the geographic distance is of importance for this paper. Other distances: cultural, administrative and economic are not applicable in the relationship between headquarters and their national subsidiaries.

2.2 Personal Initiative

Different employees approach their work in different ways and with different motivations. Depending on their motivation, some will show proactive behaviour and take initiatives and others will not. According to Kuhl (1992) we can differ two sorts of people; those who have a goal but do little to achieve it (a "state orientation") from those who rapidly put goals into action (an "action orientation"). Proactive behaviour is defined as "taking initiative in improving current circumstances or creating new ones; it involves challenging the status quo rather than passively adapting to present conditions." (Crant, 2000, p. 436). Personal initiative is defined as "the individual is taking an active and self-starting approach to work and going beyond what is formally required for a given job" (Fay and Frese, 2001; Frese et al., 1997). There is plenty research done that proves that personal initiative leads to better job performance (Frese et al., 1997). The same research suggests that by taking personal initiative employees translate externally given tasks into internal tasks which allow them to define extra goals that lie outside of their role requirements. Intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence behaviour. They are indicators of how hard people are willing to try, or how much work they are planning to do to perform the behaviour. As a general rule, the stronger the intention to engage in the pro-active behaviour, the more likely is that performance will improve (Ajzen 1991). Speier & Frese (1997) characterized personal initiative by the following aspects: "(a) is consistent with the organization's mission, (b) has a long-term focus, (c) is goal oriented and action oriented, (d) is persistent in the face of barriers and setbacks, and (e) is self-starting and proactive". The downside of a personal initiative according to Crane, is that "personal initiative implies questioning the status quo, which is not always perceived as a positive behaviour".

2.3 The Influence of Geographic Distance on Personal Initiative

Geographic distance (GD) is physical distance between the HQ and individual employee work location. Various studies describe the importance of geographic distance between MNCs and their foreign subsidiaries to be taken in consideration when making strategic decisions. Shorter

geographic distance positively influences shared business culture that favours cooperation behaviour (Storper, 1999). This suggests that longer geographic distance would have a negative influence on cooperation behaviour and would have a linear effect. Boschma (2005) explains that geographic proximity of firms fosters social interaction, trust building and enhance knowledge spill-over and innovation. Howells (2002) and Boschma (2005) discuss the influence of geographic distance between co-workers and point out that shorter distance will enhance networking, interaction and collaboration while long distance makes it more difficult to achieve the same. General expectancy is that employees facing shorter geographic distance to HQ would be more informed, better trained and have more social capital at headquarters and therefore show more personal initiative. We can now draw a parallel with field workers and conclude that geographic distance between HQ and an individual employee's work location has an effect on personal initiative of field workers. Employees working on locations far from the HQ experience difficulties in communication, knowledge distribution and building a social capital with HQ which affects their work engagement and alignment with corporate goals. Working often on their own, field workers must be self-reliant and self-organized and due to their separation from the rest of the organization they could experience more (Nilles, 1994). Several studies concentrate on virtual working and virtual workers which are in fact also field workers that are mainly employed in an IT sector. These studies suggest that geographic distance from the HQ and colleagues necessitates new communication and information systems as well as cultural change. Wiesenfeld et al. (1999) in their study concentrate on the context of virtual work and whether the geographic distance will weaken the relationship between virtual employees and their organization. *"Virtual workers' isolation and dispersion necessitate new communication systems, information systems, and sometimes even organizational culture change"* (Wiesenfeld et al., 1999, p.214). Different studies report that virtual workers i.e. field workers complain that they are "out of sight, out of mind" from their organization and vice versa. This contradictory situation according to DeSactis & Monge (1999) could lead to the change in employees' perceptions of their relationship to their organization. A negative perception will influence employees' sense of connectedness and willingness to take initiatives to improve the organizational success. Considering above-mentioned and various literature on geographic distance between headquarters and subsidiaries i.e. virtual workers i.e. field workers and the importance of personal initiatives of employees in current labour markets, it is likely to expect that there is a negative relationship between geographic distance and personal initiative. Therefore, the following hypothesis is developed:

Hypothesis 1: Geographic distance between HQ and individual employee is negatively related to the degree of personal initiative of an employee.

2.4 Perceived Organizational Support

There are many factors that determine personal initiative. Managerial attention, employee engagement, motivation and connectedness are some of the most common determinants of personal initiative (Frese, 1996). *"Employee engagement first. No company, small or large, can win over the long run without energized employees who believe in the firm's mission and understand how to achieve it"* (Welch & Welch, 2006, May 8). Engaged employees are often loyal and committed to their organization delivering higher productivity and providing for lower employee turnover hence giving their organization a competitive edge (Vance, 2006). According to Halac & Prat (2016), workers' effort depends not only on compensation, but also on their beliefs about whether management is paying attention to their behaviour. Only when paying attention management can recognize worker behaviour (Halac & Prat, 2016). Some studies find that workers' perceptions about management and employee job satisfaction matter for both productivity and profits (Harter et al., 2002; Koys, 2001). Employees appreciate attention for both psychological and financial reasons (Halac & Prat, 2016). Harter et. al (2002) stress that employees' engagement and performance depend on their belief that they are given recognition or praise for doing good work. Managerial attention is a scarce resource (Ambos & Birkinshaw, 2010), but very needed for the performance of employees. Attention is not only given but also received i.e. experienced by workers. It is the level of individual perceived attention that motivates employees to go beyond their daily tasks and to take initiatives. Perceived Organizational Support is defined as: *"Employees' general belief that their work organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being"* (Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002). POS is the main construct of the Organizational Support Theory (OST) that was introduced by Eisenberger et. al. (1986). This theory conceptualises the importance of the amount of appreciation an organization has for their employees and their well-being. The higher appreciation by an organization the more employees feel obligated to perform better, to meet organizational expectations and to achieve organizational goals. Empirical study of Pundt et al. (2010) shows positive relationship between POS and innovative behaviour. Not only the organizational context matters, but for many employees it is of an importance if their manager cares about them. They want their manager to care about them as a person and not only as a means to an end (Dur, 2009). According to Wagner & Harter (2006), employees who believe that their manager cares about them as a person are more motivated and satisfied. The social relationship between the manager and the employee develops when the manager shows care for the employee, which in turn leads to the organizational commitment and positive attitude of all employees (Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002). POS has also influences on employees other than just personal initiative. Employees who perceive fairness of their salary are less likely to be absent from work (Patchen, 1960). Eisenberger's POS theory goes further to imply that there would be some kind of an agreement between the degree of

a support that an employee expects from the organization and his incorporation of organizational membership into his self-identity. This in turn would increase employees' efforts to meet organizational goals through greater attendance and performance (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Because POS is an individual perception of own place within the organization which is affected through human contact and behaviour, it is likely to expect it would be affected by geographic distance. But because POS is dependent on human behaviour rather than geographic distance a positive POS should decrease the influence of geographic distance between headquarters and field workers in relation to the personal initiative.

2.5 The Influence of Geographic Distance on Perceived Organizational Support

Because field workers can work anywhere, it is impossible to enforce direct supervision and coordination to control them. (DeSanctis & Monge, 1999). Field workers are instead forced to be self-organized and are expected to show "good" organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB). The ability to manage field workers depend on identifying the factors that predict their identification with the organization (Batia et al., 2000). Organizational identification is the construct defined by Ashfort & Mael (1989) as "employees' perception of belonging to the organization". Geographic distance between organizations and their members, a defining feature of field work, in many cases reduces individuals' contact with the organization, weakens perceived organizational support employees experience, lessens their exposure to the organizational structures and processes and prevent them from building a social capital. Besides this, field workers are often excluded from lunches with colleagues, Friday afternoon drinks and celebrations of personal and corporate events which aim to enhance organizational identification and increase social capital. The inability of employees to visit the HQ frequently due to geographic distance has its influence on the degree of managerial attention given to them and the way employees perceive given attention. The periodic meetings with or visits from the top management are scarce. Nilles (1994) state that field workers feel left out and are sometimes saddened by missing informal organizational rituals, such as gathering by the coffee machine. Above-mentioned influence of geographic distance on field workers along with the findings of Organizational Support Theory (OST) from Rhodes & Eisenberger (2002), described on page 8, leads to the development of the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Geographic distance between HQ and individual employee is negatively related to the degree of organizational support perceived by the employee.

2.6 The Influence of Perceived Organizational Support on Personal Initiative

The relationship between perceived organizational support and personal initiative has been researched by Eisenberger et al. (2002). They found a positive relationship between perceived

organizational support and a degree of personal initiative an employee takes. The more support and fairness employees perceive to receive from their organization the better they will perform and try to meet organizational goals. Besides perceived organizational support, there is also a work-based social support researched by Wiesenfeld et al. that state following: *“Work-based social support provides important cues regarding organizational membership and motivates organizational identification by leading people to feel personally valued and important”* (Wiesenfeld et al., 1999, p.219). Considering this, there is an agreement on both studies and expectation that this research will empirically confirm the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Perceived organizational support is positively related to the degree of personal initiative of an employee.

2.7 The Mediating Role of Perceived Organizational Support

The contacts with the organization and colleagues as well as the exposure to other aspects of the organizational identity positively influence employees' identification with the organization (Dutton et al., 1994). These factors provide cues suggesting that an employee is a member of an organization and can enhance one's sense of belonging. In most of the cases, field workers are naturally less exposed to those factors than the employees working at the HQ. Work-based social support that field workers receive from their organization could neutralized a lack of the exposure to above-mentioned factors and still create the sense of belonging (Wiesenfeld et al., 2002). Field workers who experience social support are likely to assume that HQ view them as equal organizational members and to see themselves as ones. Perceived organizational support an employee experience could therefore serve as an important cue triggering and enhancing employees' organizational identification. The stronger the identification, sense of belonging and social support more likely will employees take initiatives. Even if the organizational support is absent, employees with stronger need for affiliation that are less affected by social cues regarding their membership, could still identify with the organization. In many cases employees just want to be the “good citizens” and are prepared to perform the activities even if they are not asked to. Regardless the distance to the HQ it is possible for employees to experience positive perceived organizational support through their contacts at the HQ and feedback they receive. Their superiors, who also may be field workers, can create a good working environment that can influence one's perceived organizational support. This is why this research expects perceived organizational support to mediate the effect of geographic distance on personal initiative of field workers. Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

Hypothesis 4: Perceived organizational support mediates the effect of geographic distance on the degree of personal initiative of an employee.

2.8 Organizational Context

Today companies face growing globalization, rapid innovation, technological improvements and ever demanding customers. In order to survive and to gain competitive advantage companies must be able to cope with all sorts of different environmental challenges. To do so they depend on their flexibility and ability to change. It is common knowledge that those companies that stand still will eventually get overtaken and then fail. Companies therefore depend on the competences of their employees, especially those employees that show proactive behaviour. Proactive behaviour is defined as “taking initiative in improving current circumstances or creating new ones” (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008). In the organizational literature on MNCs, studies stress that proactive behaviour of subsidiaries is of an important strategic relevance in order to gain competitive advantage (Barlett and Ghoshal, 1998; Nohria and Ghoshal, 1994; Birkinshaw, 1997, 2000; Delany, 2000; Govindarajan & Ramamurti, 2011). Proactive behaviour is therefore one of the most valuable competences an employee possesses, and employers should be grateful for employing such an individual. To exploit full potential of their employees’ initiatives and proactive behaviour, companies need to set up an appropriate organizational context that embraces such behaviour. Ambos and Birkinshaw (2010) stress that “headquarters attention can be viewed as a scarce organizational resource affecting performance”. Different scholars tried to address the problem of capturing employees’ ideas. Van Dijk & van den Ende (2002) have developed a “Creativity Transformation Model” (CTM) that enables companies to transfer employees’ creativity to practical ideas (see Figure 1). Besides personal characteristics and social psychology that antecedent personal creativity, van Dijk & van den Ende argue that organizational culture as well as organizational structure are necessary to generate personal initiative and to put the ideas to work. Although van Dijk & van den Ende conducted their research analysing Dutch companies they have not considered the influence of geographic distance on personal initiative nor whether companies actively reached out to their field workers.

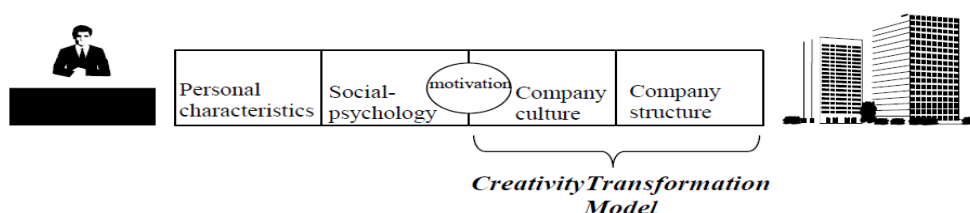


Figure 1: Creativity Transformation Model, van Dijk & van den Ende (2002)

Once again was the literature on multinationals and their subsidiaries advised. Strutzenberger & Ambos (2013) describe Subsidiary Initiative Process (SIP), as a three stages process (see Figure 2). Antecedents refer to preconditions for initiative taking. Implementation refers to the different stages from undertaking the initiative through commitment of resources and actual putting the idea to work. Outcomes refers to the effect of subsidiary initiative.

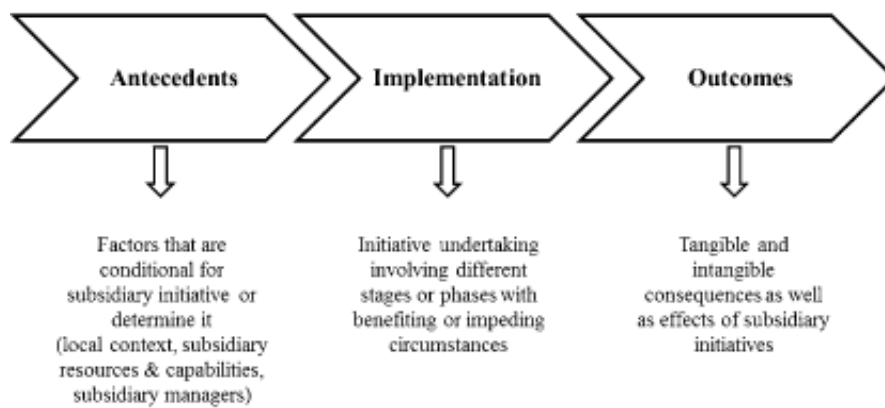


Figure 2: Subsidiary Initiative Process (SIP) model Strutzenberger & Ambos (2013)

The SIP model shows a great similarity with CTM model that van Dijk & van den Ende have developed but it also does not cover the effect of geographic distance. Unfortunately, both models although giving much insights in the initiative taking process cannot fully answer the research question. The SIP model is focused on subsidiaries in a multinational context and initiatives that on an individual level are not really explored. The CTM model actually covers the “Implementation” stage of SIP model. But none of these models investigates the influence of geographic distance between HQ and individual employee work location. Nor they take in consideration personal initiative and the way how individual employees experience organizational support.

2.9 Conceptual Model

The previously outlined variables, and therefore the design of this study, is captured by the conceptual model (see Figure 3). This paper aims to demonstrate that geographic distance between the HQ and an individual employees’ work location has a significant effect on the personal initiative employees take. Further, this paper examines if geographic distance has a significant effect on perceived organizational support field workers experience. This research expects to confirm the positive relationship between perceived organizational support field workers experience to the degree of personal initiative field workers take. Moreover, the research will show if there is a mediating effect of perceived organizational support on the relationship between geographic distance to HQ and personal initiative one takes. To support this research, following research model was developed:

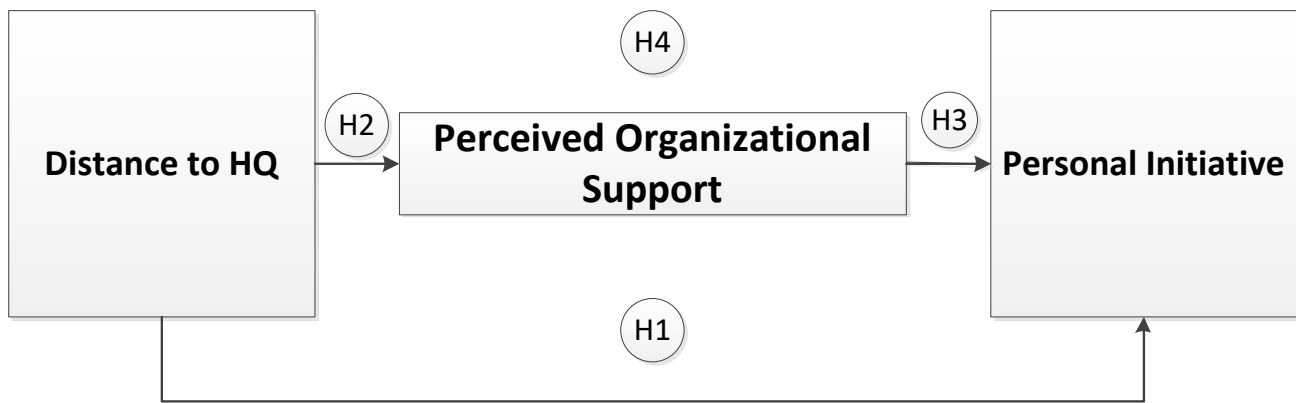


Figure 3: Research Model

To cover all the aspects of the conceptual model the following research question has been formulated:

What is the relationship between geographic distance and personal initiative of the field workers and how does perceived organizational support mediate this relationship?

3. Methods

3.1 Setting and Data Collection

To empirically test the hypotheses, the data was collected using a survey questionnaire. The target respondents were employees of Dutch company MAAS International B.V. based in Eindhoven. In MAAS International B.V. there are approximately 600 employees and between 450 and 500 of them are field workers in different job functions. The job functions are: Operator, mobile Operator, Field Service Engineer, After Sales Barista, Area Coordinator, Area Manager, Account Manager, Project Manager, Installation Engineer, Depot Manager and Order Picker. This population was chosen because the author is one of those employees and therefore has a higher probability of receiving a sufficient response to the survey. Another reason is that the organizational context of this company is very similar to many other companies in different sectors and the results from this research would therefore be scientifically generic. Amongst the others the results of this research are applicable to IT Consulting-, cleaning-, catering- and facility companies. One more consideration to choose for this company is that the HQ is situated in Eindhoven area which is a southern province of the Netherlands. There are many employees who work as far as 300 kilometres from the HQ and have never visited the HQ. This allows to empirically test the influence of geographic distance on a degree of personal initiative and the role of perceived organizational support. Existing and validated constructs were used for this research. The survey was distributed through the organization, which consists mostly of Dutch speaking employees. The questionnaire was therefore translated into

Dutch. The original questions were translated to Dutch and checked by an English-speaking Dutch person. Then the translation was checked by a Dutch speaking English person to make sure that there are no misunderstandings in used terminology. To make sure the survey resonates with the intended population some small adjustments were made to the original questions. The survey was developed on the online platform Qualtrics (<https://erasmusuniversity.eu.qualtrics.com>) and sent to the seven respondents with different professional backgrounds to test the understanding of terminology and the questions flow. The feedback received from the test survey was used to further refine the survey. The survey was sent by email to 466 respondents, all of them working in the field. To prevent the pollution of data, all respondents were manually picked from a list of employees and their functions received from the HRM department. Any employee working at the office was excluded from the mailing list. The questionnaire was closed after 18 days. The number of respondents was 211 of which 184 fully completed (39.4% of N=466). The data of 27 uncompleted surveys was deleted from the data set. In order to ensure complete anonymity "job function" question was omitted and "gender" question was made optional. The gender information in combination with job function, age and tenure could lead to the identification of the respondent.

3.2 Measurement and Validation of Constructs

This study's construct measures are all based on existing scales. The duration of the survey was under ten minutes which should increase the response rate. Appendix 1 provides an overview of the survey questionnaire and the Appendix 2 provides the used cover letters. The respondents were asked to report on a 7-points Likert scales, presented by 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree.

The scale for measuring dependent variable Personal Initiative is developed and tested by Frese et al., (1997). The 7 items scale of this construct measures a degree of personal initiative respondents report. An example of a statement is: *"I actively attack problems"* and *"I take initiative immediately even when others do not"*. Frese et al. (1997) conducted their research by using both quantitative and qualitative research methods and also interviewed respondent's partners to validate the responses. Fay & Frese (2001) in later research found strong correlation between data from self-reported questionnaire and interviews with respondent's partners. This validates the use of only self-reported questionnaire. For this research only a self-reporting questionnaire was used, Cronbach's alpha (93). To increase the validity of self-reporting questionnaire on the personal initiative, the questionnaire was expanded with 4 control questions by asking the respondents to report: When was the last time they undertook an initiative?; Was the initiative regarding own job performance i.e. best practice, innovative initiative or else?; Was their initiative acknowledged by their manager?; Did they receive a compliment for taken initiative? The Cronbach's alpha of this scale named "Initiative Characteristics" is low (55).

To calculate the geographic distance between HQ and individuals' work location, respondents were asked in which province or city they are employed. Because of a majority of field workers have many different clients, the distance between HQ and location of the reported city (or in case of reported province the capital city of that province) was taken as mid reference point. Geographic distance between the HQ and reported city / province was then calculated using an online route planner tool www.routeplanner.nl.

Mediating variable Perceived Organizational Support (POS) was originally tested with the 16-item questionnaire by Eisenberger et al. (1986). The example of a statement used by Eisenberger et al. (1986) is: *"My organization fails to appreciate any extra effort from me"*. For this study it was chosen to replace "my organization" with "my supervisor" because for the most field workers due to geographic distance between the HQ and their place of work, the supervisor is the prominent if not the only contact they have with their organisation. Therefore, in this questionnaire the supervisor is seen as the organization. One item (question 2: 'If my supervisor could hire someone to replace me at a lower salary he/she would do so') loaded negatively in reliability analyses. After careful consideration, it was chosen to exclude this item from further analysis. There were enough items left (15) to reliably test the construct. The Cronbach's alpha of this scale is (.95).

The following control variables were also included in the questionnaire: Gender (1, 'female' 2, 'male'); Age (in years) and Tenure. These control variables are meant to measure if any categorical influence on personal initiative exist. For example: do the employees with longer organizational tenure take more initiatives than the employees with a short organizational tenure?

Three more questions were added to the questionnaire with the aim to measure the frequency of contact between employees and their supervisor and their colleagues at the HQ. Due to geographic distance, employees could experience difficulty in interaction frequency with their superior and colleagues. The difficulty to interact with each other could also be seen as distance, measured not in kilometres but by the frequency of contact. To analyse if the effects of the frequency of contact would be similar to the effects of geographic distance, the scale "Interaction Frequency" was created consisting of two items with Cronbach's alpha (.87). Interaction frequency was taken into the analysis as an independent variable and as an alternative for geographic distance. Firstly, all analyses were conducted with geographic distance as the theoretical model suggests. Secondly, another analysis was conducted where geographic distance was replaced by interaction frequency.

The reliability of constructs and normality check such as Skewness and Kurtosis are shown in Table 1. Different constructs showed deviation of distribution: Personal Initiative (negative); Initiative Characteristics (negative); Perceived Organizational Support construct showed normal distribution and Interaction Frequency showed a normal distribution. The variables were computed to achieve

normalization of distribution. Perceived Organizational Support contains a list of 15 items, 6 of them were counter-indicative, made to eliminate common response bias. The values of those 6 items were recoded. To correct the deviation of distribution the outliers were excluded.

Table 1. Measurement Scales

Construct	Cronbach's a	Items	Valid N	Mean	S.D.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Personal initiative	93.1	7	179	5.92	0.66	-.469	.054
Initiative Characteristics	55.1	4	185	1.78	0.7	.359	-.607
Perceived Organizational Support	94.7	15	185	4.87	1.15	-.673	.218
Interaction Frequency	87.3	2	185	2.59	1.11	.024	-1.481

3.3 Post Hoc Analyses

In the same way the interaction frequency was used as an alternative for distance, a personal initiative could be measured through a several control questions that were used to increase the validity of response on personal initiative scale. The following 1 item scales were sequentially used as dependent variables: "Frequency of Initiative", "Acknowledgment of Initiative" and "Receiving a Compliment". For the post hoc analyses only the PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) model 4 analyses were used.

4. Analyses and Results

In this chapter the results of different analyses are shown. First, the descriptive data and frequencies are shown in Tables 2a and 2b. The correlation matrix between variables is displayed in Table 3. Tables 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9, provide the results of hierarchical analyses and The PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) model 4 analysis. Table 10, contains the results of post hoc analyses.

Gathered data was analysed using SPSS. Several preliminary steps were undertaken to prepare raw data. All data were checked on missing values and labels to different categories. Data concerning the distance between the HQ and employee's work place was calculated and included in the dataset. Descriptive statistics (see Table 2a) show that the youngest respondent was 21 and the oldest 65. The sample consists of 22.7% female and 76.8% male respondents and 1 non-response on this question. The average age of respondents is 44.6 years, the average organizational tenure is 11.1 years. The average geographic distance between HQ and respondent's work location is 115.75 km, the closest is at the HQ and the most remote is 244.7 km. To check if there is any non-response bias, the HR department was asked about gender ratio, average age and tenure of all employees. The information received from HR department, dated on May 15th 2018 states: Female employees 24.58%, Male employees 75.42%, average age 44.4 years and average tenure 10.3 years. This shows that the sample is a good representative of all population.

A majority of respondents (> 70%) report that they show high level of personal initiative on all 7 items of Personal Initiative construct. A 69.2% of respondents reports to take initiative on a weekly basis and another 20% on a monthly basis. Reported initiative concerns mainly daily business 54.1% and searching for efficiency 20%. When asked whether their initiative was acknowledged by their supervisor, 48.6% of respondents reported positively and 31.4% were unsure. Of those who reported that their initiative was acknowledged by their supervisor (n=91), 71% of them (N=65) reported to have received a compliment for taken initiative. A 20% of respondents that reported to be unsure whether their initiative was acknowledged by their supervisor, reported that they have received a compliment for the initiative they took. This suggests that their initiative was acknowledged by their supervisor which brings in the total of 55.6% acknowledged initiatives. In Table 2a is general information about respondents and frequencies presented. Further looking into the frequencies of Perceived Organizational Support construct, there were 34 respondents (18%) that answered "neutral" on 50-100% of all items. This raises a doubt whether the questionnaire was taken seriously by those respondents. Moreover, frequencies show that a majority of respondents experience a positive Perceived Organizational Support.

The frequencies of given answers regarding the distance are shown in the Table 2b. The frequencies show that employees working closest to the HQ have more contact with supervisor and colleagues at the HQ and also meet their supervisor more often. They receive more often acknowledgment and compliments for taken initiatives from their supervisor. The results show a non-linear relationship between geographic distance and frequency of contact and do not show the relationship between the distance to HQ and frequency of initiatives. As hypothetically suggested greater the distance the less initiative would be shown, but the results show that the most initiative was shown in the middle category 101-200 Km even though the frequency of contact is lower than in other categories and the employees receive less acknowledgment and compliments for taken initiatives. A possible explanation could be that those employees who have less contact with their supervisor are more dependent on themselves to get the job done which leads to more initiative. The lower frequency of contact could be responsible for less sharing the information about daily business with their supervisor which leads to less acknowledgment and compliments for taken initiatives.

Table 2a. Respondents' Information

		Number	Valid %
Gender	Women	49	22.7%
	Man	161	76.8%
	Unknown	1	0.5%
Age	, 30 years	27	14.6%
	31-40 years	35	18.9%
	41-50 years	69	37.3%
	51-60 years	44	23.8%
	61 > years	10	5.4%
Tenure	< 5 years	76	41.1%
	6-10 years	28	15.1%
	11-15 years	23	12.4%
	16-20 years	27	14.6%
	21-25 years	15	8.1%
	26-30 years	10	5.4%
	31 > years	6	3.2%
Distance to HQ	< 100 Km	67	36.2%
	101-200 Km	103	55.7%
	200 Km >	15	8.1%
Contact frequency with supervisor	< 1 time per month	29	15.7%
	1-2 times per month	52	28.1%
	3-4 times per month	28	15.1%
	5 > times per month	76	41.1%
Contact frequency with supervisor in person	< 1 time per month	61	33.0%
	1-2 times per month	52	28.1%
	3-4 times per month	16	8.6%
	5 > times per month	56	30.3%
Contact frequency with colleagues at the HQ	< 1 time per month	43	23.2%
	1-2 times per month	36	19.5%
	3-4 times per month	32	17.3%
	5 > times per month	74	40.0%

Table 2b. Frequencies regarding the distance

	Distance to HQ	< 100 Km		101-200 Km		200 Km >	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Contact frequency with supervisor	< 1 time per month	8	12.0%	18	17.5%	3	20.0%
	1-2 times per month	19	28.3%	29	28.2%	4	26.7%
	3-4 times per month	7	10.4%	19	18.4%	2	13.3%
	5 > times per month	33	49.2%	37	36.0%	6	40.0%
Contact frequency with supervisor in person	< 1 time per month	15	22.4%	40	38.8%	6	40.0%
	1-2 times per month	24	35.8%	24	23.3%	4	26.7%
	3-4 times per month	4	5.9%	12	11.7%	0	0.0%
	5 > times per month	24	35.8%	27	26.2%	5	33.3%
Contact frequency with colleagues at the HQ	< 1 time per month	14	20.9%	21	20.4%	8	53.3%
	1-2 times per month	10	14.9%	25	24.3%	1	6.6%
	3-4 times per month	11	16.4%	19	18.4%	2	13.3%
	5 > times per month	32	47.8%	38	36.9%	4	26.7%
When was the last initiative	This week	45	67.1%	75	73.0%	8	53.3%
	This month	15	22.4%	20	19.4%	2	13.3%
	Half a year ago	2	3.0%	4	3.9%	1	6.7%
	A year ago	0	0.0%	1	1.0%	0	0.0%
	two years ago	1	1.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	N/A	4	6.0%	3	2.9%	4	26.7%
Was the initiative acknowledged by supervisor	Yes	36	53.7%	47	45.6%	7	46.7%
	No	8	11.9%	16	15.5%	1	6.6%
	Not sure	21	31.3%	33	32.0%	4	26.7%
	N/A	3	4.4%	7	6.8%	3	20.0%
Did you receive a compliment from supervisor	Yes	33	49.3%	41	39.8%	7	46.7%
	No	34	50.7%	62	60.2%	8	53.3%

4.1 Correlation Matrix

Descriptive statistics, correlations and Cronbach's alpha are presented in Table 3. The correlation matrix shows means, standard deviation and Pearson inter-correlation between two variables. All variables were checked for collinearity before further analyses.

Personal Initiative is negatively related to geographic distance ($r=-0.15$, $p<0.05$) There is a positive relation with perceived organizational support ($r=0.25$, $p<0.01$). There is no significant relation between geographic distance and perceived organizational support ($r=-0.04$, ns).

Table 3. Correlation Matrix								
Variables	Mean	S. D.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Gender	1.77	0.42						
2. Age	44.63	10.85	.171*					
3. Tenure	11.00	9.19	.218**	.541**				
4. Personal Initiative	5.92	0.67	-0.114	-0.073	-0.103 (93)			
5. Geographic Distance	115.75	51.04	0.031	0.081	0.072	-.149*		
6. Perceived Organizational Support	4.87	1.15	0.009	-0.065	-0.077	.226**	-0.045 (95)	

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.2 Test of Direct Effects

The results in table 3 show the direct effects (Hypothesis 1-3). As expected in hypothesis 1, there is a significant negative relation between geographic distance and personal initiative ($\beta = -.149$, $p < 0.05$) therefore the Hypothesis 1 is supported. The Hypothesis 2 suggested that the distance is negatively related to the degree of perceived organizational support. The Hypothesis 2 was not supported ($\beta = -.045$, ns). Perceived organizational support ($\beta = .226$, $p < 0.01$) as suggested in Hypothesis 3, has significant positive relation to the degree of personal initiative, which supports the Hypothesis 3.

Hierarchical regression as displayed in the Table 4, shows the model variance. All control variables were included in the first model. Subsequently, geographic distance was added in the model 2 and perceived organizational support was added in the model 3. The results show that geographic distance when added in the model 2 shows no significant effect ($\beta = -.141$, ns). The model 3 shows a positive statistical significance ($\beta = .220$, $p < 0.01$). Only the third model when perceived organizational support was added shows a statistical significance and predicts a 22% of the total variation of the dependent variable.

Table 4: Effects of Geographic Distance and Perceived Organizational Support

Dependent variable: Personal Initiative	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	St. β	(t-value)	St. β	(t-value)	St. β	(t-value)
Control Variables:						
Gender	.094	(-1.222)	.093	(-1.218)	.103	(-1.378)
Age	-.017	(-.197)	-.010	(-.116)	-.005	(-.057)
Tenure	-.073	(-.811)	-.067	(-.751)	-.047	(-.533)
Main effect:						
Geographic Distance			-.141	(-1.889)	-.138	(-1.888)
Perceived Organizational Support					.220**	(2.998)
R ²	0.020		0.039		0.087	
Adjusted R ²	0.003		0.017		0.060	
Δ Adjusted R ²			0.014		0.043	
F-value	1.155		1.771		3.280**	
N= 178						

$p < 0.05^*$; $p < 0.01^{**}$; $p < 0.001^{***}$

4.3 Test of Indirect Effect

To test Hypothesis 4, PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) model 4 was used. PROCESS provides regression path analysis for testing direct and indirect effects on dependent variable e.g. the degree of Personal Initiative. The result summary is shown in table 6. The total effect of the model: X (Geographic Distance) on Y (Personal Initiative) with Perceived Organizational Support as mediator is $\beta = -.0020$, $t(-2.006)$, $p < 0.05$. The direct effect X on Y is $\beta = -.0019$, $t(-1.985)$, $p < 0.05$ which accounts for 95% of

the variance. The indirect effect accounts for only 5% of the variance ($\beta = -.0001$). The Hypothesis 4 is supported, but the effect of mediation of Perceived Organizational Support is very low.

Table 5. PROCESS model 4: The Direct and Total Effects of Mediation Model

Dependent variable: Personal Initiative		
Independent variable:	Effect	Coeff.
Geographic Distance		
	Direct effect	-0.0019*
	Total effect	-0.002*
Perceived Organizational Support		
	Indirect effect	-.0001*

$p < 0.05^*$; $p < 0.01^{**}$; $p < 0.001^{***}$

4.4 Interaction Frequency as an Alternative for Geographic Distance

As explained on page 15, the “Interaction Frequency” i.e. the alternative for geographic distance was used as an independent variable as substitute for geographic distance. The results in table 6, show that there is significant positive relation between interaction frequency and personal initiative ($\beta = .227$, $p < 0.01$) therefore the Hypothesis 1 is not supported. The Hypothesis 2 suggested that the distance is negatively related to the degree of perceived organizational support. This time the results were highly positively significant ($\beta = .390$, $p < 0.01$). Hypothesis 2 is not supported. Perceived organizational support ($\beta = .226$, $p < 0.01$) as suggested in Hypothesis 3, has significant positive relation to a degree of personal initiative.

Table 6. Correlation Matrix with Interaction Frequency

Variables	Mean	S. D.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Gender	1.77	0.42						
2. Age	44.63	10.85	.171*					
3. Tenure	11.00	9.19	.218**	.541**				
4. Personal Initiative	5.92	0.67	-0.114	-0.073	-0.103 (93)			
5. Interaction Frequency	115.75	51.04	0.118	-.145*	-.210**	.227** (87)		
6. Perceived Organizational Support	4.87	1.15	0.009	-0.065	-0.077	.226**	.390** (95)	

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**.. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Hierarchical regression as displayed in the Table 7, shows the model variance. All control variables were included in the first model. Subsequently the interaction frequency was added in model 2 and perceived organizational support was added in model 3. The results show that interaction frequency when added in model 2 shows a significant positive effect and explains 23.8% of the variance. The model 3 shows an increase of the effect on personal initiative. In model 3, both interaction frequency and perceived organizational support, statistically significantly predict 33.1% of the total variation of the dependent variable.

Table 7: Effects of Interaction Frequency and Perceived Organizational Support

Dependent variable: Personal Initiative	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	St. β	(t-value)	St. β	(t-value)	St. β	(t-value)
Control Variables:						
Gender	-.094	(-1.222)	-.134	(-1.753)	-.131	(-1.723)
Age	-.017	(-.197)	-.006	(-.064)	.075	(.951)
Tenure	-.811	(-.498)	-.022	(-.248)	-.021	(-.237)
Main effect:						
Interaction Frequency			0.238**	(3.130)	.175*	(2.143)
Perceived Organizational Support					.156*	(1.960)
R ²	0.020		0.072		0.092	
Adjusted R ²	0.003		0.051		0.066	
Δ Adjusted R ²			0.048		0.015	
F-value	1.155		3.359*		3.500**	
N= 174						

p<0.05*; p<0.01**; p<0.001***

Again was the PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) model 4 used to test the Hypothesis 4. The total effect of the model: X (Interaction Frequency) on Y (Personal Initiative) with Perceived Organizational Support as mediator is $\beta = .1355$, $t(3.108)$, $p < 0.01$. The direct effect X on Y is $\beta = .0973$, $t(2.0631)$, $p < 0.05$ which accounts for 72% of the variance, see table 9. The indirect effect accounts for only 28% of variance ($\beta = .0382$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the Hypothesis 4 is supported.

Table 9. PROCESS model 4: The Direct and Total Effects of Mediation Model

Dependent variable: Personal Initiative		
Independent variable:	Effect	Coeff.
Interaction Frequency		
	Direct effect	.0973 *
	Total effect	.1355*
Perceived Organizational Support		
	Indirect effect	.0382*

p<0.05*; p<0.01**; p<0.001***

4.5 Post Hoc Analyses

The models with control questions “Frequency of Initiative”, “Acknowledgment of Initiative” and “Receiving a Compliment” as alternative dependent variables showed no significance. The last open question was if interaction frequency as an alternative for geographic distance will show any significance in relation to the control questions as dependent variables. The model with “Receiving a Compliment” as a dependent variable showed no significance. The models with “Frequency of Initiative” and “Acknowledgment of Initiative” as dependent variables were highly significant, see Table 10.

Table 10. PROCESS model 4: The Direct and Total Effects of Mediation Model

Dependent variable	The Frequency of Initiatives	
Independent variable:	Effect	Coeff.
Interaction Frequency		
	Direct effect	-0.950*
	Total effect	-0.924*
Perceived Organizational Support		
	Indirect effect	.0027*

Dependent variable	The Acknowledgment of Initiatives	
Independent variable:	Effect	Coeff.
Interaction Frequency		
	Direct effect	-1.133*
	Total effect	-2.540***
Perceived Organizational Support		
	Indirect effect	-1.407***

p<0.05*; p<0.01**; p<0.001***

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to improve the shortcomings of current literature on the effects of geographic distance on a degree of personal initiative of an individual employee. More precisely, the effects on the personal initiative of field workers working for national companies. As mentioned before, the literature on field workers' initiatives is scarce. The current literature on multinational companies mainly focuses on organizational or unit levels and not on the individual level. The need was felt to conduct a research that will make a contribution for theory and practice. This paper combines the existing knowledge in the field of organizational studies and proposes that geographic distance negatively effects personal initiative. Furthermore, a conceptual model was developed with associated hypothesis to explain the role of geographic distance and perceived organizational support. Finally, the hypothesis were empirically tested on 184 Dutch employees in a single organization.

Regarding the personal initiative, findings support the hypothesis on both direct and indirect effects of geographic distance. Prior research suggested that perceived organizational support will positively influence personal initiative (Eisenberger et al.,2002). This study confirms those findings. Although the conceptual model suggested that geographic distance will negatively influence perceived organizational support, no evidence was found to support this hypothesis. A possible explanation for this could be found in mobile technologies that improve communications despite the geographic

distance. This way employees could have more frequent contact with their supervisor and colleagues at the HQ which enhances their sense of belonging and connectedness that leads to positive perceived organizational support.

5.1 Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

There are limitations to this study. The population of this study consists of all field workers of one single organization in the Netherlands. Although the organizational context of this company is similar to many other service organizations, the results of this study could be biased by unique organizational culture. The organizational dynamics in combination with turbulent competitive market could be of an influence on the employee's perception of his or hers performance and the way they perceive an organizational support. A longitudinal study for example, could extend this research by providing insights based on change in employee's perception about their performance and their perceived organizational support. A cross sectional study including multiple organizations could provide more generic findings.

The post hoc analysis showed some interesting effects of the variables that were not primarily the scope of this study. For example, a geographic distance could be seen as an obstacle for an employee to engage with its supervisor or colleagues. When the variable 'Interaction Frequency' was used as an alternative for geographic distance it had a significant positive effect on perceived organizational support whereas geographic distance had no significant effect on perceived organizational support. This suggests that even though modern communication technologies enable more contact, despite geographic distance, it is the frequency and possibly the quality of contact that predicts the way employees perceive organizational support and eventually show more initiative. The interaction frequency as an alternative for distance, when tested on two, out of three, alternative variables for personal initiative, showed higher significance then the conceptual model. This implies that perhaps other scales for measuring personal initiative are needed. It is on future research to empirically test this assumption.

"The present is theirs; the future, for which I really worked, is mine"

Nikola Tesla

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Appendix 1. Survey Questionnaire

Control variables

Gender:

Age:

Tenure:

Place of work, Area/city:

(O) stands for original question and (V) for translated (vertaald) into Dutch question.

Personal Initiative (PI)

1) I actively attack problems. (O) Ik pak problemen aan. (V)
2) Whenever something goes wrong, I search for a solution immediately. (O) Wanneer er iets mis gaat, zoek ik onmiddellijk naar een oplossing. (V)
3) Whenever there is a chance to get actively involved, I take it. (O) Wanneer er een kans is om actief betrokken te zijn, dan pak ik die aan. (V)
4) I take initiative immediately even when others don't. (O) Ik neem meteen initiatief, ook als anderen dat niet doen. (V)
5) I use opportunities quickly in order to attain my goals. (O) Ik gebruik snel kansen om mijn doelen te bereiken. (V)
6) Usually I do more than I am asked to do. (O) Ik doe meestal meer dan ik gevraagd ben om te doen. (V)
7) I am particularly good at realizing ideas. (O) Ik ben vooral goed in het realiseren van ideeën. (D)

Additional control questions to increase validity of self-reporting initiatives.

1) When was the last time you took an initiative? This week; this month; half a year ago; a year ago; two years ago; not applicable Wanneer heb je voor het laatst initiatief getoond? Deze week; deze maand; half jaar geleden; een jaar geleden; twee jaar geleden; n.v.t
--

<p>2) What was the nature of your initiative?</p> <p>Job routine; best practice; innovation; other _____; not applicable;</p> <p>Van welke aard was het initiatief?</p> <p>Dagelijkse werkzaamheden; efficiëntere manier van werken; innovatie/vernieuwing;</p> <p>anders _____ n.v.t.</p>
<p>3) Is your initiative recognized by your supervisor as one?</p> <p>Yes; no; I don't know; not applicable;</p> <p>Wordt jouw initiatief erkend door jouw leidinggevende?</p> <p>Ja; nee; ik weet het niet; n.v.t.</p>
<p>4) Did you get a compliment for taking the initiative?</p> <p>Yes; no</p> <p>Heeft u een compliment gekregen voor het genomen initiatief?</p> <p>Ja; nee</p>

Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

<p>1) My supervisor values my contribution to organizational well-being. (O)</p> <p>Mijn leidinggevende waardeert mijn bijdrage aan de organisatie welzijn. (V)</p>
<p>2) If my supervisor could hire someone to replace me at a lower salary he/she would do so. (O)</p> <p>Als mijn leidinggevende iemand aan zou kunnen nemen om mij tegen een lager salaris te vervangen dan zou hij/zij dit doen. (V)</p>
<p>3) My supervisor fails to appreciate any extra effort from me. (R) (O)</p> <p>Mijn leidinggevende heeft geen waardering voor extra inspanningen van mijn kant. (V)</p>
<p>4) My supervisor strongly considers my goals and values. (O)</p> <p>Mijn leidinggevende houdt sterk rekening met mijn doelen en wat ik belangrijk vind. (V)</p>
<p>5) My supervisor would ignore any complaint from me. (R) (O)</p> <p>Mijn leidinggevende zou iedere klacht van mij negeren. (V)</p>
<p>6) My supervisor disregards my best interests when it makes decisions that affect me. (R) (O)</p> <p>Mijn leidinggevende houdt geen rekening met mijn belangen wanneer hij/zij beslissingen neemt die van invloed zijn op mijn werk. (V)</p>
<p>7) Help is available from my supervisor when I have a problem. (O)</p> <p>Ik krijg hulp van mijn leidinggevende wanneer ik een probleem heb. (V)</p>
<p>8) My supervisor really cares about my well-being. (O)</p> <p>Mijn leidinggevende geeft echt om mijn welzijn. (V)</p>
<p>9) Even if I did the best job possible, my supervisor would fail to notice. (R) (O)</p> <p>Ook al doe ik mijn uiterste best, dan nog zou mijn leidinggevende dat niet opmerken. (V)</p>

10) My supervisor is willing to help me when I need a special favour. (O) Mijn leidinggevende is bereid mij te helpen als ik een speciaal verzoek heb. (V)
11) My supervisor cares about my general satisfaction at work. (O) Mijn leidinggevende geeft om mijn algemene tevredenheid met het werk. (V)
12) If given the opportunity, my supervisor would take advantage of me. (R) (O) Als de mogelijkheid zich zou voordoen, dan zou mijn leidinggevende misbruik van mij maken. (V)
13) My supervisor shows very little concern for me. (R) (O) Mijn leidinggevende bekommert zich weinig om mij. (V)
14) My supervisor cares about my opinions. (O) Mijn leidinggevende geeft om mijn mening. (V)
15) My supervisor takes pride in my accomplishments at work. (O) Mijn leidinggevende is trots op mijn prestaties op het werk. (V)
16) My supervisor tries to make my job as interesting as possible. (O) Mijn leidinggevende probeert mijn werk zo interessant mogelijk te maken. (V)

Appendix 2. Cover Letters

Date: 13th of March 2018

Beste collega,

Mijn naam is Srdjan Milenic en ik studeer af aan de Erasmus Universiteit in de opleiding Master Bedrijfskunde. Mijn scriptie onderzoek richt zich op de invloed die de geografische afstand tussen het hoofdkantoor en de werkplek van een buitendienstmedewerker heeft op de mate van persoonlijk initiatief dat een medewerker met een functie in de buitendienst vertoont. Mijn respondentenpopulatie betreft alle collega's van MAAS die werkzaam zijn in een buitendienst functie. Ik wil je vriendelijk vragen 5-7 minuten van jouw tijd te spenderen aan het invullen van mijn vragenlijst via de link onderaan deze email. Je kan dit ook invullen op je telefoon of tablet. Op de hiernavolgende pagina's worden je vragen of uitspraken voorgelegd, die betrekking hebben op jou of jouw werksituatie. Het is de bedoeling dat jij het antwoord kiest dat het best past bij de situatie waarin jij dagelijks jouw werk uitvoert. Ik wil je hartelijk danken voor het invullen van deze enquête. Houd er alsjeblieft rekening mee dat er geen goede of slechte antwoorden zijn, alleen jouw eigen mening is van groot belang. De antwoorden op deze vragenlijst worden strikt vertrouwelijk behandeld en de respondenten blijven geheel anoniem. Mocht je een vraag hebben dan kan je dit aangeven via dit email adres: smilenic@maas.nl

An Reminder email

Date: 19th of March 2018

Beste collega,

Hierbij stuur ik je de reminder voor het invullen van mijn enquête. Veel collega's hebben deze al ingevuld. Van de 466 respondenten is de enquête reeds door 123 collega's ingevuld, waarvoor mijn dank. Door de anonimiteit van de enquête kan ik niet zien wie de enquête wel of niet ingevuld heeft waardoor ik deze mail weer aan eenieder stuur. Mocht je de enquête al ingevuld hebben dan kan je deze mail negeren. Vriendelijk verzoek aan overige 343 collega's om de enquête alsnog in te vullen.