Document généré le 12 oct. 2024 04:49

Relations industrielles
Industrial Relations

Personality, Social Support and Workers' Stress

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Volume 47, numéro 1, 1992

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/050746ar
DOI : https://doi.org/10.7202/050746ar

Aller au sommaire du numéro

Éditeur(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0034-379X (imprimé)
1703-8138 (numérique)

Découvrir la revue

Citer cet article

Dolan, S. L., van Ameringen, M. R. & Arsenault, A. (1992). Personality, Social Support and Workers' Stress. *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, *47*(1), 125–139. https://doi.org/10.7202/050746ar

Résumé de l'article

Malgré l'intérêt marqué pour le phénomène du support social et de ses relations avec le stress au travail, l'étude de ce concept demeure extrêmement complexe. En effet, les recherches publiées font appel à différents types de définitions et la controverse demeure en ce qui a trait aux effets différenciés du support social, notamment les effets directs ou modérateurs.

Cette étude examine d'abord les liens directs entre le support social, la perception des sources de stress au travail et la détresse psychologique. En deuxième lieu, elle teste l'effet modérateur du support social sur les relations stimuli-réponses en fonction de la personnalité.

Huit cent sept (807) personnes travaillant dans le milieu hospitalier québécois ont répondu à un questionnaire sur le stress au travail. Les données recueillies sont basées sur un modèle conceptuel multidisciplinaire et multidimensionnel développé par les auteurs depuis 12 ans. Dans cette étude, un modèle réduit a été examiné. Les facteurs suivants ont été étudiés: deux sources de stress, intrinsèque et extrinsèque; trois manifestations de détresse psychologique du stress telles que l'anxiété, la dépression et l'irritation; quatre catégories de la personnalité qui représentent une combinaison orthogonale du Locus de contrôle de Rotter avec le «Striver-Achiever» de Sales; et enfin, trois dimensions du support social en provenance du supérieur immédiat, des collègues et de la famille. Les effets directs sont présentés sous la forme de corrélations entre chacun des facteurs pour chacun des quatre groupes de personnalité. Les effets modérateurs ont été étudiés en utilisant la méthode de régression hiérarchique suggérée par Arnold (1982).

Les effets directs les plus significatifs représentent d'abord un lien négatif entre les trois dimensions du support social et les sources de stress extrinsèque, tous individus confondus. Quelques relations spécifiques ont été dévoilées selon certains types de personnalité. De même, il existe une relation négative significative entre le support social et les trois formes de détresse psychologique et ceci pour l'ensemble des groupes de personnalité.

Plusieurs effets modérateurs du support social sont présentés. Les plus importants concernent les sources de stress extrinsèque. Par ailleurs, les effets varient considérablement en fonction de la forme spécifique de détresse psychologique, de la dimension du support social et également en fonction du type de personnalité. Nous pouvons surtout retenir que: 1) les relations sont plus importantes pour le stress extrinsèque; 2) un effet modérateur du support social sur le stress intrinsèque existe uniquement pour les «striver-achiever» - locus externes; 3) la relation entre le stress extrinsèque et la dépression et l'irritation semble être amplifiée pour les «non-striver-achiever» - locus interne.

En conclusion, cette étude nous fournit d'autres éléments pour aider à développer une approche nouvelle visant la compréhension des relations entre le support social, les sources de stress au travail et la détresse psychologique.

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Personality, Social Support and Workers' Stress

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The study examines social support as a correlate of perceived job demands and psychological strain and as a moderator of the relationship between stimulus and response, according to personality traits. 807 hospital employees were administered an occupational stress questionnaire. Data was obtained regarding two sources of job demands (intrinsic and extrinsic), three psychological symptoms (anxiety, depression and irritation), four categories of personality and three areas of social support. Using hierarchical regression procedures (Arnold 1982) the results suggest that the effects of social support vary significantly depending upon the source of job demands, the workers' personality and the psychological symptom manifested.

Social support is of growing interest as a potential approach to alleviate job stress. Although it might seem evident that better support improves stress coping, the study of social support is a complex undertaking. There is wide disagreement on both how to define and measure social support. For example, certain definitions are more structural in character, pertaining to the number and frequency of relationships with others (Hammer, 1981); others, more subjective in form, pertain to an individual's perceptions of the supportive quality of his/her social environment (House 1981).Yet, more to the point, is the controversy regarding the effects of social support.

Some authors report direct effects on the perception of job demands: the more supportive one's social environment is felt, the less stress one may perceive (Pinneau 1976; La Rocco and Jones 1978; Winnubst et al. 1982) and the better one may feel psychologically (Caplan et al. 1975; La Rocco et al. 1980; Billings and Moos 1982).

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Others consider social support as a moderator variable between job demands and their consequences: supported individuals cope better, thereby lessening distress (Payne 1980). Moderating effects of social support have been reported on depression (La Rocco et al. 1980; Billings and Moos 1982; Husaini et al. 1982), state anxiety (Sarason et al. 1983) and irritation (Winnubst et al. 1982). Thus, the concept of social support as a moderator between stimulus and response is gaining empirical support (Gore 1987) implying its protective role in the development of unhealthy consequences (House 1981).

Some oppose direct and moderating effects. Fleming (1982) argues that the direct effects of social support imply a beneficial quality whether or not stress is present, whereas in the moderating model, a high level of social support would be beneficial to coping under stress, but totally insignificant in its absence. Certain investigators have reported both direct and moderating effects of social support (La Rocco et al. 1980; Winnubst et al. 1982). Aneshensel and Stone (1982) believe that both models are not mutually exclusive: social support may have a positive influence on one's mental state regardless of stress and still influence coping. Divergent opinions may be due to dissimilar methodological approaches such as the type of social support measures used as well as the analytical strategy employed to estimate moderating effects.

Turner (1981) suggested that the model of social support as a moderator may also be conditioned by other variables. More specifically, Heller and Swindle (1983) as well as Gottlieb (1983) discuss the critical importance of personal resources as mediating variables in the stress-coping process. Our analysis attempts to address this issue by the inclusion of a "personal resource" factor combining locus of control (Rotter 1966) and a modified version of the type A trait (striver-achiever) (Sales 1969). In addition, we have characterized two sources of occupational demands (intrinsic and extrinsic), as well as three levels of social support: one's immediate superior, colleagues at work, and family and friends.

In sum, the primary objective of the study is to test the moderating effect of social support on the relationship between perceived stressors and strain symptoms whatever the personality type. A secondary objective is to explore how this moderating effect varies from one personality type to the other.

METHODS

A comprehensive study on the relationships between job demands and a variety of both individual and organizational outcomes in a hospital

environment has been in progress since 1978 (Arsenault and Dolan 1983a; Arsenault et al. 1989). It permitted the development and testing of a contingency model of occupational stress. A number of segments of this broader study has already been published (Arsenault and Dolan 1983b; Dolan and Arsenault 1984; Dolan and Balkin 1987; Leonard et al. 1987; Van Ameringen et al. 1988, Arsenault et al. 1991).For this study we retained only part of the model as schematically presented in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1

Partial Presentation of the Working Model

Intrinsic Job Demands		
Contacts with patients		
Participation		
Urgent decisions		
Physical risks	*Personality*	
Threatening tasks		
Responsibility	Locus of control	
Quantitative overload	Striver-achiever	*Psychological Strain*
Extrinsic Job Demands	*Social Support*	Depression
		Anxiety
Restricted autonomy	Superiors	Irritation
Skills under-used	Colleagues	
Career ambiguity	Family and friends	
Workload instability		
Pay inequity		
Role ambiguity		
Role conflict		
Linguistic pressure		

Subjects

807 full time hospital workers with more than 6 months tenure in the same job participated in the study. Subjects came from 8 different hospitals and constituted a representative cross-section of job categories. A case-wise deletion procedure used for dealing with missing values reduced the actual number of complete cases to about 650. Breakdown by gender showed a predominance of female workers (80%), typical of such organizations.

Materials and Procedures

A multiple-item questionnaire was used and comprised perceived job demands, individual trait and social support measures, as well as psychological distress (strain) self-assessment scales.

Job Demands

Job demands pertinent to the hospital work environment were measured using Likert type scales fully described elsewhere (Arsenault and Dolan 1983a; 1983b; Dolan and Arsenault 1984). Internal reliability coefficients for all scales ranged between .67 and .85. They were classified into intrinsic and extrinsic sources based primarily on conceptual arguments derived from previous research (House 1984; Caplan et al. 1975) and supported by factorial analysis. All measures were subject to validation studies which insured adaptation in content and wording to the present study population.

Ultimately, an intrinsic job demand index was derived by linear addition of the standardized scores of the seven corresponding scales listed in Figure 1. A similar extrinsic demand index combining the eight corresponding scales listed in Figure 1 was also compiled. Co-linearity between these two job demands indices is considered to be low (r=.27).

Trait Measures

Two commonly used measures of personality in stress research were employed here. The first is a nine item scale developed by Caplan et al. (1975) based on the work of Sales (1969) and pertains to the striver-achiever (S-A) trait. This measure is an approximation of Rosenman et al. (1964) type A personality. The scale has an observed range of 10 to 63. Subjects above the median were considered high S-A, and those below, low S-A.

The original version of Rotter's locus of control scale (1966) was administered as well. The observed range was from 1 to 23. Subjects obtaining a score below 11 (median score) were considered internal, those above, external.

Given that the two trait measures were almost orthogonal (r=-.15), they were combined to form four distinct categories of personalities: (a) the high S-A, high internal, was labelled "HOT-CAT"; (b) the high S-A, high external, "HOT-DOG"; (c) the low S-A, high internal, "COOL-CAT"; and (d) the low S-A, high external "COOL-DOG". In previous work,

Arsenault and Dolan (1983a), have described these four personality types in the following manner:

A. The HOT-CAT's are competitive, preoccupied with control of their territory, must engage in immediate action and exert control over their emotional reactions. They see themselves as formal and authoritative leaders, the so-called dominant of the social structure. They will strive in order to maintain control.

B. The HOT-DOG's are hyperactive optimistic individuals who feel guided by external events.They are restless individuals who find satisfaction in the demonstration that they have kept themselves busy doing whatever has to be done. They are more devoted than faithful and formal roles in an organized social structure does not interest them. They strive and don't always believe in control.

C. The COOL-CAT's have a tendency to be overwhelmed by their analytical mind. Being extremely critical, they have a tendency towards pessimism. It is difficult to determine if they are solitary by choice or if others avoid them because of their retreating behavior.They like to feel unpredictable and do not like to be controlled or directed. They don't strive or compete but believe in control.

D. The COOL-DOG's would never act hastily. Their domain is more of quiet reflection and slow pace jobs. They are quite sensitive to all sorts of joys and mishaps, yet do not search and even prefer not to have control over such happenings. They appear more faithful than devoted. They don't strive nor believe in control.

Social Support

Inspired by Cobb (1976) and House (1981) and adapted to a more occupational context, social support was defined as follows: the degree to which an individual perceives how others facilitate his/her working life, how he/she can count on them for support when things get difficult, how he/she can feel they can talk to them and how much they are willing to listen to his/her problems. This measure is more affective as compared to other definitions of support which are more instrumental and informative.

Three sources of support were considered: social support from immediate superior, from colleagues at work and from spouse, family and friends. Internal reliability coefficients ranged from .77 to .89.

Outcomes

The strain consequences were measured using three validated psychological scales: depression (Cobb 1970), state anxiety (Spielberger et al. 1970), and irritation (Cobb 1970). These psychological scales had internal reliability coefficients of .88, .73 and .64 respectively.

Statistical Treatment

A. *Direct effects:* Correlations were computed between job demand indices (intrinsic and extrinsic) and psychological strain symptoms as well as social support scales (Table 1). They were also computed between social support and strain symptoms (Table 2). Computations are shown across all types of personality, taking all individuals as a single group.They are also shown for each of the four personality types.

B. *Moderator effects:* As mentioned earlier, controversy about social support as moderator variable does exist, perhaps due to divergent methodologies and statistical treatments (Aneshensel and Stone 1982). The buffering effect of each source of social support was assessed through hierarchical multiple regression analyses, using intrinsic and extrinsic job demands and social support scales as predictors. The buffering effect was tested as the significance in prediction added by the "job demands x social support interaction term" (change in R^2) for each of the psychological symptoms, after the main effects of job demands and social support had been partialled out (Cohen and Cohen 1975; Arnold 1982). Such hierarchical analyses were performed across all personality types and for each type separately. Changes in R^2 significant at the .05 levels are shown in Table 3. The direction of the change, taken as the sign of the regression coefficient is also indicated.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the significant correlations ($p < .05$) between intrinsic and extrinsic job demands and the three psychological symptoms (1A), and the three sources of social support (1B). These coefficients provide evidence of significant relationships between all three sets of variables.

The results show that across all personality groups only the extrinsic job demand index (Extr) is significantly correlated with depression, anxiety and irritation (Table 1A). Separate analysis on each personality

type reflect this general trend with the notable exception of the COOL-CAT type who seems to exhibit only anxiety as a significant correlate of extrinsic demands.

With regards to intrinsic job demands, the general trend is the absence of any significant correlation with strain symptoms.Quite a few notable exceptions appear however: a significant correlation between irritation and intrinsic job demands is present for all types except for the HOT-DOG's. The HOT-DOG's, on the other hand are the only ones to exhibit a significant correlation between intrinsic demands and depression. Anxiety does not appear to be significantly related to intrinsic demands whatsoever.

Similarly table 1B shows correlations between job demands and social support. Across all personality groups, the general trend again shows more prominent correlations, albeit negative, between extrinsic demands and all three types of social support. There is however a significant correlation between intrinsic demands and support from one's immediate superior.

TABLE 1

Correlations between Intrinsic and Extrinsic Demands, Symptoms and Social Support: Across all and for each Personality Types

Personality Type	*Across Types*		*Hot-Cat Type*		*Hot-Dog Type*		*Cool-Cat Type*		*Cool-Dog Type*	
Perceived Stress	*Intr*	*Extr*	*Intr*	*Extr*	*Intr*	*Extr*	*Intr*	*Extr*	*Intr*	*Extr*
A. Symptoms										
-Depression	–	0.28	–	0.18	0.13	0.29	–	–	–	0.33
-Anxiety	–	0.34	–	0.31	–	0.28	–	0.30	–	0.41
-Irritation	–	0.24	0.15	0.20	–	0.21	0.22	–	0.14	0.28
B. Social Support										
-Superiors	-.14	-.40	-.21	-.27	–	-.46	–	-.29	-.16	-.39
-Colleagues	–	-.30	–	-.28	–	-.26	–	-.28	–	-.28
-Family	–	-.13	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	-.19

Values in the table are correlation coefficients significant at $p < .05$.
(Intr = Intrinsic; Extr = Extrinsic).
-- has been inserted to represent non-significant correlations.

Within personality types, the COOL-DOGS follow exactly the general trend. The small (-.13) correlation between family social support and extrinsic demands does not show up in the other three personality types. Finally, only the HOT-CAT's along with the COOL-DOG's show a significant relation between social support from one's immediate superior and intrinsic demands.

In summary, Table 1 illustrates a complex but noticeable pattern of direct relationships between demands and symptoms on the one hand and demands and social support on the other hand. It is noteworthy that extrinsic demands appear to be stronger and seem to show a more systematic positive correlation with strain symptoms and a negative correlation with social support.

Table 2 shows the correlations between social support and psychological symptoms. Our results are similar to those reported in other studies (e.g., Caplan et al. 1975; Turner 1981; Winnubst et al. 1982). When we look at all groups confounded, the greater is one's perception of social support, be it from the superior, colleagues or family, the lesser the feelings of depression, anxiety or irritation or vice versa. Quite strikingly, the pattern of correlations is much more stable from one personality type to the other especially with regards to co-worker support. Family support does not seem to be related to irritation for the COOL-DOG's. Superior social support does not appear to relate to irritation for both CAT types, HOT or COOL. However, the HOT-CAT type's depression and the COOL-CAT type's anxiety are negative correlates of one's superior support.

Table 3 shows our attempt to analyze the moderating effects of social support between job demands and psychological strain using the stepwise hierarchical procedure mentioned earlier. In general, results vary according to both personalities and job demands.

For intrinsic job demands, only family social support is associated with a significant negative decrease in strain symptoms but specifically for the HOT-DOG personality type. Or conversely, the highly strained HOT-DOG receives significantly less family social support. The general trend, all individuals confounded, does not support the hypothesis of a significant moderating effect of social support on the relationship between intrinsic demands and strain symptoms.

For extrinsic job demands, the general trend shows that support from colleagues and family is negatively associated with depression and support from superior with anxiety. The changes in R^2, however, are marginal.

If we distinguish between the four types of personality, there is no evidence that social support has a moderating effect on the HOT CATs' symptoms. The HOT-DOG type shows evidence of a moderating effect on anxiety via co-worker support. The COOL-DOG type appears to have a significant decrease in anxiety associated with superior support and in irritation associated with co-worker support.

TABLE 2

Correlations between Symptoms and Social Support Across all and for each Personality Types

Personality Type	*Across Types*			*Hot-Cat Type*			*Hot-Dog Type*			*Cool-Cat Type*			*Cool-Dog Type*		
Symptoms	*Dep*	*Anx*	*Irr*	*Dep*	*Anx*	*Irr*	*Dep*	*Anx*	*Irr*	*Dep*	*Anx*	*Irr*	*Dep*	*Anx*	*Irr*
Social Support															
–Superiors	-.22	-.29	-.33	-.18	–	–	-.26	-.20	-.24	–	-.20	–	-.23	-.17	-.24
–Colleagues	-.29	-.28	-.25	-.13	-.16	-.24	-.31	-.27	-.22	-.23	-.31	-.26	-.37	-.32	-.27
–Family	-.33	-.20	-.18	-.27	-.18	-.19	-.31	-.15	-.14	-.44	-.27	-.37	-.32	-.20	–

Values in the table are correlation coefficients significant at $p < .05$. (Dep = Depression; Anx = Anxiety; Irr = Irritation).
-- has been inserted to represent non-significant correlations.

TABLE 3

Changes in R^2 on Symptoms with Social Support Competing with Intrinsic and Extrinsic Stress Across all for each Type of Personality

Personality Type	*Across Types*			*Hot-Cat Type*			*Hot-Dog Type*			*Cool-Cat Type*			*Cool-Dog Type*		
Strain Symptoms	*Dep*	*Anx*	*Irr*	*Dep*	*Anx*	*Irr*	*Dep*	*Anx*	*Irr*	*Dep*	*Anx*	*Irr*	*Dep*	*Anx*	*Irr*
A. Intrinsic Stress															
Social Support															
–Superiors															
–Colleagues															
–Family							$.04^-$	$.06^-$	$.04^-$						
B. Extrinsic Stress															
Social Support															
–Superiors		$.01^-$												$.04^-$	
–Colleagues	$.01^-$							$.04^-$				$.08^+$			$.09^-$
–Family	$.01^-$									$.10^+$					

Values in Table 3 are changes in R^2 associated with the (Job demands x Social support) interaction term at $p < .05$. The positive and negative signs to the right of R^2 values gives the direction of the change. Only significant findings are presented in the table.

Of particular interest is what happens to the COOL-CATs. In their case, support from family is associated with an increase in depression and support from colleagues, with an increase in irritation.

In sum, the examination of social support as a moderator could be viewed as follows: first, associations are more prominent in relation to extrinsic as opposed to intrinsic job demands. Second, evidence of a moderator effect of social support on intrinsic job demands exists only for the HOT DOGs (external striver-achiever). Thirdly, the relationship between extrinsic demands and strain appears to be potentiated by social support for internal low striver-achiever individuals (COOL-CAT).

DISCUSSION

In view of the controversy surrounding direct and indirect effects of social support, our results tend to support Aneshensel and Stone's (1982) contention that both aspects are not mutually exclusive.

The strongest evidence, as shown in Table 2, favors a non-specific direct correlation between all dimensions of social support and all the strain symptoms studied here. The differences between personality types are relative exceptions to the general trend. One cannot however conclude in terms of causality: increased strain symptoms might affect the quality of perceived support as well as the reverse. This assertion is an emerging concern according to a recent study (Seltzer 1989). But in any event, poor support seems to go along with strain.

On the other hand, there is also evidence supporting a direct relationship between job demands and social support as well as strain symptoms. Extrinsic job demands appears to be a strong correlate of both. Here, again, the emphasis is on interdependency and not necessarily on causality. That is to say that strained individuals might perceive more conflicts and organizational constraints and might as well experience less support. There would however be some differences in patterns between personality types.

Finally, this study offers some support to the previously reported role of social support as a moderator variable in the relationships between occupational demands and psychological strain. In relative terms, however, such a moderating effect accounts for little variance and seems to interact with both personality traits and type of job demand.

In more specific terms, certain personality types may not even seek social support when experiencing either intrinsic or extrinsic demands. Or the lack of social support might reinforce certain personal attitudes with increasing demands. That would be the typical case for the HOT-CAT's;

formal and dominant, action-oriented leaders, who could perceive the lack of social support as a reinforcement of their leadership style and at the same time experience the need for social support as a sign of weakness, and therefore a menace to their proper identity.

The HOT-DOG's appear to be the only group to react specifically to intrinsic stress with an associated buffering effect of family social support for all three symptoms. Again, this action oriented (S-A) but environment sensitive character (external) might perceive intrinsic demands for more professional and personal commitment and responsibility as a strain to their externality. At the same time, because of their striver-achiever trait, they might be reluctant to exhibit strain in front of their colleagues and superiors as it may be interpreted as weakness. Thus, they would rather export their complaints to family and friends circles. Conversely, the lack of support from family and friends might contribute to enhance their strain when confronted with increasing workload and responsibilities.

The COOL-DOG, being a less action oriented and external individual, might not be as reluctant to express anxiety and irritation towards their co-workers and superior and may not export his/her frustrations in the family circle. Conversely again, when they loose support they would react more dramatically to extrinsic demands.

The COOL-CATS offer an inverse profile as social support in the presence of extrinsic demands increases their level of depression and anxiety instead of decreasing it. Alternatively, their expression of depression might decrease their family support and when they become irritated it may decrease their colleagues' support. This peculiar profile might be related to the low S-A trait which explains a systematic tendency not to compete for recognition. The internal trait, on the other hand, would tend to make them informal leaders. The irritation directed at their colleagues, might well be poorly received hence they project the image of being over smart. Their depressive mood might also be badly received by the family circle since they tend to project the image of a strong ego that is in control and does not need competition to prove itself.The inverse analysis would make extrinsic demands a menace (irritation) to their analytical temper that does not tolerate conflicting demands and provoke attacks directed at their co-workers. Their depressed mood would be more readily expressed in the family circle since it is a safer place to express lack of personal control over events.

CONCLUSION

This study provides further evidence for the necessity to develop a contingency approach towards the understanding of the relationships between job stress and psychological strain. We believe that we provide one more evidence to the usefulness of the taxonomy of different sources of social support as well as personality variables in recognizing these aforementioned contingencies.

Given the complex phenomenon under study, this may prove an interesting attempt to refine and get a better grasp of the dynamic processes involved in the stress-coping syndrome. Furthermore, such diagnoses could be very useful in guiding practitioners in implementing remedial actions. Given that no single universal remedy is effective, a successful intervention should consider simultaneously the nature of job demands, the type of individuals involved and the origin of social support in delineating a course of action.

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Personnalité, support social et l'étiologie du stress en milieu de travail

Malgré l'intérêt marqué pour le phénomène du support social et de ses relations avec le stress au travail, l'étude de ce concept demeure extrêmement complexe. En effet, les recherches publiées font appel à différents types de définitions et la controverse demeure en ce qui a trait aux effets différenciés du support social, notamment les effets directs ou modérateurs.

Cette étude examine d'abord les liens directs entre le support social, la perception des sources de stress au travail et la détresse psychologique. En deuxième lieu, elle teste l'effet modérateur du support social sur les relations stimuli-réponses en fonction de la personnalité.

Huit cent sept (807) personnes travaillant dans le milieu hospitalier québécois ont répondu à un questionnaire sur le stress au travail. Les données recueillies sont basées sur un modèle conceptuel multidisciplinaire et multidimensionnel développé par les auteurs depuis 12 ans. Dans cette étude, un modèle réduit a été examiné. Les facteurs suivants ont été étudiés: deux sources de stress, intrinsèque et extrinsèque; trois manifestations de détresse psychologique du stress telles que l'anxiété, la dépression et l'irritation; quatre catégories de la personnalité qui représentent une combinaison orthogonale du Locus de contrôle de Rotter avec le «Striver-Achiever» de Sales; et enfin, trois dimensions du support social en provenance du supérieur immédiat, des collègues et de la famille. Les effets directs sont présentés sous la forme de corrélations entre chacun des facteurs pour chacun des quatre groupes de personnalité. Les effets modérateurs ont été étudiés en utilisant la méthode de régression hiérarchique suggérée par Arnold (1982).

Les effets directs les plus significatifs représentent d'abord un lien négatif entre les trois dimensions du support social et les sources de stress extrinsèque, tous individus confondus. Quelques relations spécifiques ont été dévoilées selon certains types de personnalité. De même, il existe une relation négative significative entre le support social et les trois formes de détresse psychologique et ceci pour l'ensemble des groupes de personnalité.

Plusieurs effets modérateurs du support social sont présentés. Les plus importants concernent les sources de stress extrinsèque. Par ailleurs, les effets varient considérablement en fonction de la forme spécifique de détresse psychologique, de la dimension du support social et également en fonction du type de personnalité. Nous pouvons surtout retenir que: 1) les relations sont plus importantes pour le stress extrinsèque; 2) un effet modérateur du support social sur le stress intrinsèque existe uniquement pour les «striver-achiever» – locus externes; 3) la relation entre le stress extrinsèque et la dépression et l'irritation semble être amplifiée pour les «non-striver-achiever» – locus interne.

En conclusion, cette étude nous fournit d'autres éléments pour aider à développer une approche nouvelle visant la compréhension des relations entre le support social, les sources de stress au travail et la détresse psychologique.