

## Thriving in Academia: How Social Support in the Workplace Impacts on the Performance Levels of Iraqi Women University Administrators?

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**Abstract:** The current study aimed to explore the effects of social support provided by supervisors (department heads) and colleagues on the performance levels of women working in the administrative departments at Jabir Ibn Hayyan University for Medical and Pharmaceutical Sciences in an embedded model of the impact of affective commitment to career and job enrichment. With a purposive sample of (76) female administrative staff holding a bachelor's degree, the data were analyzed. Hypotheses were tested using the structural equation modeling method according to the least squares modeling method (PLS-SEM) with the SmartPLS .4 software package. The study's findings demonstrated that women working in administrative departments have a favorable and substantial degree of affective commitment to career and job enrichment when they get social support from their superiors (department heads) and colleagues.

The study also concluded that affective commitment to career and job enrichment has a positive and significant impact on the levels of performance of women working in administrative departments. The study also presented a set of recommendations, the most prominent of which are: The University must provide all forms of support to female administrators working at the university to raise their performance levels. Administrative department heads must develop and implement policies and practices to create a positive work environment, reformulate administrative functions, and expand the scope of tasks to meet women's aspirations and increase their motivation.

**Key words:** Social Support in the Workplace, Affective Commitment to Career, Job Enrichment, Job Performance, Iraqi Women Administrators.



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### 1. Introduction

Technological advancements and the emergence of dramatically changing social and economic issues have made the workplace environment different and workplace behaviors complex. To address these enormous challenges, Organizational scholars and practitioners emphasize that in order to boost employee productivity, social support from coworkers and superiors is crucial.



With the increasing number of working women taking on administrative roles in universities, the dual nature of the tasks and roles they must perform, and the routine nature of administrative work, social support in the workplace for female administrators is crucial to their professional development and psychological well-being. It plays a significant role in mitigating conflicts between dual roles, promoting work-life balance, and facilitating career advancement.

Social support in the workplace is defined as "the extent to which employees believe that those around them care about them and are willing to provide work-related assistance." In the majority of organizational environments, positive connections between employees and their supervisors are critical, making it a necessary aspect of the workplace. (Foy et al., 2019: 6). Social support provided by supervisors and coworkers has positive effects on regulating an individual's emotional state, creating a strong sense of identity and professional belonging, reducing or alleviating physical and mental fatigue, motivating more tremendous effort at work, and promoting improved performance. (Liu et al., 2022: 2). On the other hand, employees who are respected and treated with dignity by their colleagues and supervisors demonstrate greater commitment to their professions (Abrol & Kishor, 2021:229). Social support practices provided by colleagues and supervisors in the workplace also lead to positive outcomes for the entire organization by increasing commitment to the workplace and job performance (Vuong et al., 2022:3).

The nature of administrative work, however, necessitates the inclusion of duties that call for a variety of abilities; this is referred to as job enrichment. In this sense, the organization should support staff members and help them grow and improve their job responsibilities in order to make their work more appealing, efficient, and demanding. (Salari et al., 2023: 87). Therefore, task diversity is an essential element in expanding the scope of work, as it enhances employee motivation and prevents boredom in the workplace. Providing employees with diverse responsibilities also allows them to fully utilize their skills, which improves their engagement and, thus, enhances their performance levels. (Alias et al., 2024: 253).

Although existing research has explored the effects and benefits of social support in different work contexts, understanding how it specifically affects female administrators in general is limited. There is still a lack of detailed understanding of how its practices specifically affect levels of affective commitment to career and job enrichment, and thus affect levels of job performance for women in managerial roles within the cultural and organizational context of Iraqi universities, particularly at Jabir Ibn Hayyan University of Medical and Pharmaceutical Sciences, based on the above, the study problem can be formulated with the following questions:

1. What is the impact of social support provided by supervisors (department heads) and colleagues in the workplace on affective commitment to career among women working in the administrative departments at the research university?.
2. What is the impact of social support provided by supervisors (department heads) and colleagues in the workplace on job enrichment among women working in the administrative departments at the research university?.
3. What is the impact of affective commitment to career on job performance among women working in the administrative departments at the research university?
4. What is the impact of job enrichment on job performance among women working in the administrative departments at the research university?.

### ➤ Research Objectives

1. The current study aims to expand our theoretical understanding of social support in the workplace by presenting a conceptual framework for how social support provided by supervisors (department heads) and colleagues influences affective commitment to career and



job enrichment, which in turn affects the performance of women working in administrative departments at Jabir Ibn Hayyan University for Medical and Pharmaceutical Sciences.

2. The results of this study may contribute to changes in the policies and practices of the administration of Jabir Ibn Hayyan University for Medical and Pharmaceutical Sciences to better support women administrators, potentially leading to the efficient and effective achievement of work goals.
3. The current study makes valuable contributions to the available literature examining the social support practices of supervisors and colleagues and their relationship to affective commitment to career, job enrichment, and performance levels of women administrators. Researchers have paid little attention to these variables, which have not been adequately studied in this context.

#### ➤ **The importance of the study**

Given the unique organizational and cultural nature of Iraqi universities, the current study gained significance from exploring the effects of social support provided by supervisors (department heads) and colleagues on affective commitment to career and job enrichment, which in turn impacts the performance levels of women working in administrative departments, specifically at Jabir Ibn Hayyan University for Medical and Pharmaceutical Sciences. This approach aligns with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research's vision to enhance the role of Iraqi women in management and leadership, oppose all forms of discrimination, and formulate public policies that ensure equal opportunities between the sexes in Iraqi universities. For this reason, it becomes essential to comprehend the function of social support in the workplace for women employed in administrative departments.

The researchers supported this trend: "Employees who receive social support in their workplace demonstrate better performance in their various roles at work and at home, especially women" This study of this group is unique in the literature, as it has not been sufficiently studied in this area of research. The current study also has the potential to encourage universities to address the challenges faced by female administrators, potentially leading to improvements in their job performance within higher education institutions.

## **2. Literature Review:**

Whether in their personal or professional life, people require social help in several areas. Social support at work may be extremely important for assisting staff members in overcoming obstacles, keeping a cheerful attitude, and advancing their careers. (Deng, 2023: 2682).

Social support is defined as "the extent to which employees believe that those around them care about them and are willing to help them at work" "A person's cognitive evaluation of the support they receive from their social network is known as social support in the workplace, and it is exemplified by the support of their supervisor and coworkers. Three types of support are available: (emotional) empathy, care, love, and trust, (informational); advice, recommendations, information access, etc. and (practical): sharing duties and responsibilities, in-kind help, skill development, etc. (Azim & Islam, 2018:3). Many aspects of work are significantly impacted by social support in the workplace, but the most significant is that social support from supervisors and colleagues is one of the main factors influencing work enrichment and performance.

Employees perceive social support as a motivating resource that increases commitment to work, which in turn positively impacts the achievement of professional goals. (Salari et al, 2023:86).

#### ➤ **Affective commitment to career**

An individual's conviction, emotion, and acceptance of the organization's aims and principles, as well as his readiness to join it to further his professional progress, are referred to as affective commitment to a career. (Damayant et al., 2019: 54). **Employees who are highly committed to**



**their profession and organization see themselves as an integral part of the organization and develop self-confidence and interest in their work. (Abrol & Kishor, 2021: 22).** Committed people are prepared to stay with their organization and put in a lot of work on its behalf because they support and believe in its mission and core principles. Consequently, the psychological connection that binds an employee to the organization is reflected in commitment. **(Bakan et al., 2014: 143).** Through their social network's understanding, support, and empathy, these workers preserve or even enhance their professional competence. Effective support may be given by coworkers and superiors in the form of resources, knowledge, or advice. **(Deng, 2023:2684).**

According to (Akbiyik, 2016:13,14), workers who experience a high degree of support from their coworkers and managers at work also exhibit greater levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction than workers who receive less support. Employee commitment and workplace engagement are positively correlated with the amount of social support they perceive or get. Positive work experiences and increased devotion to one's employment might result from social support in the workplace. (Sigursteinsdottir & Karlsdottir, 2022:13). Employee commitment is believed to be one of the determinants of job performance and has become a major focus of many organizational behavior studies. (Sirohi & Shrivastva, 2013:44).

### ➤ **Job Enrichment**

Job enrichment is a procedure that encourages employees to take on more responsibilities and duties to fully utilize their talents and abilities to complete specified tasks. It is described as changing the physical aspects of work, its essential tasks, and its components to improve job satisfaction for the individual who is in charge of carrying out their responsibilities. (Salari et al., 2023: 88). Another definition of job enrichment is a key management tool that encourages workers to take on more challenging and enthusiastic jobs, which in turn boosts individual motivation for improved performance. (Abu Tayeh et al., 2021: 1). Job enrichment also plays a crucial role in improving employee performance, which contributes significantly to the growth of the entire organization. As a result, employees become more attractive in a more engaging work environment and feel more responsible.

Work itself is increasingly being seen as a relevant value by modern organizations, which are rapidly moving away from seeing capital as the main motivator for job enrichment. In this way, workers execute their duties with an internal spirit that comes from their dedication and passion for the work, which outweighs whatever rewards they may receive from outside sources. (Al-Khayat, 2017: 3). Support from coworkers and superiors is also necessary for work enrichment. Social support in the workplace can be perceived or received when one person (or group of workers) offers senior management, another employee (or group of employees), or both material, informational, or emotional assistance. (Ahmed, 2022: 113)

### ➤ **Job Performance**

Job performance is the sum of behaviors employees exhibit to take action and strive to achieve a goal in line with the organization's objectives. (KÖROĞLU & ÇALIŞKAN, 2022:104) Behaviors that are under each employee's control and connected to the organization's goals are referred to as job performance. Additionally, it is seen as a result of how well a person does particular tasks, such as conventional work descriptions. The needs, goals, and responsibilities of the work, along with the organization's views on the importance of certain behaviors, serve as the main foundation for job performance. (Salari et al., 2023:88) Job performance includes the quality and quantity of results resulting from individual or collective effort to complete the work. In other words, one way to define job performance is the capacity of individuals to fulfill their work goals, expectations, performance standards, or organizational objectives. (Gharib et al., 2016:25)

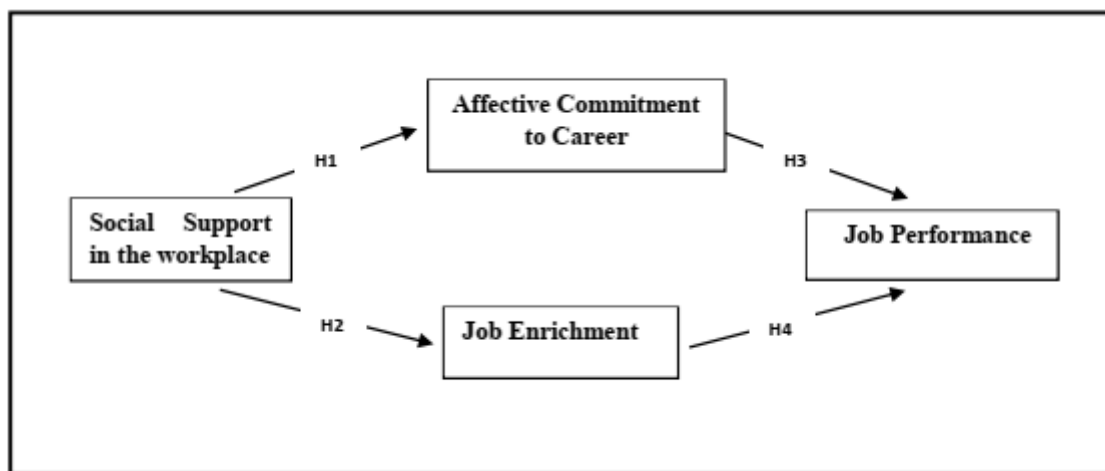
Employee engagement can positively impact an organization's work performance as it is one of the key factors determining organizational performance. (Nadeeka & Weerasinghe, 2020: 4).



Encouraging employees to use their abilities and participate in worthwhile activities increases their self-satisfaction in addition to the substantial benefits of job enrichment on motivation and performance, self-efficacy, and overall job effectiveness. When employees are entrusted with additional responsibilities and decision-making, they are more likely to feel motivated and driven toward higher performance goals. (Alias et al., 2024: 254).

### 3. Hypotheses development

The current study identifies and examines four research hypotheses, based on a review of previous literature, which indicates that the level of social support provided in the workplace by supervisors (department heads) and colleagues can enhance the degree of affective commitment to career and enrich the work of women working in the administrative departments of Jabir Ibn Hayyan University for Medical and Pharmaceutical Sciences, and that the relationship between these practices, in turn, improves the levels of work performance, which is positively reflected on the level of organizational results. Figure (1) represents the hypothetical model adopted by the current study:



**Figure (1) Hypothetical model for the research**

- **H1:** There is a positive and significant impact of Social Support in the workplace (supervisory support and co-worker support) on Affective Commitment to Career among women working in administrative departments.
- **H2:** There is a positive and significant impact of Social Support in the workplace (supervisory support and co-worker support) on Job Enrichment among women working in administrative departments.
- **H3:** There is a positive and significant impact of Affective Commitment to Career on Job Performance among women working in administrative departments.
- **H4:** There is a positive and significant impact of Job Enrichment on Job Performance among women working in administrative departments.

### 4. Measurement

The study adopted the establishment of the scale from previous studies to measure the hypothetical model of the study: Table .1 shows the measures used.

**Table 1. Measurement of variables**

Variables	Item	Source	Likert Scale
Social Support in the Workplace Supervisory support (SS)	4 4	Vuong et al,2022	1-5



<b>co-worker support (CS)</b>			
<b>Affective Commitment to Career (CAR)</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Perreira et al,2021</b>	<b>1-5</b>
<b>Job Enrichment (JE)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Annamalai,2022</b>	<b>1-5</b>
<b>Job Performance (JP)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>KÖROĞLU &amp; ÇALIŞKAN,2022</b>	<b>1-5</b>

### ➤ Participants and Procedure

The present study focused on a purposive sample of (76 )women with bachelor's degrees who work in the administrative divisions of Jabir Ibn Hayyan University for Medical and Pharmaceutical Sciences in order to gather empirical data and perform statistical analysis to test the research hypotheses.

### 5. Analysis and Results

The following procedures were followed to arrive at the findings of the structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis of the data using Smart PLS. 4:

- ✓ Providing an overview of the study data collected through descriptive statistics.
- ✓ Evaluating the study's standard model according to reliability and validity indicators.
- ✓ Evaluating the study's structural model according to path analysis indicators to test the study's hypotheses.

#### A. Descriptive analysis

The statistical analysis provides an overview of the study data, as shown in Table (2), through the values, mean, and standard deviation of the study variables. All study variables exceeded the mean of (3) on the five-point Likert scale, which indicates the level of clarity of the questionnaire items and their suitability to the study objectives for the sample of respondents.

**Table. 2. Descriptive analysis results**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Social Support in the Workplace</b>		<b>Affective Commitment to Career</b>	<b>Job Enrichment</b>	<b>Job Performance</b>
	supervisory support	co-worker support			
Mean	3.8387	4.2432	3.79833	4.5262	4.4275
Standard deviation	1.1205	0.7415	0.85	0.6492	0.6942

**Source: SmartPLS.4 output**

#### B. Assessment of the Measurement Model

The standard model of the study is evaluated according to the reliability and validity criteria for the constructs established for the measurement model, as defined by Hair et al., 2017. These criteria include:

1. Internal consistency (composite reliability)  $\geq 60$ , with Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.70.
2. Indicator reliability (standardized saturation of the indicator) 0.70.
3. Average variance extracted from approximate validity (AVE)  $> 0.50$ .

The results of Table( 3) show that the constructs of the standard model of the study have good reliability, as the values of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability are higher than 0.7. They



also have appropriate validity, as the value of AVE for all constructs of the model was greater than 0.5, which is in accordance with the required standards.

**Table. 3 Evaluation of Validity and Reliability**

Variable		Items	Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	(AVE)
Social Support in the Workplace	supervisory support	SS1	0.889	0.911	0.915	0.618
		SS2	0.880			
		SS3	0.893			
		SS4	0.863			
	co-worker support	CS1	0.899			
		CS2	0.890			
		CS3	0.925			
		CS4	0.925			
Affective Commitment to Career		CAR1	0.933	0.912	0.912	0.850
		CAR2	0.907			
		CAR3	0.926			
Job Enrichment		JE1	0.681	0.749	0.835	0.572
		JE2	0.887			
		JE3	0.869			
		JE4	0.532			
Job Performance		JP1	0.823	0.859	0.865	0.702
		JP2	0.824			
		JP3	0.818			
		JP4	0.885			

Source: SmartPLS.4 output

### C. Assessment of the Structural Model

#### ➤ Collinearity Assessment

Multicollinearity arises when two or more variables are not independent of each other. Since multicollinearity is a potential problem in a structural model, multicollinearity must be tested. By evaluating collinearity using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), this may be ascertained. Hair et al. (2014) state that a VIF score of five or above suggests that multicollinearity may be an issue. The results in Table 4 revealed that the VIF values for all variables were less than 5, which were all within the acceptable limits, indicating that there was no significant correlation between any of the components of this study.

**Table. 4 Results of collinearity assessment.**

Variables	VIF
Social Support in the Workplace -> Affective Commitment to Career	1.000
Social Support in the Workplace -> Job Enrichment	1.000
Affective Commitment to Career -> Job Performance	1.068
Job Enrichment -> Job Performance	1.068



### ➤ Hypothesis test

By evaluating the study's structural model, the ( $R^2$ ) and the level of significance of the path coefficients were used to assess the goodness of the structural model.

Table 5 shows the results (see figure 2)

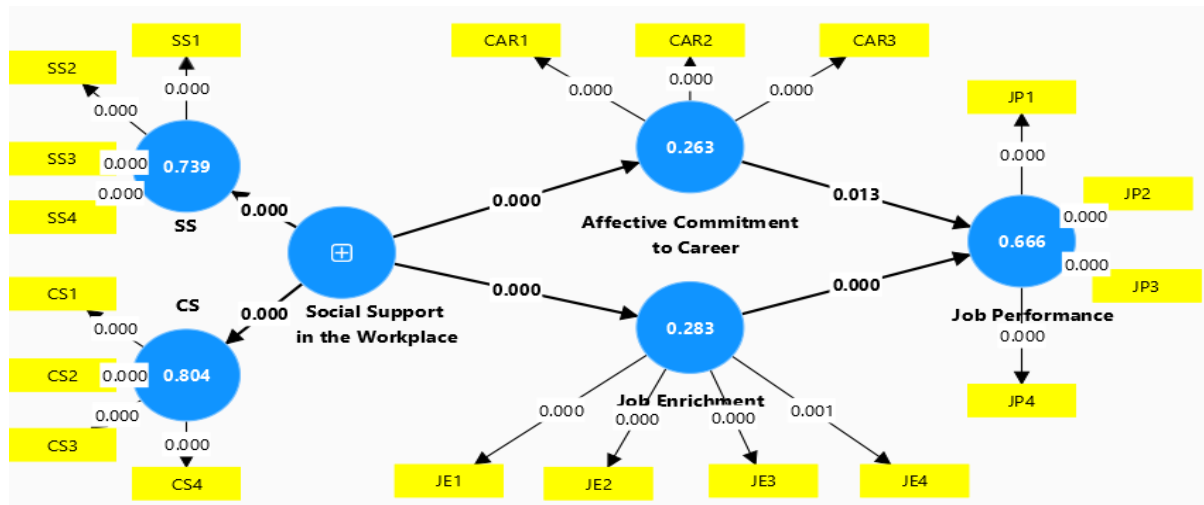


Figure 2. Structural equation model (SEM)

Source: SmartPLS.4 output

( $R^2$ ) represents the percentage of variance in the structural model constructs. According to Hair et al. (2017), this value ranges between 0 and 1. "The higher the ( $R^2$ ) coefficient, the better the structure is explained by the latent constructs. A high ( $R^2$ ) coefficient also reveals that the variable values can be well predicted by the PLS path model. (Giao et al. 2020, and Cohen, 1988) recommend that ( $R^2$ ) values of 0.26, 0.13, or 0.02, respectively, be described as high, moderate, or weak in behavioral sciences. According to the results of the statistical analysis in Figure (2), the  $R^2$  value for the affective commitment variable was 0.263, and the ( $R^2$ ) value for the job enrichment variable was 0.283, both relatively high values. The  $R^2$  value for the work performance variable was 0.666, which is very high, demonstrating the PLS model's predictive quality in the current study.

The study's hypotheses are tested according to the values of the t-statistics ( $>1.96$ ),

The  $\beta$ -value and the p-value.  $\beta$  indicates the strength and direction of the relationship, while the t-value represents the relationship's significance. The t-value should remain  $>1.96$  and the p-value at a 5% significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) (Hair et al., 2017). (See Table 5).

Table 5. Path coefficient and hypothesis test

Hypotheses	Path	$\beta$ -coefficient	SD	t - Value	P-values	Rustle
H1	Social Support in the Workplace -> Affective Commitment to Career	0.513	0.070	7.284	0.000	Accepted
H2	Social Support in the Workplace -> Job Enrichment	0.532	0.096	5.529	0.000	Accepted
H3	Affective	0.154	0.062	2.487	0.013	Accepted



	<b>Commitment to Career -&gt; Job Performance</b>					
<b>H4</b>	<b>Job Enrichment -&gt; Job Performance</b>	0.764	0.063	12.037	0.000	Accepted

**Source: Smart PLS.4 output**

From the results of Figure (2) and Table (5), the path analysis was presented, which was consistent with the criteria approved by (Hair et al,2017). All the hypotheses of the study are accepted. The T-statistics value indicates the possibility of accepting the hypothesis if its value is higher than 1.96. The coefficient value indicates the direction of the hypothesis, whether positive or negative.

Hypotheses H1 through H4 describe the relationship between the study variables. According to the results of the H1: social support at work has a positive and direct effect on Affective Commitment to Career among women working in administrative departments.

The results of testing the H2: showed that social support at work has a positive and direct effect on job enrichment among women working in administrative departments.

The results of the H3: indicated that Affective Commitment to a Career has a positive and direct effect on the job performance of women working in administrative departments.

The results of the H4: indicate that job enrichment has a positive and direct effect on the job performance of women working in administrative departments.

## 6. Discussion

According to the statistical analysis's findings, the variable of affective commitment to career had a coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of 0.263, which essentially explains the variation in the structure of affective commitment to the profession, which is largely explained by adjustments in workplace social support. Comparably, the job enrichment variable's coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was 0.283, which is similarly explained by differences in workplace social support.

As for the variable of job performance, the value of the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was 0.666, which can be essentially explained by variances in the variables of affective commitment to career and work enrichment by (67%). The remaining percentage (33%) is explained by other variables not addressed in the current study.

Tests of the current study's hypotheses also revealed that: social support at work has a positive and direct impact on Administrative women affective commitment to their careers, with an impact factor of 51%, according to the results of H1, which is in line with findings from studies by (Azim & Islam, 2018 and Abrol & Kishor, 2021). With an effect factor of 15%, the results also demonstrate a positive and substantial association between job performance and affective commitment to one's career. These outcomes align with the study findings of Bakan et al. (2014) and Nadeeka & Weerasinghe (2020). The results of the research show that social support has a positive and significant relationship with job enrichment, with an impact factor of 53%, which is also consistent with the findings of research conducted by Salari et al., (2023).

The study's findings also demonstrate a favorable and substantial association between work enrichment and job performance, with an effect factor of 76%. This is in line with research findings by Salari et al. (2023) and Abu Tayeh (2021). With an effect coefficient of  $\beta = 0.513$  for affective commitment to career and  $\beta = 0.532$  for job enrichment, it can be concluded that these variables contribute to the overall impact of social support from department heads and colleagues on administrative women's job performance.



## 7. Conclusion and recommendations

The results of the statistical analysis of the current study data indicate that all proposed hypotheses are acceptable. These hypotheses are that affective commitment to the career path and job enrichment among female employees in the administrative departments at Jabir Ibn Hayyan University for Medical and Pharmaceutical Sciences are positively and significantly influenced by social support from department heads and colleagues. Furthermore, affective commitment to the career path and job enrichment have a positive and significant impact on the job performance of female employees in the administrative departments at the university under study. Therefore, it can be said that social support in the workplace influences both emotional commitment to the career path and job enrichment, which in turn impacts the job performance of female employees in the administrative departments at Jabir Ibn Hayyan University for Medical and Pharmaceutical Sciences. Therefore, the following recommendations can be made:

- The university administration must provide all forms of support to women working in administrative departments to enable them to be more productive, which can impact their performance levels.
- Provide training opportunities for department heads on social support practices so they can provide the necessary support to the employees they supervise.
- It is important for supervisors (department heads) to provide an encouraging and positive work environment and create an atmosphere in which female managers feel free to communicate with them and their colleagues.
- Continuously redesign jobs based on the compatibility of the administrative tasks with women's circumstances, including adding new tasks and skills to existing jobs. Expanding the scope of tasks also contributes to increased motivation at work and impacts overall performance.
- It is suggested that further research be conducted on “social support in the workplace, emotional commitment to the profession, job enrichment and their role in improving the performance of employees in educational institutions.”

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