The effect of perceived citizen views and supervisor support on Private Security Officers' job satisfaction: the mediating role of self-legitimacy

Seung Yeop Paek¹ · Mahesh K. Nalla² · Julak Lee³ · Anna Gurinskaya⁴

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Abstract

The present research examined the determinants of private security officers' job satisfaction. Specifically, the impact of perceived citizen views and supervisor support on job satisfaction was explored while investigating the mediating effect of self-legitimacy. A convenience sample of South Korean private security officers were explored by using a paper-and-pencil questionnaire and in-depth interviews. The results showed that perceived citizen views and supervisor support positively affected self-legitimacy and job satisfaction, and self-legitimacy mediated the impact of perceived citizen views on job satisfaction. This research contributes to the job satisfaction and private security literature as no prior studies have assessed the influence of perceived citizen views, supervisor support, and self-legitimacy on the job satisfaction of private security officers. Policy implications and future research directions are discussed.

Keywords Job satisfaction · Private security · Self-legitimacy · Perceived citizen view · Supervisor support

Introduction

Private security plays a critical role in security and crime governance in both the developed and developing economies. Considering the growing number of private security industries employing millions of personnel worldwide (Button 2019) and that the routine security tasks that they perform are akin to public policing (Nalla and Newman 1990), enhancing Private Security Officer (PSO) performance and procedural justice has significant implications for security governance. Not least, PSOs' unique expertise and resources could play a critical role in today's nodal security network (Dupont 2004; Shearing and Wood 2003; Wood 2004).

✉ Julak Lee
julaklee71@cau.ac.kr

Extended author information available on the last page of the article

One critical contributor to PSOs' effective performance is job satisfaction, a widely studied construct in psychology (Judge et al. 2017), particularly in the areas of human resource management and organizational behavior (Cantarelli et al. 2016). Job satisfaction has been found to have various beneficial organizational outcomes, including improved performance (Judge et al. 2001; Kang et al. 2011), productivity (Harter et al. 2002), and the promotion of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) (Dalal 2005). It is also associated with higher job commitment (Valaei et al. 2016) and lower turnover rates (Allen and Meyer 1990; Tarigan and Ariani 2015).

Scholars have explored the correlates of job satisfaction, suggesting that work conditions (e.g., autonomy, task variety, task significance, task identity, etc.) (Hackman and Lawler 1971) and favorable relationships with colleagues (e.g., feedback, social support, etc.) (Humphrey et al. 2007) are among the predictors of job satisfaction. Extensive research has been conducted on the determinants of job satisfaction among criminal justice agents, including law enforcement (e.g., Paoline and Gau 2020; Demirkol 2020) and correctional officers (Jiang et al. 2016; Lambert et al. 2020). While the employment of PSOs far outstrips that of police officers, scholars have placed significantly more emphasis on studying the antecedents of the latter's job satisfaction.

This research explores the determinants of job satisfaction in the specific context of South Korean PSOs. The rising demand for private security services in South Korea can be attributed to several factors. Key among them are events centered around post-war recovery efforts in the 1960s (Button et al. 2006; Lee 2004), constraints placed on public police services due to increased crime rates in the 1970s and deterioration of the social order, and the rapid expansion of the private sector (Kim 2015). Additionally, South Korea has regularly hosted international events, including the 1988 Summer Olympics, 2002 World Cup, and the 2018 Winter Olympics. These combined factors resulted in a sharp increase in PSO employment. Despite the large numbers of PSOs working in public spaces and carrying out tasks comparable to law enforcement, their job satisfaction has not drawn much scholarly interest.

We also examine the effect of PSO self-legitimacy on job satisfaction, a relationship that has not been investigated in the existing literature. While police and private security share similar work characteristics, one distinction sets them apart. Specifically, police officers often display the notion of authority and legitimacy as representatives of the state (Bottoms and Tankebe 2012) vested with the roles of guardians of peace and protectors of the community (Herbert 1996). As sworn officers, the uniform and the right to use force, among other accouterments of the job, affirm their occupation and prominent role in society (Gau and Paoline 2019). While sharing a similar culture (Singh and Kempa 2007), motivations, and values with the police (van Steden et al. 2015), PSOs are often private citizens who hold less legal authority and symbolic power (Joh 2004; Mopasa and Stenning 2001; Stenning 2000). This contrast between the two groups could affect PSOs' perceptions of their legitimacy, which may determine their levels of job satisfaction.

In light of the similarities and distinctions between police officers and PSOs, the current research explores the predictors of job satisfaction among South Korean PSOs. Further, we examine the extent to which self-legitimacy mediates the

influence of work-related factors, perceived citizen views and supervisor support, on PSOs' job satisfaction.

PSOs' job satisfaction

Features of PSO work

Although PSOs' opinions about their work have not been researched rigorously, existing studies inform readers about the nature of security work and officers' attitudes toward their jobs, especially in Western countries. PSOs have been shown to view their tasks as similar to policing and that they have legal authority, as do the police (Manzo 2010). There are also comparable findings regarding occupational subculture and safety. In particular, PSOs perform their duties while being concerned about their safety, so they try to utilize as many officers as possible to maintain order (Rigakos 2002).

While sharing similarities with police, PSOs tend to exhibit low job satisfaction and a high turnover intention. Research results suggest that PSOs wishing to engage in a different work role could be associated with the nature of security work which entails dangerous situations and lower pay and status than police (Button 2007). Interviews with South Korean PSOs reveal low job commitment. This could be attributed to unfavorable work conditions such as long hours, alienation, and experiencing abuse (verbal and physical) from citizens, and a lack of understanding of legal authority (Button and Park 2009).

As for the predictors of PSO job satisfaction, a study of Singaporean PSOs concludes that favorable views on job autonomy, pay and benefits, and support from non-security employees are related to higher job satisfaction (Nalla et al., 2017b). Moreover, a qualitative study conducted in the United States has found that various work-related elements influence PSOs' job satisfaction (Nalla and Cobbina 2017), chief among them is the opportunity to interact with and help citizens. On the other hand, boredom at work, low pay, lack of adequate training in self-defense (i.e., safety at work), and few available basic amenities have been shown to decrease job satisfaction.

Despite the contributions of existing studies, limited research has examined the predictors of PSO job satisfaction by focusing on the unique features of security work. Particularly, security work entails routine interactions with ordinary citizens within a hierarchical command system (Cunningham and Taylor 1985; Nalla and Newman 1990). Research suggests that private security performs a wide range of tasks related to patrolling, information gathering, housekeeping, and customer care to maintain order and prevent crime (Wakefield 2003). Effective performance of these duties may require favorable citizen views and support from colleagues, especially those in a position to direct and give orders.

We develop the conceptual model based on existing knowledge regarding the impact of perceived citizen views and supervisor support on job satisfaction. The influence of perceived citizen attitudes and supervisor support on PSOs' confidence in their authority (i.e., self-legitimacy) and its impact on job satisfaction are

investigated. This is an important area of research that has been largely unexplored but has practical implications for managing private security personnel who are a central part of today's security governance network. In the next section, we discuss the importance of citizen view and supervisor support for job satisfaction.

Perceived citizen views and supervisor support

As stated, among security governance actors, police officers' job satisfaction has received the most attention. A distinguishing feature of security governance is contact with citizens subject to authority, so police officers require citizens' approval to perform their duties effectively (Bottoms and Tankebe 2012; Tyler 1990). Research shows that how citizens view and treat law enforcement impacts officers' job satisfaction (Abdulla et al. 2011; Fosam et al. 1998; Jo and Hoover 2012; Lim et al. 2000; Yim and Schafer 2009).

Moreover, supervisors who direct and evaluate performance significantly affect job satisfaction in hierarchical work environments. For instance, police officers tend to accept a policy of secrecy without opposition in fear of supervisory sanctions (Muir 1977). Studies conducted in different cultural settings, including the Caribbean (Bennett 1997), Turkey (Buker and Dolu 2010), and South Korea (Jo and Hoover 2012) find a strong relationship between supervisory support and job satisfaction.

Drawing from relevant research in the policing literature, it is evident that some features of PSOs' work environment and tasks, namely routine interactions with citizens and performing tasks in a hierarchical system, are comparable to those of police officers despite the fact that PSOs' main duty is to serve their clients and not to enforce the law (Becker 1974). Thus, it can be hypothesized that security officers' perceptions of citizen attitudes and supervisor support influence their job satisfaction. With no prior studies examining the association between perceived citizen views and job satisfaction and little existing evidence on the relationship between supervisor support and job satisfaction, further investigation is warranted to provide new insights.

Private security and self-legitimacy

Sources of self-legitimacy

Legitimacy is a key factor for enhancing security governance agents' performance and promoting citizen compliance and cooperation. There is no shortage of knowledge regarding the factors that shape citizen views on the legitimacy of security governance actors, especially those relating to public law enforcement. For actors engaged in crime prevention activities, the impact of procedural fairness and effectiveness on legitimacy has been widely substantiated (e.g., Bottoms and Tankebe 2012; Gau and Brunson 2010; Gau and Paoline 2019; Hamm et al. 2017; Jackson et al. 2012; Sunshine and Tylor 2003; Tyler 1990).

Most legitimacy research has focused on the views of those subject to authority, such as citizens (Bottoms and Tankebe 2012). However, it should be noted that authorities must convince themselves that their power is legitimate before exercising it on subjects (Bottoms and Tankebe 2013). In other words, achieving “legitimate authority” status requires recognition from both the powerholder and those subject to it (Beetham 2013). To view oneself as a legitimate entity, one needs to believe that the power to be exercised is rightfully one’s own (Nix and Wolfe 2017).

In the field of criminology and criminal justice, scholars have investigated the self-legitimacy of law enforcement (e.g., Nix and Wolfe 2017; Tankebe 2019) and correctional (e.g., Meško et al. 2017) officers. Police officers often exhibit self-legitimacy (Bottoms and Tankebe 2012) by justifying their authority and viewing themselves as proud protectors of peace (Herbert 1996). Considering the nature of law enforcement, the views of supervisors and their clientele are essential determinants of police self-legitimacy. In particular, fair supervisory treatment indicates favorable status and importance within the organization (Barbalet 2001; Tyler and Smith 1999). Nix and Wolfe (2017) have also found that organizational justice, of which fair supervisory treatment is a key dimension, is a crucial determinant of police officers’ self-legitimacy. Therefore, to increase organizational commitment,¹ command staff, including supervisors, must exhibit procedural justice to foster self-legitimacy (Tankebe 2010).

As in the case of police, ordinary citizens comprise most of the PSO clientele, so how citizens view and treat PSOs during interactions could influence officers’ assessment of their self-legitimacy (Bottoms and Tankebe 2012; Bradford and Quinton 2014; Nix and Wolfe 2017; Tankebe 2019). While PSOs interact with citizens regularly (Nalla and Heraux 2003) and share a similar culture (Singh and Kempa 2007), motivations, and values with the police (van Steden et al. 2015), they hold less legal and symbolic power (Joh 2004; Mopasa and Stenning 2001; Stenning 2000) compared to public law enforcement. Additionally, it is widely recognized that PSOs receive very limited to no training (Cobbina et al. 2016), producing derogatory occupational stereotypes such as “wanna-be-cops” and “rent-a-cop” (Nalla and Heraux 2003). These may contribute to the negative public views of private security, which could undermine PSOs’ self-legitimacy.

Research on how PSOs understand citizens’ attitudes toward them is virtually non-existent, but the few studies examining people’s opinions about private security in different cultural contexts report mixed findings (e.g., Nalla et al. 2017a; Nalla and Wakefield 2014). For example, a study conducted in Portugal finds that people are generally satisfied with PSOs, but they are unsure about or hold unfavorable attitudes toward their professionalism (Moreira et al. 2015). Since interacting with citizens and helping those who need assistance are significant predictors of PSO job satisfaction (Nalla and Cobbina 2017), the perception of positive citizen attitudes could be a critical aspect of security work.

¹ It can be defined as a worker’s identification with and involvement in an organization (Porter et al. 1974).

Fig. 1 Conceptual framework

Role of self-legitimacy in PSO job satisfaction

Although legitimacy has been researched extensively as an important element of effective social control, self-legitimacy and its association with job satisfaction have not been explored substantially. Tankebe (2010) has assessed the association between police officers' self-confidence in their legitimacy with organizational commitment in the cultural context of Ghana. However, no research has examined the link between self-legitimacy and job satisfaction. Research suggests that officers who view themselves as a legitimate authority are more likely to treat citizens in a procedurally fair way (Bradford and Quinton 2014; Tankebe and Meško 2015) because self-legitimacy is positively related to organizational commitment and engagement in behaviors that benefit the organization (Tankebe 2010). Considering the close link between organizational commitment and job satisfaction (e.g., Cur-rivan 1999; Van Scotter 2000), self-legitimacy is expected to affect job satisfaction positively.

Inferring from existing evidence and the private security work environment that entails regular interaction with citizens and a close working relationship with supervisors, we expect to see that perceived citizen attitudes and supervisor support are closely associated with PSO self-legitimacy and job satisfaction. In sum, we assess how PSOs' perceived public image and supervisor support affect their job satisfaction directly and indirectly through self-legitimacy (Fig. 1) and attempt to answer the following questions:

1. "Does self-legitimacy affect security officers' job satisfaction?"; and
2. "Does self-legitimacy mediate the effects of perceived citizen attitudes and supervisor support on security officer job satisfaction?"

Present study

Setting: South Korea

Post-war economic development has spurred the growth of the private security industry in South Korea. According to the World Bank, the nation's gross domestic product which exceeds 1.6 trillion U.S. dollars is ranked twelfth globally (World Bank 2020). The nation's infrastructure which has developed along with economic advancement requires quality security services. In addition to their presence at public facilities and structures, PSOs are deployed at various mass private properties (Shearing and Stenning 1981). They have been employed extensively during special events such as the 2002 World Cup and the 2018 Winter Olympics. Advanced information and communications technology and incorporation of security technologies (e.g., closed-circuit television, burglar alarms, etc.) into daily order maintenance (Button 2007) have also increased the demand for private security.

In 2019, there were 157,774² private security personnel hired by 4502 businesses in South Korea, which outnumbered the police force (122,913) (Korean National Police Agency 2020). Security businesses must be registered with the Korean National Police Agency (KNPA) before beginning their operations, which creates a hierarchical relationship with the police by placing private security in an ancillary position. The fact that South Korean PSOs do not have as much legal authority as their public counterparts has implications for the public image of private security and PSOs' self-legitimacy. In other words, a lack of recognition of PSOs' authority could diminish officers' self-confidence in their legitimacy, which could ultimately decrease job satisfaction.

Data collection

We constructed a mixed methods design by surveying respondents using a paper-and-pencil questionnaire (Phase 1) and interviewing a sample subset (Phase 2). By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, we attempted to utilize the strengths and offset the weaknesses of each method (Jick 1979). Quantitative data were collected and analyzed to inform the qualitative part of data collection (Greene et al. 1989). This sequential design allowed us to examine the extent of convergence between the results and use the interviews to elaborate on the survey results (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004; Tashakkori and Teddlie 2002).

Survey data were collected from a 2016 convenience sample of private security officers in South Korea. Participants were recruited from three large security businesses located in the Seoul metropolitan areas and one in the Gangwon province, primarily providing facility security services for residential communities, business complexes, and gambling establishments. The officers were asked to complete the

² Because only contract security officers are included in the official statistics, the actual private security population, including in-house employees, could be much higher.

Table 1 Characteristics of respondents and variables

	<i>n</i>	%	Min	Max	Mean/S.D
<i>Gender</i>					
0=Female	27	6.21			
1=Male	408	93.79			
<i>Education</i>					
1=High School	175	42.37			
2=Associate's Degree	94	22.76			
3=Bachelor's or higher Degree	144	34.87			
Years of experience	428		0	20	5.80/4.37
Job satisfaction	432		3	15	9.66/2.42
Self-legitimacy	432		3	15	7.66/2.56
Perceived citizen view	431		6	30	17.19/4.68
Supervisor support	432		3	15	9.21/2.55

questionnaire during a break after being informed that participation was voluntary and anonymous. The final sample comprised 436 PSOs (Table 1).

Subsequent semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted in 2021 to explore and validate the findings drawn from the 2016 data. An in-depth interview is the most widely employed qualitative data collection method to examine participants' insights into the research topic (King et al. 2019). We administered individual phone interviews to six PSOs from May 24 to May 28, 2021. To investigate possible changes in perceptions from the time of survey, we recruited individuals with at least five years of experience. Interviewees were male in their 30 s (2), 40 s (2), or 50 s (2) and were employed at two of the security businesses that participated in the original survey.

The interview guide was provided by Table 2 Measurement of Variables. Interviews began with general questions about participants' job satisfaction, self-legitimacy, perceived citizen view, and supervisor support. We also asked whether there were any significant changes in their attitudes compared to five years ago. We spoke with each officer for about thirty to forty minutes.

Measurement of variables

Noting that job satisfaction was referred to as the overall evaluation (Weiss 2002) and assessments of different aspects of a job (Smith et al. 1969), the dependent variable was measured with the following three items using a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree): *I am satisfied with the work I do in my current assignment*, *The work I do in my current assignment is intrinsically rewarding*, and *The work I do in my current assignment is financially rewarding* ($\alpha=0.81$).

Self-legitimacy ($\alpha=0.84$) measured respondents' self-confidence in their authority as a security officer (Bradford and Quinton 2014; Tankebe and Meško 2015). The construct was measured using three items regarding the respondents' perceived

Table 2 Measurement of variables

Construct	Item	Mean	Loading	Var
Job satisfaction (CR = .83)	I am satisfied with the work I do in my current assignment	3.47	.85	.27
	The work I do in my current assignment is intrinsically rewarding	2.81	.63	.60
	The work I do in my current assignment is financially rewarding	3.38	.86	.26
Self-legitimacy (CR = .98)	Private security officers have enough authority to perform their jobs effectively	2.64	.79	.38
	Citizens follow the directives of private security officers	2.66	.84	.29
	As a private security officer, I have more power than an ordinary citizen	2.36	.75	.44
Perceived citizen view (CR = .94)	Citizens have a great deal of respect for private security officers	2.54	.72	.47
	The public is satisfied with private security services	2.84	.87	.25
	Citizens have a lot of faith in private security officers	2.83	.88	.22
	Citizens believe that private security officers are effective in solving crime	2.87	.84	.30
Supervisor Support (CR = .90)	Citizens believe that private security officers are fair in handling complaints	2.98	.84	.30
	Citizens believe that private security officers are polite when they are interacting with them	3.13	.75	.44
	My supervisor gives credit to people when they do a good job	3.09	.87	.23
	My supervisor rewards being cooperative and a good team player	2.90	.84	.29
	My supervisor shows complete trust in officers' ability to perform their tasks well	3.22	.87	.24

CR composite reliability

authority to perform their jobs effectively, their views of citizens' recognition of their authority, and the degree of power they had compared with ordinary citizens.

To measure perceived citizen views of PSOs ($\alpha=0.92$), respondents were asked whether citizens had respect for and faith in PSOs, were satisfied with private security services, and believed PSOs were effective in solving problems as well as fair and polite in performing their duties. Moreover, supervisor support ($\alpha=0.89$) measured participants' opinions of their supervisors' feedback on positive performance and cooperative behavior and the trust their supervisors had in them (see Table 2 for details on empirical specification). Socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, years of experience, and education were included as control variables.

Analytic strategies

To assess both direct and indirect relationships between the variables and address measurement errors, we employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) which offered various analytic options such as Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), structural regression, and path analysis (Raykov and Marcoulides 2006; Schumacker and Lomax 2004). The SEM analyses were conducted with Stata 14 which used the maximum likelihood estimator.

We referred to different indices for model fit evaluation including the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). Specifically, we consulted Hu and Bentler's (1998, 1999) guidelines suggesting CFI values close to or greater than 0.95, SRMRs close to or less than 0.08, and RMSEAs close to or less than 0.06 as the indicators of a good fit.

In qualitative analysis, we examined whether the interview findings supported the results of quantitative analyses and attempted to understand officers' attitudes toward work and perceived self-authority at an in-depth level. Interviews were recorded and transcribed before coding the themes identified in the conceptual framework and the quantitative analysis. This type of deductive approach served the sequential explanatory design well (Trahan and Stewart 2011).

Results

Quantitative

Participant and variable characteristics

The vast majority of participants were male (94%), and participant ages ranged from 22 to 78 years old with a mean age of 48. About a third of the respondents had earned a bachelor's or a higher degree (35%), which was in line with the general perception that PSOs had little formal education (Nalla and Heraux 2003; van Steden and Nalla 2010).

Table 3 Correlations between latent variables

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Job satisfaction	1			
2. Self-legitimacy	.58***	1		
3. Perceived citizen view	.64***	.71***	1	
4. Supervisor support	.74***	.54***	.55***	1

* $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$

The findings indicated that participants were generally satisfied with their jobs ($\bar{x}=9.66$) and held favorable attitudes toward their supervisors ($\bar{x}=9.21$). However, their perceptions of citizen views were rather negative ($\bar{x} = 17.19$), suggesting the respondents did not believe that citizens had respect for or faith in them or were satisfied with their work. Respondents did not think they had enough authority to carry out their duties effectively, which was indicated by a low level of self-legitimacy ($\bar{x}=7.66$) (Table 1).

SEM analysis

Construct analyses were conducted using CFA. The results based on 431 cases (five with missing values removed) showed that the theoretical model fit the empirical data well ($\chi^2[84]=323.473$; CFI=0.95; SRMR=0.05; RMSEA=0.08). All items loaded to the hypothesized factors with evidence of reliability, and the constructs were positively correlated with one another (Tables 2 and 3).

Findings from the structural regression analysis³ ($\chi^2(120)=366.296$; CFI=0.94; SRMR=0.05; RMSEA=0.07) revealed that a positively perceived citizen view ($\beta=0.26$, $p \leq 0.001$), supervisor support ($\beta=0.52$, $p \leq 0.001$), and self-legitimacy ($\beta=0.15$, $p \leq 0.05$) increased job satisfaction. Both belief in favorable citizen perception ($\beta=0.59$, $p \leq 0.001$) and supervisor support ($\beta=0.23$, $p \leq 0.001$) had a positive influence on self-legitimacy. Further analyses showed that self-legitimacy mediated the effect of perceived citizen attitudes (26%) on job satisfaction,⁴ but the indirect effect of supervisor support on job satisfaction through self-legitimacy was marginal ($p=0.1$) (Fig. 2; Table 4).

Qualitative

All interviewees stated that their opinions had not changed significantly from the original data collection time, suggesting that perceived citizen views and supervisor support were important factors for self-legitimacy which predicted PSOs' job satisfaction. Moreover, perceived citizen views and supervisor support were critical elements of job satisfaction.

³ An examination of the nature of the excluded cases with missing values showed that they were Missing Completely At Random (MCAR; $p=0.84$).

⁴ Indirect effect (0.10)/total effect (0.38)=proportion of total effect mediated (0.26).

Table 4 Predictors of private security job satisfaction ($n = 400$)

Endogenous variable	Predictor	B (SE)	B (SE)
Job satisfaction	Self-Legitimacy	.15* (.07)	.15* (.07)
	Perceived citizen view	.26*** (.06)	.26*** (.06)
	Supervisor support	.52*** (.05)	.52*** (.05)
	Male	.07 (.04)	.07 (.04)
	Years of experience	.04 (.04)	.04 (.04)
	Education	-.03 (.04)	-.03 (.04)
Self-legitimacy	Perceived citizen view	—	.59*** (.05)
	Supervisor support	—	.23*** (.05)

Entries are standardized coefficients

SE Standard Error

* $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$

Fig. 2 Predictors of job satisfaction in the full model (* $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$)

Aside from quarantine-related work these days, little has changed with regard to the tasks I perform at work over the past several years. It seems like the way citizens view and treat security officers is not much different (from the time of survey administration), either (Respondent #4).

Additionally, four officers discussed how Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) had impacted their self-legitimacy and perceptions of citizens' views. Private security has been performing various tasks related to quarantine measures for both public and private businesses. With ratification of the amendment of Infectious Disease Control and Prevention Act, Quarantine Act, and Medical Service Act in May 2020, PSOs have performed their work with enhanced authority as non-compliance could result in criminal punishment. One respondent explained:

Since the outbreak of Corona (COVID-19), we control access at the entrance by having visitors sign in by hand or QR code and taking temperature using a thermal imaging camera. We make sure people follow the rules...Corona (COVID-19) is such a serious problem that people usually follow our directions. Occasion-

ally, there are people who try to ignore these steps, and we ask them to follow our instructions and remind them of potential legal consequences they could face for non-compliance. This usually change their attitudes and improves cooperation...I feel like we have more authority as we perform critical tasks related to quarantine (Respondent #2).

Regarding the perceptions of citizen views, the same participants believed that the pandemic and involvement in quarantine work had had a positive effect on the public image of private security. They also indicated that citizens seemed to recognize private security's contributions to public safety and exhibited more faith in their work as they had become more visible.

Discussion

In this research, the predictors of PSO job satisfaction were explored in the cultural setting of South Korea. The findings showed that PSOs' sense of self-legitimacy increased job satisfaction. The key sources of self-legitimacy included the perceived views of citizens and supervisor support which also had a direct effect on job satisfaction. Self-legitimacy is an essential element of effective security work because officers who view themselves as legitimate authorities are more likely to carry out their duties in a way that benefits the organization (Bradford and Quinton 2014; Tankebe 2010; Tankebe and Meško 2015). The structural regression analyses suggest that security businesses focus on increasing officers' self-legitimacy, which could be achieved by improving public opinions (Bottoms and Tankebe 2012) and supervisors' procedural and distributive fairness (Tankebe and Meško 2015).

Additionally, findings suggested that citizen attitudes could directly affect job satisfaction, as is the case for police officers (Lim et al. 2000). More importantly, supervisor support was the strongest predictor of PSO job satisfaction, adding further evidence to the close link between the two, which is extensively documented in research on police officers (e.g., Bennett 1997; Buker and Dolu 2010; Jo and Hoover 2012). This suggests that supervisors who can provide immediate feedback and support when needed, and recognize the good performance of and show trust in their subordinates could increase organizational identification (Bradford et al. 2014) which has been found to increase job satisfaction (van Dick et al. 2008).

Research limitations must be noted before discussing the findings' implications. First, the results obtained from the convenience sample may not be generalizable to the larger private security population. We could also not confirm whether the respondents who had answered the survey items measuring perceived citizen views did so based on their personal contact experiences or their opinions. Moreover, we understand that there could be a discrepancy between the actual and perceived citizen views of PSOs. Future research should utilize random sampling and include items that inquire about real-life interactions with citizens to enhance the findings' validity.

Despite the limitations, the current study contributes to the job satisfaction and private security literature as the first investigation of the effect of self-legitimacy on

PSO job satisfaction. Factors that influenced how PSOs viewed their own authority, including perceived citizen views and supervisor support, were also considered. Because self-legitimacy is a critical element of order maintenance and law enforcement (Tankebe and Meško 2015), researchers examining the correlates of security governance agents' job satisfaction should continue to examine its influence.

Furthermore, acknowledging the possibility that PSOs' attitudes could have changed since the time of data collection, we conducted in-depth phone interviews to assess the validity of the findings obtained from the quantitative analyses. We confirmed that PSOs' attitudes toward their work, legitimacy, citizen views, and supervisor support had not changed much from five years ago when survey data were collected. In addition to affirming the validity of quantitative findings, interviews suggested that carrying out quarantine-related tasks during the pandemic had had a positive effect on PSOs' overall job satisfaction, perceived public image, and self-legitimacy. Future research should continue to examine the impact of the specific tasks performed by private security, visibility in public spaces, and increased legal authority on PSOs' attitudes toward their work.

In addition to their theoretical implications, the findings offer insights into the management of private security personnel. Despite being a key social control agent and their numbers exceeding those of police officers (Nalla and Gurinskaya 2017), research suggests that low pay and lack of training diminish PSOs' job commitment and professionalism and produce negative images of the profession (Cobina et al. 2016; Nalla and Heraux 2003). To improve public perceptions of private security and instill confidence in PSOs, a systematic effort is needed to educate and train officers to perform their work professionally and in a procedurally just manner. An emphasis should be placed on handling cases fairly, providing reasons for their actions, and giving opportunities to clients to express their opinions, because enhancing procedural justice will generate favorable citizen views toward private security and foster cooperation (Tyler 1990; Tyler and Blader 2000; Tyler and Huo 2002; Sunshine and Tyler 2003). Improving public attitudes by producing professional PSOs could help attract quality job seekers, especially if the training is supplemented with enhanced compensation and benefits.

Aside from training and education, businesses should educate supervisors on the importance of providing constructive feedback, rewarding teamwork, and showing trust in their subordinates. According to the findings, supervisors have a greater influence on PSOs' job satisfaction than the perceived views of citizens, demonstrating that respondents' attitudes toward their jobs are impacted by those who direct and assess them at work regularly.

Moreover, programs aimed at increasing PSO's self-legitimacy and job satisfaction should be considered at a broader level. It has been noted that private security is viewed as an ambiguous occupation and security officers have less legal authority compared to the police in performing their duties (van Steden and Nalla 2010). Thus, increasing the visibility of PSOs through programs like Business Improvement Districts (BIDs: D'Souza 2020) and police–private security partnerships could help both the police and the public understand private security's critical role in security governance.

Furthermore, only twenty-six percent of respondents answered that police officers acknowledged PSOs' authority and respected their decisions. As discussed, private businesses must be registered with the KNPA which acts as the supervising agency. Thus, having their authority acknowledged by police officers is likely to instill confidence in PSOs' self-legitimacy. To realize this goal, the police must understand that non-state agents play crucial roles in today's security governance and educate officers about viewing and treating their private counterparts as legitimate partners.

Conclusion

The present research investigated the factors that were related to PSOs' job satisfaction in South Korea. Although private security is an integral part of today's security governance (Wood 2004), there is little knowledge regarding the predictors of PSO job satisfaction. Since private security is a major constituent of security governance and job satisfaction produces positive organizational outcomes (e.g., Dalal 2005; Harter et al. 2002; Kang et al. 2011; Valaei et al. 2016), assessing the factors that enhance PSOs' job satisfaction has important safety implications.

The results showed that supervisor support was the strongest predictor of participants' job satisfaction. We also found that self-legitimacy was an important determinant of security officers' job satisfaction. Additionally, interviews revealed that private security's increased role in the implementation of COVID-19 quarantine measures had a positive impact on perceived citizen views, self-legitimacy, and job satisfaction, not only confirming the relationships observed in the quantitative analyses but also suggesting that the pandemic further strengthened the relationships between the variables. Future research investigating job satisfaction of security governance agents should continue to assess the relevance of self-legitimacy and perceived citizen attitudes, in addition to other widely known job- and environment-related determinants.

Private security is an essential social control agent, so PSOs' job satisfaction must be researched continuously, especially when considering the workforce's size and the various types of services they provide. Finally, research findings must be translated into policies as effective and professional work performed by content private security personnel will ultimately contribute to creating a safer society.

Declarations

Conflict of interest On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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Authors and Affiliations

Seung Yeop Paek¹ · Mahesh K. Nalla² · Julak Lee³ · Anna Gurinskaya⁴

Seung Yeop Paek
seung.paek@csueastbay.edu

Mahesh K. Nalla
nalla@msu.edu

Anna Gurinskaya
a.gurinskaya@spbu.ru

¹ Department of Criminal Justice, California State University, East Bay, 25800 Carlos Bee Boulevard, Hayward, CA 94542, USA

² School of Criminal Justice, Michigan State University, 655 Auditorium Road, East Lansing, MI 48824, USA

³ Department of Industrial Security, Chung-Ang University, 84 Heukseok-ro, Dongjak-gu, Seoul 06974, South Korea

⁴ Department of Liberal Arts and Sciences, St. Petersburg State University, 58-60 Galernaya Street, St. Petersburg 190000, Russia