Assessing the Moderating Effect of Socioeconomic Status Between Perceived Supervisor Support and Student Internship Satisfaction at a Historically Black College and University(HBCU)

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Introduction to Internships & HBCUs

- Internships benefit students, educational institutions, and businesses
- Research based on Traditionally White Institutions(TWI); lack of research on internships at Historically Black College and Universities(HBCU)
    - HBCUs provide educational route for many student populations
    - HBCUs outperform TWIs by several academic and professional metrics
    - Augment understanding of internships in comparison to TWIs

Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment (MTWA)

Inspired by Kurt Lewin's Field Theory, which asserts that B= f (P, E)

Primarily used in Vocational Rehabilitation. Focus on an individual's abilities and overcoming social and physical barriers that create disabling environments.

Important Points:

- The work (E) requires that certain tasks be performed, and that the individual brings appropriate skills to perform the necessary tasks.
- The individual can inturn expect compensation for work performance and certain preferred conditions, such as safe and comfortable workplace.
- BOTH the (P) and the (E) must continue to interact with each other in a way that meets both of their requirements -- successful work adjustment being the achieving and maintenance of continued correspondence.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

Research Question:
To what degree does socioeconomic status moderate the relationship between perceived supervisor support and student internship satisfaction?

Hypothesis:
We expect that there will be a significant difference between the impact of socioeconomic status on student perception of supervisor support and overall internship job satisfaction.

Student's SES → Perceived Supervisor Support → Student Internship satisfaction
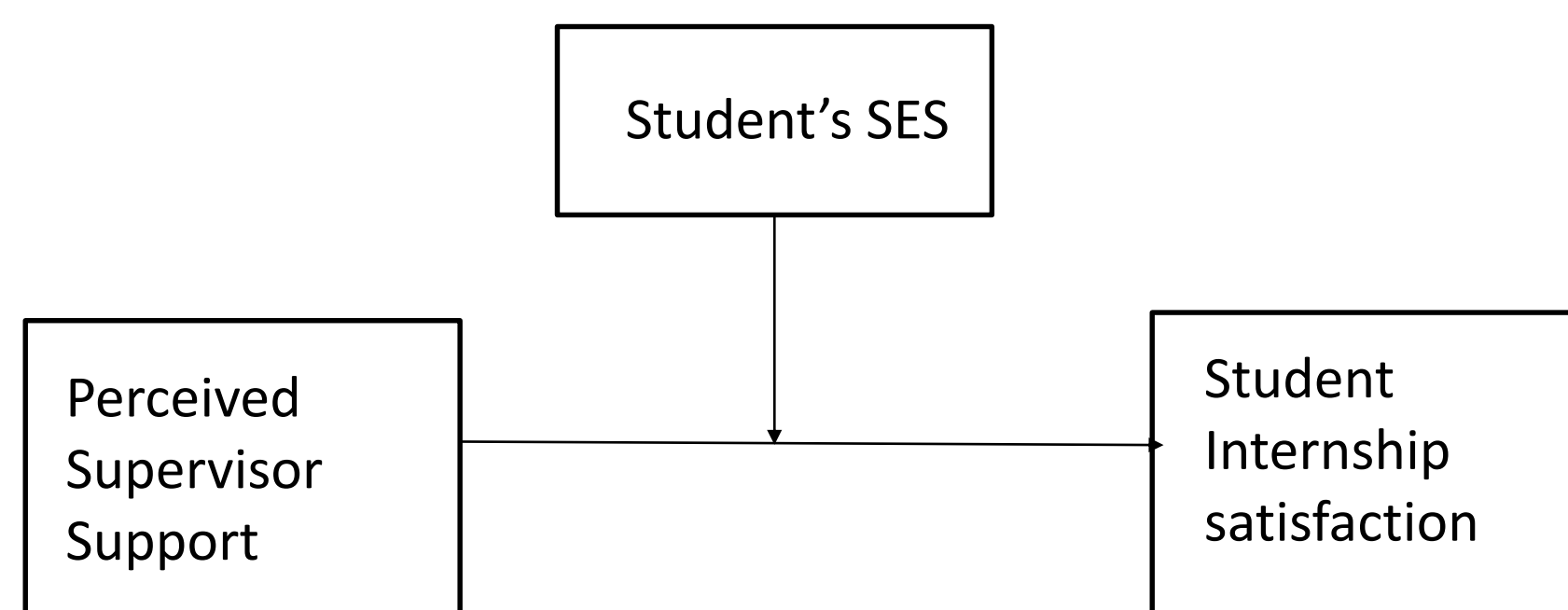
Methodology

Demographics	Frequency
Age (N = 84)	Range = 16-20 M = 16.9, SD = 2.45
Gender (N = 84)	Female = 66 Male = 18 Not reported = 1
Race (N = 84)	Black/African American = 79 Asian American = 4 Biracial = 1 Not reported = 1
Disability Status (N = 82)	Yes = 2
International (N = 84)	International = 14 Domestic = 70
First-generation (N = 84)	Yes = 32
Employed (N = 85)	Yes = 29

Parental Annual Income (N = 81)	Frequency	Percentage
Less than $24,999	29	36%
$25,000 - $49,999	25	31%
More than $50,000	27	33%

- HBCU in Southeast U.S. (small, selective, private liberal arts, undergrad and grad)
- Of 85 undergrads with internship experience, 81 reported SES
- 65 paid internships, 20 unpaid

Measure

Perceived Supervisor Support. The 4-item PSS was used to assess how employees perceive the support of their supervisor. Responses range from 1 "Not at all," 2 "A little," 3 "Some," 4 "Quite a bit" and 5 "A great deal." The four items are "In this internship, how much did your supervisor care about your well-being?", "In this internship, how much did your supervisor care about your satisfaction at work?", "In this internship, how much did your supervisor appreciate the amount of effort you made?" and "In this internship, how much respect did you feel you received?". Coefficient alpha was .87 for this sample. (PSS: Modified Shanock and Eisenberger, 2006).

Internship Satisfaction. This scale was measured by a single item "How satisfied were you with your internship experience? (1=Not at all satisfied; 2=A little satisfied; 3=Somewhat satisfied; 4=Very satisfied; 5=Extremely satisfied)."

Social Economic Status (SES). We used parental income as a proxy to measure students' social, economic status. The question is "What is your best estimate of your parents' or guardians' total income last year? Consider income from all sources before taxes. (1=Less than $24,999; 2=$25,000 - $49,999; 3= $50,000 - $74,999; 4=$75,000 - $99,999; 5=$100,000 - $124,999; 6=$125,000 - $149,999; 7= $150,000-$199,000; $200,000 or more)." Then, we collapsed these seven income levels into three levels. 1 and two were coded as low SES, 3 and four were coded as middle SES, and 5 to 7 or more were coded as upper-middle SES. The upper-middle SES was our reference group, so we created dummy codes for low SES and middle SES for these two groups about the upper-middle group.

Result

	Supervisor Support	Student's SES	Internship satisfaction
Supervisor Support			
Student's SES	0.01		
Internship satisfaction	0.62***	-0.02	

	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	SE	B	SE
Intercept	.68	.46	-1.30	1.10
Supervisor Support	.74***	.10	1.23***	.26
Low vs. Upper-middle			2.23	1.25
Middle vs. Upper-middle			3.32*	1.40
Low vs. upper-middle X Supervisor Support			-.54	.29
Middle vs. Upper-middle X Supervisor Support			-.81*	.33
Observations	81		81	
R-square	.66		.43	
F	52.24***		11.54***	
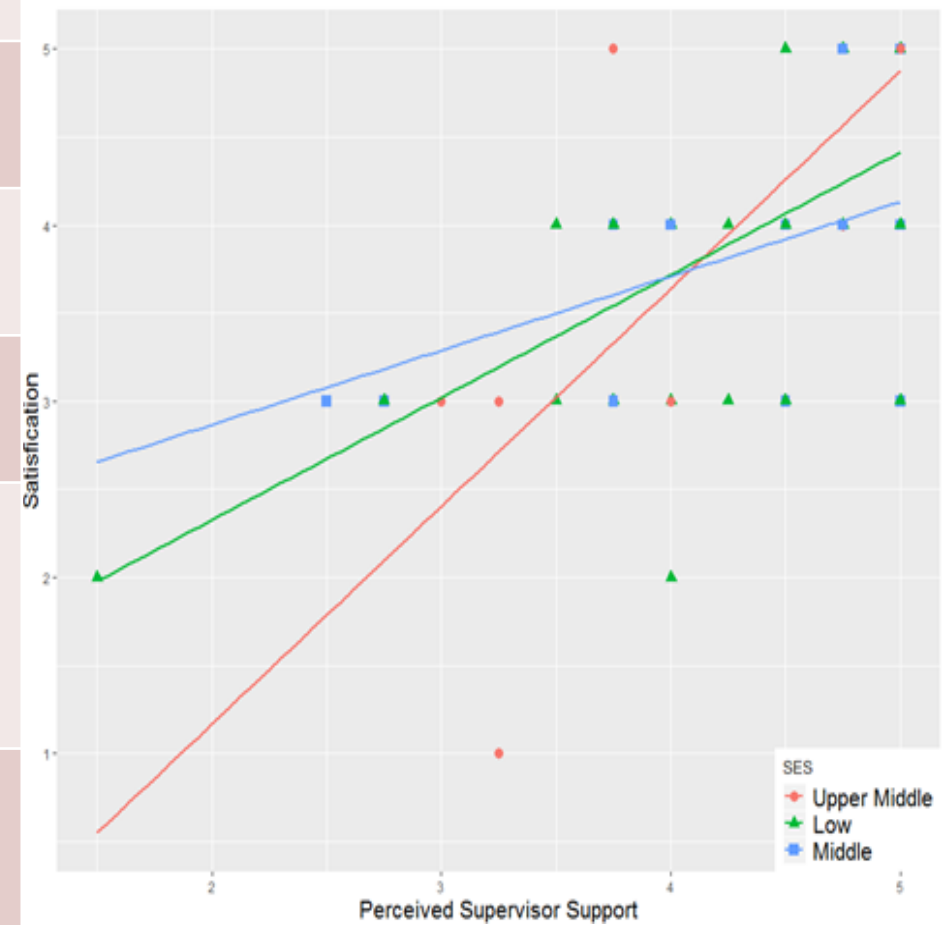
Discussion

- The variation in the initial degrees of satisfaction with the internship site prior to any wok commencing, may have had more do with students getting the internship that addressed their most salient needs, e.g. financial with paid internships .
- This trend did not replicate as heavily for the middle-income; any changes could have reflected the amalgam of lower- and upper-middle income experiences given the vast differences of the upper and lower bounds. The middle class is the only bracket that is within $1 of lower- and upper-middle class.

Limitations
- The role of cultural capital in internship decision-making was not explicitly explored but we could be present based on the study results.
    - Definition: An embodied socialized tendency or disposition to act, think, or feel in a way that is strategic within the context of the social environment in which one finds oneself.

Conclusion

- A better understanding of students' backgrounds in understanding the future-oriented benefits of internships and in assessing the potential correlation between paid internships being better than unpaid, could change student decision-making in the selection of internships. These changes could lead to internship decisions that might not necessarily be paid but be better for future, long-term job prospects.

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