Person–organization fit, OCB and performance appraisal: Evidence from matched supervisor–salesperson data set in a Spanish context

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Abstract

Despite the extensive work carried out by sales researchers regarding the influence of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) on significant individual and organizational outcomes, it is still of interest to address new research questions and support previous results with samples from different organizational settings and other countries. Researchers have also identified the need to thoroughly investigate relationships between different antecedents of extra-role behaviors.

In this study, we intend to test a two-part model. The first part of the model assumes that a salesperson’s OCB is determined by Person–Organization fit and that this relationship is mediated by the salesperson’s job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The second part examines the impact that such behavior may have on the supervisor’s rating of the salesperson’s performance.

Data collected from 122 salesperson–supervisor dyads from 35 firms confirmed that Person–Organization fit has a positive effect on OCB due to the effect it has on the salesperson’s job satisfaction. The results also verified the positive effect of OCB on the supervisor’s evaluation of the sales agent’s performance, both directly and indirectly, through the impact OCB had on the supervisor’s fondness of the salesperson. Certain implications of this study, as well as directions for future research, are also addressed.

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1. Introduction

The adequate measurement of salesperson performance is equally important for both organizations and individuals. As far as organizations are concerned, this measurement is crucial due to the effect it has on salespeople’s behavior. Jaworski and Kohli (1991) indicate that no factor has a stronger influence on salespeople’s behavior other than feed-back and performance ratings from their supervisors. For salespeople, performance appraisal is particularly important considering the consequences it has on their professional career, particularly with regard to promotion and compensation (Anderson & Oliver, 1987; Churchill, Ford, Hartley & Walker, 1985). Thus, for executives, it is a matter of great interest to better understand the factors that explain their salespeople’s performance ratings.

Performance appraisals generally focus on input or output criteria, with job descriptions providing the basis for evaluations. At the same time, other factors have a substantial effect on appraisals, with organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) having one of the more significant effects on managerial evaluations (Allen & Rush, 1998; MacKenzie, Podsakoff & Fetter, 1991; MacKenzie, Podsakoff & Fetter, 1993). As Podsakoff,
MacKenzie, Paine and Bachrach (2000, p. 537) state, results of literature reviews suggest that “OCB accounted for substantially more variance in performance evaluations than objective performance”.

Salesperson OCB refers to discretionary behavior (i.e., sportsmanship, civic virtue, and helping behavior) on the part of the employee which are not objectively related to his/her sales productivity (MacKenzie, Podsakoff & Ahearne, 1998). Even though OCB is not part of the individual’s assigned duties, these extra-role behaviors are still beneficial to the organization, its members and the employees themselves.

Another variable that has been proved to influence the managerial evaluation of a subordinate’s performance is how fond a supervisor is of him/her. OCB is often an important determinant of to what degree supervisors “like” their subordinates (Allen & Rush, 1998; Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Hui, 1993). OCB consistently has a direct and indirect influence on the performance rating of an employee.

Considering that OCB has an influence on the supervisor’s liking of the subordinate and on his/her performance appraisal, it is essential to identify its antecedents. We propose that salesperson OCB is determined by Person–Organization (PO) fit, a type of person–environment interaction. In addition, we maintain that this relationship is mediated by salesperson job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

PO fit refers to employees’ subjective beliefs about how well their personal values match the organizational culture (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Cable & Parsons, 2001; Kristof, 1996). Previous studies indicate that the more individuals fit into their organization, the more positive work-related outcomes will be achieved, including lower stress levels (French, Caplan & Harrison, 1982; Lovelace & Rosen, 1996), higher job involvement (Blau, 1993), greater organizational commitment (Meglino, Ravlin & Adkins, 1989), better work attitudes (Caldwell & O’Reilly, 1990), greater performance ratings (Judge & Bretz, 1992), and lower staff-turnover (Chatman, 1991; Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown, Zimmermann & Johnson, 2005; Meglino & Ravlin, 1998; O’Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991).

PO fit is a promising construct for the sales industry. Something that makes PO fit especially important for salespeople is the specific nature of salespeople as “boundary-spanners” (Dubinsky, Howell, Ingram & Bellenger, 1986), usually spending long periods of time outside the enterprise, experiencing feelings of uncertainty, stress and interpersonal conflict. Under such circumstances, problems related to higher stress levels, poorer work attitudes and greater staff-turnover might be more common among these workers than among other professionals.

Employee-turnover has always been problematic among salespeople (Richardson, 1999), as it creates major expenses through lost sales, costs of separation, recruitment, selection, and training. In the forever-changing environment of selling and sales management, where human talent is becoming increasingly viewed as a key competitive advantage, organizations may find PO fit a useful tool for reducing turnover. As Jones, Brown, Zoltners and Weitz (2005) suggest, customer demands for quick responses are overwhelming to salespeople, who must balance a multiplicity of other responsibilities at the same time.

In this situation, it is imperative that sales organizations find the best way to retain their top performers that have become overworked and exhausted.

Taking into account that PO fit results in increased levels of well-being, positive behaviors and lower turnover, the congruence between individual and organizational values could be critical in the selling context.

However, research about PO fit in a sales context is very sparse. When looking at the relationship between PO fit and OCB it is worth noting that although previous research has focused on the link between PO fit and work attitudes, and the link between work attitudes and OCB (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine et al., 2000), the PO fit–OCB relationship has not received any attention in this context. An exception is the work conducted by Netemeyer, Boles, MacKee and MacMurrian (1997). The above authors analyzed the relationship between PO fit and the will to do more. However, they only studied two enterprises and two industries, which leads to questioning over the generalization of the results in other sales contexts. In addition, Jelinek and Ahearne (2006), who brought the concept of anti-citizenship behavior (ACB) into the sales management domain, stated that salespeople who do not “fit well” in their organizations may resort to ACB, although they did not test this theory empirically. Nevertheless, PO fit could encourage salespeople to go that extra mile for their organizations by being helpful, tolerating job related inconveniences, supporting fellow co-workers when they are feeling disheartened, attending non-obligatory organizational functions and so on.

Organizational literature argues that it is likely that PO fit has an impact on OCB through job satisfaction (Van Dyne, Graham & Diener, 1994). It has also been noted that other mediating factors besides job satisfaction could exist (Netemeyer et al., 1997; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, Fetter, 1990). One macro-motive that researchers have underlined as a potential mediator of this relationship is organizational commitment (MacKenzie et al., 1998; Menguc, 2000). Consequently, this study tries to improve the understanding of the perceptual determinants of salespeople’s OCB by evaluating the indirect influence of PO fit on OCB through the effect it has on job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Thus, we intend to test the influence of PO fit on salespeople’s OCB, and also how OCB reflects on the performance rating given to salespeople by their supervisors. To date, there are no empirical studies that link PO fit to performance ratings through OCB in a sales context. Thus, our research offers a new insight into the sources of salesperson OCB and the antecedents of salesperson performance ratings by supervisors.

Through this study, we are primary contributing to existing sales literature in the following ways: (a) the empirical examination of the effects of PO fit on OCB, following the suggestion of previous studies, which confirm that other

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1 The OCB literature review by Podsakoff et al. (2000) states that empirical research has focused on four major categories of antecedents: individual (or employee) characteristics, task characteristics, organizational characteristics, and leadership behavior.
mediating factors besides job satisfaction might exist; (b) the avoidance of the common-method variance bias4; and (c) the use of a multi-company data sample that represents various industries in different countries. In this case, the country is Spain: where cultural elements differ greatly from those of the USA (the country referred to in the majority of published studies). For example, using Hofstede’s (1980) cultural dimensions, the USA, as opposed to Spain, has a stronger orientation towards individualism (91 versus 51), less power distance (40 versus 57), less uncertainty avoidance (46 versus 86) and a stronger orientation towards masculinity (62 versus 42).

According to Piercy, Cravens, Lane and Vorhies (2006, p. 258), “a further test of the robustness of the existing OCB propositions would be provided by multi-company studies over a range of sectors and company and national cultures”. Considering that most of the research about these variables is US-centred, the fact that the data was gathered in Spain will provide an insight into the generalization of this behavior in other countries and cultures. With this in mind, it has been suggested that the environmental context may go beyond the micro-level analysis of the organization, making it necessary to consider the macro-level effects of a nation’s culture (Westerman & Vanka, 2005). Consequently, this study will contribute to knowledge about sales force attitudes across countries, an issue of particular importance given that, in world markets today, integrated sales workforces are on the rise.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to investigate the relationships between the core constructs of salesperson PO fit, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, supervisor liking and salesperson performance ratings. Firstly, a theoretical background and hypotheses will be given; secondly, a research method will be described; and finally, the study findings will be presented and the managerial and research implications discussed.

2. Theoretical background and development of hypotheses

2.1. Person–Organization (PO) fit

The term “person–organization (PO) fit” describes the connection between individual and organizational goals; individual preferences or needs and organizational systems or structures; and individual personality and organizational climate (Kristof, 1996). PO fit is a sub-component of the broader concept of Person–Environment fit (PE fit), which historically arises out of the fundamental notion credited to Lewin (1935) that behavior is a joint function of the individual and his or her environment. Interesting research on PE fit has revealed that there are benefits such as satisfaction, productivity, creativity and stability when the characteristics of individuals are compatible with the characteristics of their environment.

The majority of PO fit research (e.g. Cable & Judge, 1996; Chatman, 1991; Meglino & Ravlin, 1998; O’Reilly et al., 1991) has been on the similarity between individual and organizational values, or Person–Culture fit, because values are perceived as fundamental and relatively enduring (Chatman, 1991). As Verquer, Beehr and Wagner (2001) pointed out, within the domain of PO fit, values are the most commonly studied congruence constructs, with value similarity and Person–Culture fit often treated as equivalent terms (Kristof; 1996; O’Reilly et al., 1991).

Up until now, as far as the consequences of PO fit are concerned, researchers are convinced that a higher value fit between individuals and their organizations is associated with a more positive subjective experience for the person and a better overall performance for the organization (Kristof, 1996). Regarding the general foundations of these effects, Huang, Cheng and Chou (2005) suggest that they are typically credited to the well-documented effects of similarity-attraction and social identity processes (Byrne, 1971).

2.1.1. PO fit and job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is seen as both affect- and cognition-based and refers to “all characteristics of the job itself and the work environment which salespeople find rewarding, fulfilling, and satisfying, or frustrating an unsatisfying” (Churchill et al., 1974, p. 255).

Understood as an overall global state (Netemeyer et al., 1997), job satisfaction is a broadly studied concept in sales force management and is well-documented as a key job outcome for salespeople (Bagozzi, 1978; Behrman & Perreault, 1984; Brown & Peterson, 1993; Churchill et al., 1974; Jaworski & Kohli, 1991).

There is an extensive body of research in organizational psychology that considers the role of job satisfaction as very important with regards to effectively managing work relationships. For example, recent studies have found job satisfaction to be related to the day to day satisfaction of the individual (Rode, 2004), confirming that the employee’s work attitude towards the organization is mainly determined by his/her satisfaction in the company and by the way he/she feels the organization treats him/her (Naudé, Desai & Murphy, 2003). In addition, the more satisfied a front-line employee is with his/her job, the more possibilities there are of having loyal and satisfied customers (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003).

PO fit theory suggests that shared values between individuals and organizations lead to job satisfaction for the employee and favorable outcomes with regard to achieving organizational goals (Chatman, 1991). When people do not “fit” into their environment, they experience feelings of incompetence and anxiety. When they do fit, they experience more positive and less negative effects and are likely to choose to remain in that environment.

Organizational behavior literature supports the positive effect of PO fit on job satisfaction (e.g. Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Sales literature also suggests (Brown & Peterson, 1993; Churchill et al., 1985) and provides practical support (Netemeyer et al., 1997) that perceived “value congruence” is an antecedent of job satisfaction.

4 Our analysis avoids the possibility of the presence of common method variance bias by using a paired sample “supervisor–salesperson”. In other words, the information used in the empirical analysis was provided by the salespeople (PO fit, job satisfaction and organizational commitment) and their supervisors (liking and OCB).
Accordingly, the first hypothesis is formulated as follows:

**H1.** The salesperson’s perception of Person–Organization fit will have a positive influence on his/her job satisfaction.

### 2.1.2. PO fit and organizational commitment

The concept of organizational commitment refers to a person’s emotional reactions towards the characteristics of the organization for which he works and is concerned with a belief in the goals and values of that organization (Cook & Wall, 1980). According to Buchanan (1974), organizational commitment is made up of three components: (a) *identification*: employees’ pride in the organization, as well as internalization of the organization’s goals and values; (b) *involvement*: the employee’s willingness to invest their personal effort for the sake of the organization; and (c) *loyalty*: affection for and attachment to the organization; a sense of belonging manifesting itself in a “desire to stay”.

As regards the relationship between PO fit and organizational commitment, it was revealed that individuals, who recognize a strong link between their personal values and those of their organization, have higher levels of organizational commitment (Huang et al., 2005; O’Reilly et al., 1991; Valentine, Godkin & Lucero, 2002; Ximénez & San Martin, 1999). Virtanen (2000) also alleged that strength of culture can be easily conceptualized as strength of commitment, whereas Brown (1995) indicated that a strong culture (i.e. where staff respond to stimuli as a result of their belief in organizational values) is usually seen to be tantamount to consistency: beliefs and values are “shared relatively consistently throughout an organization”, and thus, management of culture is treated as management of commitment.

The recent meta-analysis conducted by Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) confirmed that PO fit is significantly linked to organizational commitment. In fact, the authors concluded that attitudes towards various aspects of the environment were most strongly related to the corresponding type of fit and that organizational commitment was most strongly influenced by PO fit.

As this relationship has not yet been examined in a sales setting, this study will look at the intensity of the PO fit–commitment relationship found in other settings. Thus, hypothesis two is formulated as follows:

**H2.** The salesperson’s perception of PO fit will have a positive influence on his/her organizational commitment.

### 2.1.3. Organizational commitment and job satisfaction

Despite the wide-ranging literature available on commitment and job satisfaction, the focus of the relationship between these two constructs is still a matter of controversy. Consequently, overall job satisfaction is either viewed as a cause of organizational commitment (assuming that an employee’s opinion about their job is formed before they form an opinion about the entire organization) (e.g. Currivan, 1999, MacKenzie et al., 1998) or as a result of it (Bateman & Strasser, 1984; Hunt, Chonko & Wood, 1985; Still, 1983), (assuming that employees commit themselves to the organization before attitudes of satisfaction can emerge). Although the first approach is the most common, studies that support this assumption have an essentially cross-sectional nature, which prevents any concrete deductions regarding causation from being made.

In our study, we assumed that the employee would begin to develop attitudes consistent with their existing level of commitment to the organization (Staw, 1980). In fact, and in keeping in line with previous research (O’Reilly & Caldwell, 1981; Schein, 1968), we believe that organizational commitment could start rather early, possibly due to pre-entry experiences. O’Reilly and Caldwell (1981) and Pierce and Dunham (1987) affirm that commitment first surfaces when an employee makes a job choice. When there is less pre-employment commitment to the organization and less of a will to do more, there will also be less job satisfaction. Respectively, the opposite is also true (Bhuian & Menguc, 2002).

This statement is supported by a number of studies (e.g. Bateman & Strasser, 1984; Hunt et al., 1985; Kacmar, Carlson & Brymer, 1999). Among them, the study carried out by Bateman and Strasser (1984) deserves particular attention because it provides evidence that overall satisfaction is not a cause of commitment but rather a result of it. Sales literature also includes ample evidence supporting the main effects of organizational commitment on job satisfaction (i.e. Bhuian & Menguc, 2002; Coelho, Augusto, Coelho, Sá & Soares, 2005).

Thus, hypothesis three is as follows:

**H3.** The salesperson’s organizational commitment will have a positive influence on the salesperson’s job satisfaction.

### 2.2. Organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB)

In recent years, researchers have recognized the importance of distinguishing between in-role (e.g. sales volume, commissions, percentage quota) and extra-role (e.g. organizational citizenship behaviors, pro-social behaviors) aspects of performance. The types of extra-role performance that have received the most attention in marketing (MacKenzie et al., 1993; MacKenzie et al., 1998; Netemeyer et al., 1997; Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1994) and management literature (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Moorman, 1991; Organ & Ryan, 1995) are OCB.

Organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) involve discretionary behaviors (such as sportsmanship, civic virtue and helping behavior) on the part of the salesperson that are not directly related to his/her sales productivity (MacKenzie et al., 1998). OCB are defined as behaviors that (a) are above and beyond those formally outlined in the job description; (b) are not compulsory; (c) are not rewarded by the organization; and (d) are essential for the organization’s success (Organ 1988).

*Sportsmanship* is a willingness on the part of the salesperson to tolerate “less than ideal” circumstances without “complaining... railing against real or imagined slights, and making federal cases out of small potatoes” (Organ, 1988, p. 11). *Civic virtue* is a behavioral trait that compels the salesperson to dutifully participate in the company and be concerned about its well-being (e.g. attend meetings or functions that are not compulsory but that are of benefit to the company, keep up with changes in the organization, take the initiative and recommend how company operations or procedures can be improved) (MacKenzie et al., 1998). Finally, as identified by Organ (1988, 1990), *helping behavior* is a combination of several aspects.
types of citizenship behavior (altruism, courtesy, peacekeeping, and cheerleading) that are all related to helping co-workers solve or avoid work-related problems.

2.2.1. Job satisfaction and OCB

In a sales context, job satisfaction has been suggested (MacKenzie et al., 1993; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman et al., 1990) and empirically tested (e.g. MacKenzie et al., 1998; Netemeyer et al., 1997) as an antecedent of OCB. The results of these studies confirm that job satisfaction is a predictor of OCB. Several theoretical explanations have been given for the relationship between job satisfaction and OCB, including social exchange theory (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994) and psychological contract theory (Robinson & Morrison, 1995). A central aspect in the majority of these theories is the “norm of reciprocity” (Netemeyer et al., 1997). An employee that is satisfied with his/her job will engage in OCB as a way of thanking those that have helped him or her (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Schnake, 1991). Given the research affirming the satisfaction-to-OCB relationship, including research into sales settings, hypothesis four is comprised of the following:

H4. The salesperson’s job satisfaction will have a positive influence on his/her OCB.

2.2.2. Organizational commitment and OCB

Organizational commitment is an affective variable that, along with extra-role behaviors, is connected to job satisfaction. Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982, p. 27) noted that those who were committed to the organization were “willing to give something of themselves in order to contribute to the organization’s wellbeing”. In addition, Brief and Motowidlo (1986), in their review of the literature on extra-role behavior, argue that the components of commitment are predictive of pro-social or citizenship behavior.

Empirical evidence confirms this statement, in literature dealing with both management (Organ & Ryan, 1995; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine et al., 2000) and sales (MacKenzie et al., 1998). Therefore, we expect OCB to be a consequence of organizational commitment and formulate hypothesis five as follows:

H5. The salesperson’s organizational commitment will have a positive influence on his/her OCB.

2.2.3. OCB, liking and performance appraisal

Researchers on performance evaluation conclude that in the relationship between OCB and performance appraisal, many managers use objective productivity (e.g. the sales volume achieved) to indicate the overall performance of subordinates such as salespeople. However, this is rarely the only factor considered. There is evidence to suggest that supervisors also implicitly consider organizational citizenship behavior when evaluating the overall performance of their employees. This behavior consequently affects their decisions with regard to promotion, training and compensation (Organ & Ryan 1995; Park & Sims, 1989; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine et al., 2000).

Amid the research carried out involving sales forces, the work of MacKenzie et al. (1991, 1993), MacKenzie, Podsakoff and Paine (1999) and Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1994) stands out. These authors demonstrate that organizational citizenship behavior has a strong, positive and consistent effect on the evaluation of a salesperson’s performance in varied contexts (insurance, petrochemical products and pharmaceuticals).

Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman et al. (1993) argue that supervisors favor employees that engage in OCB because such behaviors tend to make a manager’s job easier. It is therefore not surprising that previous studies have shown that those who engage in OCB are typically seen as more likeable by their supervisors (Allen & Rush, 1998). Therefore, hypotheses six and seven are as follows:

H6. The salesperson’s OCB will be positively related to the extent to which his/her supervisor likes him/her.

H7. The salesperson’s OCB will be positively related to the supervisor’s rating of his/her performance.

A literary review reveals that supervisors’ positive regard for subordinates is frequently associated with higher performance appraisal ratings, and with other findings such as a greater halo, increased accuracy, a better interpersonal relationship and a reluctance to punish bad performance (Lefkowitz, 2000). DeNisi and Williams (1988) stated that friendliness of an employee influences the processing of performance information, and Isen and Baron (1991) shed light on this suggestion in their conceptualization of “the positive affect” and its role in organizational settings. They argued that the positive affect facilitates the recollection of positive information stored in the memory. Consequently, positive feelings towards a subordinate should result in a supervisor recalling more positive performance-related behaviors and evaluative impressions, which in turn should lead them to better rate a subordinate’s performance. Indeed, this is not an isolated effect. French and Raven (1959) describe it as a form of reference power; while Tedeschi and Melburg (1984) point out that “on a long term basis there are many potential gains for the liked person, including better communication, trust and ability to influence”. These statements suggest that positive feelings for an employee can lead to biased performance ratings. Support has been given to Liden and Mitchell’s proposal that liking plays a critical role in the type of exchange that develops between supervisor and subordinate (Ferris, Judge, Rowland & Fitzgibbons, 1994; Judge & Ferris, 1993; Wayne & Ferris, 1990; Wayne & Liden, 1995).

In a sales context, studies conducted by DeCarlo and Leigh (1996) and Strauss, Barrick and Connerley (2001) stand out. In both cases, there is a strong link between the supervisor’s contentment with their sales agent and his/her performance rating of that sales agent. Thus, hypothesis 8 is as follows:

H8. A supervisor’s liking of a salesperson will positively influence their rating of that salesperson’s performance.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample

Data was collected from sales supervisors and salespeople working for Spanish companies located in Spain. Relevant
information regarding the project was sent to the Human Resources Manager or to the Sales Manager of each firm. Companies that agreed to participate were guaranteed confidentiality and were informed that, upon request, they would receive a summary of the research findings. After extensive follow-up procedures, 52 businesses showed an interest in collaborating with us. Eventually, after making contact a second time round to clarify aspects related to the collection of information and to the methodology used in the investigation, 39 enterprises confirmed their participation. The most common reasons given for not participating in the study were: (1) that the firm was undergoing significant organizational changes; (2) that the organization would have difficulty distributing questionnaires to both subordinates and their supervisors as directed by the research framework. The 35 companies that participated in the study represented a variety of industries, including pharmaceuticals (30%), insurance (14%), banking (14%), and wholesaling (12.3%) (see Tables 1 and 2).

The survey used in this study was originally written in English and then underwent a back-translation process. It was first translated into Spanish and then back-translated into English. This translation procedure is in compliance with the framework established by Brislin (1986) regarding the equivalence of language translations. Once the translation process was completed, pilot tests were carried out in order to ensure the survey had been accurately translated. Pre-tests of all the measurement items were performed in two steps. Firstly, several experts were asked to examine the questionnaire in order to identify any questions that may have been confusing or difficult to answer; as well as any other problems with the survey. Secondly, we conducted a test of content validity using supervisors and sales agents belonging to enterprises from three different sectors (machinery, pharmaceuticals and insurance).

Questionnaires were mailed directly to a contact in each company (e.g. the HR Manager or Sales Manager), who then distributed the questionnaires throughout the organization. For each dyad, two envelopes were sent: one for the employee and one for the supervisor. Each of these envelopes contained: (a) a cover letter with a brief explanation of the research goals, a guarantee of confidentiality and an explanation of how to return the survey; (b) a questionnaire; and (c) a stamped, addressed envelope in which the surveys could be returned directly to the researchers. In order to match supervisor and employee responses, a number code was put on each questionnaire.

A total of 240 pairs of questionnaires were distributed. The number of surveys sent to each company was based on the input of the HR Manager/Sales Manager. Therefore, a different number of questionnaires were sent to each of the 35 participating firms. One-hundred and twenty-two (122) pairs of completed questionnaires were obtained: a response rate of 50.8%. The mean number of responses per company was 3.5 and the data was spread fairly evenly across the 35 organizations. Over 80% of the data was collected from the 29 companies that supplied five or fewer respondents. Likewise, the sample is fairly representative of the different industries that were included in the study.

The structures of the various organizations did not allow for one supervisor per employee. For that reason, the number of subordinates for any given supervisor ranged from one to three. There were 68 supervisors and 122 employees, for a total of 122 supervisor-subordinate dyads. The characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 3.

### 3.2. Measures

#### 3.2.1. PO fit

Four items, developed by Netemeyer et al. (1997), were used to ask salespeople to assess the fit between their personal values and those of the organization. Sample items were: “I feel that...”
my personal values are a good fit with this organization”; and: “This organization has the same values as I do with regard to concern for others”. Answers to these items were based on a seven-point scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was 0.89 and composite reliability was 0.90, meaning the construct had a high degree of a reliability, similar to that obtained in previous research (e.g. alpha was 0.88 and composite reliability was 0.88 in Netemeyer et al., 1997).

3.2.2. Job satisfaction
Brown and Peterson (1994) measured salespeople’s job satisfaction using a scale of four items developed for a sales context. We decided to directly measure overall or “global” job satisfaction, as opposed to determining it through the measurement of satisfaction employees have with regard to different aspects or “facets” of their job. We chose this route because current research shows that in many cases, the global approach is superior to the facet approach (Christen, Iyer & Soberman, 2006). Similar global measurements have been successfully applied in previous research (e.g. Bagozzi, 1980) and their psychometric properties have been widely confirmed. Sample items were: “I think my work is very exciting” and “I would recommend a friend to work in this organization as a sales agent”. Sales agents were asked to answer these questions using a seven-point scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was 0.90 and composite reliability was 0.90. Previous research has obtained similar values for reliability (e.g. Alpha=0.86 in Brown & Peterson, 1994).

3.2.3. Organizational commitment
A salesperson’s organizational commitment was obtained using a scale developed by Mathews and Shepherd (2002), based on the BOCS scale previously proposed by Cook & Wall (1980). This scale used the three components originally proposed by Buchanan (1974): identification, loyalty and involvement. The information regarding the scale’s six items was provided by the salesperson. Sample items were: “I feel proud telling other people that I work for this organization” or “Even if this enterprise had financial problems, I would be reluctant to move to another”. Responses to these questions were based on a seven-point scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was 0.88 and composite reliability was 0.88, meaning a good reliability of the construct similar to the one obtained in previous research (Cook & Wall, 1980).

3.2.4. Organizational citizenship behavior
Supervisor ratings of employee OCB were obtained using the Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1994) scale. Their 14-item scale measures different types of organizational citizenship, including helping, civic virtue, and sportsmanship. Supervisors were asked to rate the OCB of their subordinates using a seven-point scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. Sample responses were: “Willingly gives up his or her time in order to help other agents who have work-related problems”, “Attends functions that are not required but help the agency’s/ company’s image”, and “Consumes a lot of time complaining about trivial matters” (reverse-scored). Based on the recommendations of LePine, Erez and Johnson (2002),6 these items were combined to create an overall measure of OCB. Cronbach’s alpha for this scale and composite reliability were, respectively, 0.87 and 0.83, meaning a good reliability of the construct similar to the one obtained in previous research (e.g. Mackenzie et al., 1998, alpha was 0.89).

3.2.5. Supervisor liking of subordinate
DeCarlo and Leigh (1996) studied the nature of this construct in depth and distinguished two different aspects of a supervisor’s liking of a subordinate: (a) task attraction; how desirable the salesperson is as a colleague, implying the existence of mutual confidence, a good work relationship and excellent communication between the salesperson and the supervisor; and (b) social attraction; how desirable the salesperson is as a friend and as social colleague. This second dimension, which is similar to the concept of affect used in previous investigations in the organizational context (Wayne & Liden, 1995) is the one we use in this study. Supervisor liking of the subordinate was measured using a three-item measure developed by Wayne and Liden (1995). Sample items were: “I like him/her very much as a person”; and “I think he/she would make a good friend”. Responses were based on a seven-point scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was 0.91, similar to the one obtained in previous research (e.g. Wayne and Liden’s (1995) alpha was 0.79). Composite reliability was 0.92.

3.2.6. Performance ratings
Employee performance ratings were measured with a five items scale based on the measure developed by Wayne and Liden (1995). The scale’s reliability has been proven (alpha was 0.94) and it has been successfully used in previous research (e.g. Bolino & Turnley, 2003). Supervisors were asked to rate each employee’s overall work performance using a seven-point scale. Sample items were: “the overall level of performance that I observe for this subordinate is” (where 1 = unacceptable and 7 = outstanding); and “my personal view of this subordinate in terms of his or her overall effectiveness is;” (where 1 = very ineffective and 7 = very effective). We combined ratings across the five items to create the

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6 LePine et al. (2002) confirmed that dimensions of OCB are highly related to one another and that there are no apparent differences in relationships with the most popular set of predictors, stating that dimensions of OCB are not much more than equivalent indicators of OCB. In the words of the authors: “scholars should begin to explicitly think of Organ’s (1988) OCB as a latent construct and should avoid focusing on the specific dimensions of OCB when conducting research and interpreting results” (p. 61).
Table 4
Items, constructs, loadings and critical ratios (CFA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latent variable</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Standard estimates</th>
<th>Critical ratios (t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PO fit</td>
<td>1. I feel that my personal values are a good fit with this organization</td>
<td>0.749</td>
<td>9.308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. This organization has the same values as I do with regard to concerns about others</td>
<td>0.805</td>
<td>13.483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. This organization has the same values as I do with regard to honesty</td>
<td>0.875</td>
<td>16.941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. This organization has the same values as I do with regard to fairness</td>
<td>0.914</td>
<td>18.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCB</td>
<td>1. Willingly gives of his or her time to help other agents who have work-related problems</td>
<td>0.751</td>
<td>12.896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Is willing to take time out of his or her own busy schedule to help with recruiting or training new agents</td>
<td>0.785</td>
<td>20.102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. “Touched base” with other before initiating actions that might affect them</td>
<td>0.508</td>
<td>5.802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Takes steps to try to prevent problems with other agents and/or other personnel in the company</td>
<td>0.634</td>
<td>7.147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Encourages other agents when they are down</td>
<td>0.767</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Acts as a “peacemaker” when others in the agency have disagreements</td>
<td>0.806</td>
<td>16.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Is a stabilizing influence in the agency when dissention occurs</td>
<td>0.782</td>
<td>13.379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Attends functions that are not required but help the company image</td>
<td>0.770</td>
<td>17.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Attends training/information sessions that agents are encouraged but not required to attend</td>
<td>0.555</td>
<td>5.696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Attends and actively participates in agency meetings</td>
<td>0.769</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Consumes a lot of time complaining about trivial matters (R)</td>
<td>0.603</td>
<td>8.521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Always finds fault with what the company is doing (R)</td>
<td>0.499</td>
<td>5.847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. Tends to make “mountains out of molehills” (makes problems bigger than they are) (R)</td>
<td>0.515</td>
<td>6.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. Always focuses on what is wrong with this or her situation rather than the positive side of it (R)</td>
<td>0.571</td>
<td>7.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>1. Overall, I am very satisfied with my work</td>
<td>0.731</td>
<td>7.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I find my work very exciting</td>
<td>0.699</td>
<td>7.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. I consider, to a great extent, that the investment of time spent selling is worthwhile</td>
<td>0.753</td>
<td>7.968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. I would advise a friend to sell for this company</td>
<td>0.924</td>
<td>30.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. I would recommend, to a great extent, this company as a place to work</td>
<td>0.883</td>
<td>14.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>1. I am quite proud to be able to tell people that I work for (company name)</td>
<td>0.799</td>
<td>12.169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I feel myself to be a part of (company name)</td>
<td>0.782</td>
<td>15.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. To know that my own work has made a contribution to the good of the organization would please me</td>
<td>0.665</td>
<td>7.422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. In my work I like to feel that I am making some effort not just for myself, but for the organization as well</td>
<td>0.680</td>
<td>9.436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Even if (company name) were not doing too well financially, I would be reluctant to change to another employer</td>
<td>0.755</td>
<td>11.088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. The offer of a bit more money with another employer would not seriously make me think of changing my job</td>
<td>0.739</td>
<td>9.474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liking</td>
<td>1. I like him/her very much as a person</td>
<td>0.894</td>
<td>20.790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I think he/she would make a good friend</td>
<td>0.910</td>
<td>35.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. We like each other very much</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>20.317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance appraisal</td>
<td>1. This sales agent meets my own expectations</td>
<td>0.900</td>
<td>39.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Overall, I feel this subordinate is performing his or her job the way I would like it to be performed</td>
<td>0.905</td>
<td>36.240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Overall, he/she is effectively fulfilling his or her roles and responsibilities</td>
<td>0.906</td>
<td>34.961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. My personal view of this subordinate in terms of his/her overall effectiveness is:</td>
<td>0.891</td>
<td>31.785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. The overall level of performance that I observe for this subordinate is:</td>
<td>0.873</td>
<td>31.107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(R) Reverse items.

measure. Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliabilities for the scale were, respectively, 0.95 and 0.94. Previous studies (e.g. Wayne & Liden, 1995) have obtained similar reliabilities (Alpha = 0.94).

3.3. Results

We used CFA,7 with a maximum likelihood estimation and randomly created item parcels (as described by Floyd & Widaman, 1995) in order to ensure that the three supervisor-rated variables (OCB, liking and performance ratings) were distinct. This analysis supported the three-factor structure (χ² = 35.62, df = 17; GFI = 0.93, CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.96). The match of this three-factor model was also compared with the match of a two-factor model in which OCB and performance ratings loaded onto the same factor (χ² = 147.99, df = 19; GFI = 0.76, CFI = 0.82, TLI = 0.73), a two-factor model in which liking and performance ratings loaded onto the same factor (χ² = 116.03, df = 19; GFI = 0.82, CFI = 0.86, TLI = 0.80), and a one-factor model (χ² = 294.52, df = 20; GFI = 0.61, CFI = 0.61, TLI = 0.46). In every instance, the match of the three-factor model was significantly better than the match of any alternative model, demonstrating the distinctiveness of the three final variables.

We followed the same procedure for the three salesperson-rated variables (PO fit, satisfaction and organizational commitment). We used CFA with a maximum likelihood estimation and randomly created parcels to verify that these three salesperson-rated variables were distinct. The analysis supported the three-factor structure (χ² = 8.27; df = 6; GFI = 0.98, CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.98). The match of this three-factor model was also compared with the match of a two-factor model in which PO fit and commitment loaded onto the same factor (χ² = 60.08, df = 8; GFI = 0.85, CFI = 0.88, TLI = 0.78), a two-factor model in which

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7 In order to avoid problems due to possible non-fulfilment of the conditions of multivariate normality, the bootstrapping technique was used.
PO fit and satisfaction loaded onto the same factor ($\chi^2=4.88$ \(df=8\); GFI = 0.91, CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.87), a two-factor model in which satisfaction and commitment loaded onto the same factor ($\chi^2=26.33$, \(df=8\); GFI = 0.92, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.92), and a one-factor model ($\chi^2=60.41$, \(df=9\); GFI = 0.85, CFI = 0.88, TLI = 0.80). In every instance, the match of the three-factor model was significantly better than the match of any alternative model, displaying the distinctiveness of the three salesperson-rated variables. Finally, an un parcelled CFA model indicated that the factor loading of each item onto its specified factor was substantial and statistically significant (see Table 4).

The means, standard deviations, alphas, and correlations for all of the variables in the study are provided in Table 5.

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test hypothetical relationships. SEM is useful here as it enables several hypothetical relationships to be tested simultaneously, provides an indication of the match between the hypothetical model and the actual data, and allows for the evaluation of alternative models. However, given the number of variables in our model and the relatively small sample size (\(N=122\)), we were unable to meet the minimum recommended sample size necessary to conduct our tests at a latent-variable level. Therefore, the analyses reported in this study were carried out at a manifest-variable level (i.e., using observed variables).

The maximum likelihood structural estimates of the hypothetical model are presented in Fig. 1. The model fits the data well ($\chi^2=15.893$; \(df=8\); \(p=0.044\); $\chi^2/df=1.98$; RMSEA = 0.088; GFI = 0.96; AGFI = 0.89; TLI = 0.95; CFI = 0.97; IFI = 0.97). The $R^2$ for the ratings of the subordinate’s performance was 0.46; for liking it was 0.38; for OCB it was 0.11; for job satisfaction it was 0.68 and for organizational commitment it was 0.35.

As illustrated above, seven of the eight predicted links were statistically significant (Fig. 1). In particular, findings supported Hypothesis 1: the parameter estimate for the relationship between PO fit and job satisfaction was positive and significant.

### Table 5
Means, standard deviations, and correlations among variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. PO fit</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>(0.89)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Job satisfaction</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.67 ***</td>
<td>(0.90)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Commitment</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.56 **</td>
<td>0.75 ***</td>
<td>(0.88)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. OCB</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.20 **</td>
<td>0.25 **</td>
<td>(0.87)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Liking of subordinate</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>0.21 *</td>
<td>0.41 ***</td>
<td>0.37 **</td>
<td>0.63 ***</td>
<td>(0.91)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sales performance</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.28 **</td>
<td>0.26 **</td>
<td>0.55 ***</td>
<td>0.61 ***</td>
<td>(0.95)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: alphas appear along the diagonal.

* $p<0.05$.

** $p<0.01$.

*** $p<0.001$.

The significant parameter estimate for the relationship between PO fit and organizational commitment, and between organizational commitment and job satisfaction, supported Hypotheses 2 and 3. For the relationship between job satisfaction and OCB, the parameter estimate was positive and significant, providing support for Hypothesis 4. Contrary to our expectations, there was no significant link between organizational commitment and OCB, so Hypothesis 5 was not confirmed as true. Regarding the consequences of OCB, all the predicted connections were significant and expected. The parameter estimates for the relationship between OCB and liking were positive and significant, supporting Hypothesis 6. OCB were positively related to performance, supporting Hypothesis 7 and, finally, the parameter estimate for the relationship between liking and performance was also positive and significant, verifying Hypothesis 8.

The following strong argument could be put forward regarding job performance: a satisfied employee is also a productive employee (Organ, 1977; Petty, McGee & Cavender, 1984). However, researchers have failed to find evidence of a strong correlation between satisfaction and performance, despite the many studies that have been conducted to uncover this relationship (Ramaswami & Singh, 2003). In a meta-analysis, Iaffaldano and Muchinsky (1985, p. 270) suggested that satisfaction and performance only formed “an illusory correlation between two variables that we logically think should interrelate...but in fact do not”. The results of this study have shed some light on this debate, suggesting that the relationship between job satisfaction and performance ratings could be mediated by OCB. This theory has been already put forward by Ostroff (1992) in an organizational setting. She suggests that the internal adaptability of an organization could be a precursor of adaptation to external environmental change. In order to test for mediation, we ran the tested model without OCB, adding a path that directly linked satisfaction and commitment with liking and performance. However, in this alternative model the added paths did not produce a significant result, so we can reject the null hypothesis that the more satisfied and the more committed salespeople are the preferred employees that receive better appraisals. As a result, the mediating effect of OCB can be affirmed.

Recent studies have highlighted the potential problems that can occur when mixing different selling situations into a combined sample (Avlonitis & Panagopoulos, 2006). These enquiries conclude that, in cases where the sample consists of
heterogeneous sales forces, researchers are advised to perform a multi-group analysis in order to test for invariance in the relationships of interest across different sales jobs, before pooling together the different sub-samples. Following this suggestion, we put the different sales jobs used in our sample into three groups: (a) missionary seller, (b) trade seller, and (c) technical seller. In the last two decades, these three selling groups have been frequently discussed and used in over thirty conceptual and empirical sales-related studies (Avlonitis & Panagopoulos, 2006). Regarding the questionnaires used in our study, 47% of them refer to trade salespeople; 30% to missionary salespeople; and 23% to technical selling positions. After categorizing the sales jobs, we applied multi-group structural equation modeling, estimating the conceptual model simultaneously for each type of selling situation. To assess the existence of a moderating effect on the type of selling situation, we only allowed the hypothetical structural paths to vary across the three sub-samples and compared the match of this model with one that we had constrained in order to make the structural paths equal across all three sub-samples. The resulting Chi-square difference between both models was insignificant ($\chi^2$ of 15.81 and 14 degrees of freedom is not statistically significant, $p=0.325$), implying that all structural paths are not different across the three sub-samples. Thus, we can conclude that, in the sample analyzed in this study, the type of sales job did not influence any of the relationships studied, making the combining of different sales populations into the one sample less of an issue.

4. Discussion

Overall, the results of this study provide strong support for the hypothesized model. The results especially confirm the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between PO fit and OCB. When a salesperson feels that there is a strong similarity between their values and the values of their organization, they will experience a higher level of organizational commitment to the organization and will be more satisfied at work, which, in turn, will have a positive influence on OCB. The strength of these relationships is consistent with that found in previous research into the organizational (Brown & Peterson, 1993; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; O’Reilly et al., 1991; Valentine et al., 2002) and selling (Netemeyer et al., 1997) contexts and confirms the importance of careful employee selection and socialization processes.

Our results also confirm that job satisfaction is an important predictor of OCB, a result that is consistent with previous research organizational (Organ & Ryan, 1995; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman et al., 1990) and sales (MacKenzie et al., 1998; Netemeyer et al., 1997) settings. Salespeople who are more satisfied in their jobs, due to either reciprocity, or the sharing the feelings of satisfaction that they experience, are more willing than their colleagues to display citizenship behavior. This result could be more imperative than we think in modern sales organizations. Satisfied salespeople could contribute to the well-being of their organization in the long term, by helping their colleagues to attract new clients and look after existing customers. As Netemeyer et al. (1997) pointed out: an outside salesperson often needs assistance or guidance when dealing with a customer. However, his manager may not be available to provide such help when handling a specific customer-related problem. In a situation like this, co-workers can be of great help.

Contrary to our expectations, organizational commitment was not directly related to OCB. Neither have other studies found a significant connection between commitment and citizenship behaviors. For example, Williams and Anderson (1991) failed to replicate O’Reilly and Chatman (1986), finding no relationship between commitment and either of their two dimensions of OCB. Tansky (1993) found no link between commitment and any of the five dimensions of supervisor-rated OCB. One possible explanation has to do with the measure used in this study. As we have already explained, BOCS maintains the three components originally proposed by Buchanan (1974): identification, loyalty and involvement, although it does not distinguish between commitment as a psychological state and the behaviors that follow on from it. In Meyer, Allen and Gellatly (1990) terms, identification and involvement are forms of affective commitment, whereas loyalty corresponds more closely to continuance commitment. In this respect, researchers

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**Fig. 1. Structural estimates of causal model.**

- $* p<.1$  
- **$p<.005$**  
- ***$p<.001$***  
- n.s.
have confirmed that certain dimensions of commitment are expected to be related to OCB, and some are not (Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993). For example, Meyer and Allen (1991) have argued that affective commitment is strongly connected to OCB, while continuance commitment is not.

The results confirm the positive and significant influence organizational commitment has on job satisfaction. As O’Reilly and Caldwell (1981) have pointed out, commitment can develop quite early; namely due to socialization efforts that aim to encourage newly hired salespeople to adopt company values, as well as provide them with the ability to work and to interact with others in the organization (Louis, 1980). This result is also consistent with previous sales-related studies (e.g. Bhuiyan & Menguc, 2002; Coelho et al., 2005). As most of this research is not US-centred (but rather Saudi-Arabian or Portuguese focused) and shares cultural dimensions with Spain, such as collectivism versus individualism, more research is needed in order to examine sales force attitudes across different countries, particularly given the rise of the integrated sales force in world markets today. Additionally, managers should note that pursuing strategies to increase salespeople’s organizational commitment can help to increase their job satisfaction.

Previous research in organizational settings shows how a supervisor’s relationship with their subordinate can positively influence their rating of that salesperson’s performance. This finding gives empirical support to the proposition that liking plays a critical role in the type of exchange that develops between supervisor and subordinate (Liden, Wayne & Stilwell, 1993; Wayne & Ferris, 1990).

DeNisi and Williams (1988) suggested that liking influences the processing of performance information and Isen and Baron (1991) also shed light on this suggestion, arguing that positive affect facilitates the recall of information stored in the memory, which in turn produces a positive affective tone. Thus, positive affect towards a salesperson should result in the supervisor recalling more positive performance-related behaviors and evaluative impressions, which should upgrade the supervisor’s rating of the salesperson’s performance.

The results of this study confirm the positive effect of OCB on the supervisor’s evaluation of the salesperson’s performance, both directly and indirectly through the supervisor’s liking of his subordinate. As Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1994) underlined, subordinates who are considered to be efficient are not the ones who are productive themselves, but who, instead, contribute more towards making others more productive. Management literature has suggested different ways in which OCB can be related to job performance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine et al., 2000): reciprocity, performance implicit theories, illusory correlations and so on. Fiske (1981, 1982) has argued that, when an object is identified by a person as an example of a previously definite, affectively laden category, the affect associated with the category is quickly retrieved and applied to the stimulus object. Thus, if managers include citizenship behaviors, along with high levels of task performance, in their definition of “good employees”, employees who exhibit OCB will trigger positive affect and subsequently will receive a better evaluation than those who do not exhibit these behaviors. The results obtained in this study confirm this proposal.

This study has ultimately attempted to test the generalization of the proposed relationships and motivate researchers to begin thinking about how antecedents and consequences could relate to OCB across national boundaries.

5. Managerial implications

The results of this study have important implications for the sales management sector, particularly considering the changing environment that affects the practice of selling and sales management nowadays. Current development, such as customer evolution, technological advances and competitive intensity, challenge selling organizations and laden them with the additional burden of having to select and retain the right individuals. Moreover, the actual sales workforce is becoming more and more diverse; and, as a consequence, sales managers are faced with the task of recruiting, hiring, training and motivating salespeople who come from different backgrounds and have dissimilar values. In the words of Jones et al. (2005), “selecting and developing sales personnel has always been an important topic; though today’s environment, with turnover costs continuing to skyrocket, increases the importance of doing this right”.

Besides, if we consider the specific nature of the salespeople as “boundary-spanners”, usually spending long periods outside the enterprise, obtaining feed-back is not always easy for them. There is evidence that suggests individuals who obtain less direct feedback, over a period of time, begin to feel they fit less well into their organization (Lovelace & Rosen, 1996). Under such circumstances, problems related to value congruence may be more common among these workers than among other professionals. In this context, it is important to contribute to salespeople PO fit.

Sales managers can increase salespeople PO fit through their selection process, company social gatherings and leadership (Chao, O’Leary-Kelly, Wolf & Klein, 1994; Chatman, 1991; Grant & Bush, 1996; Huang et al., 2005; Kristoff-Brown et al., 2005; López & McMillan, 2002). Some organizations may seriously consider the potential benefits of selecting on the basis of match. Our results confirm that sales organizations could profit in very tangible ways (e.g. greater job satisfaction and organizational commitment) by attracting and selecting those salespeople who “fit” into the company well. As long as top management is able to identify the specific underlying reasons for poor organizational fit, steps can be taken to increase those results and to increase OCB. This behavior is consistent with the recent emphasis placed on PO fit as a method of staffing organizations to meet the needs of the “changing nature of work” (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006). It is very important to make sales managers aware of how important the hiring process actually is.

In addition, organizational socialization practices could be used to teach sales managers how to find ways of increasing PO fit among their salespeople. Sales managers are in charge of designing appropriate social arrangements and dealing with culture strategies adopted by salespeople. Additionally, organizations should provide potential salespeople with a realistic appraisal of their value systems and work environment. Employees are more likely to be satisfied with, and committed to, an organization and are less likely to quit depending on the
extent to which socialization processes result in PO fit, which in turn ensures that firms receive greater returns on investments in recruitment, selection, and training.

Besides recruitment and socialization, leadership has emerged as an important approach, which organizational managers can use to improve salespeople’s PO values fit. As Lord and Brown (2001) indicate, by highlighting relevant behavior for organizational values or influencing socialization processes, sales managers can play a critical role in fulfilling such a function, confirming the significance of top managers when shaping and creating an organizational culture.

Another important implication of these results relates to the performance evaluation process. Sales managers are forced to be objective in their performance appraisals (Gentry, Mowen & Tasaki, 1991). However, this study confirms that, in reality, supervisor liking (a subjective factor) and OCB (an extra-role behavior) influence these appraisals. Thus, when a low performer exhibits high OCB and/or has been evaluated by a supervisor that likes him, attribution bias could arise and result in a preferential sales performance evaluation. The effects of this could damage organizations as it may cause them to keep a hold of under-performers or prevent these under-performers from progressing. Considering that traditional programs for improving appraisal processes focus on removing liking as a source of bias (Cardy & Dobbins, 1986), a possible solution would be to try various methods of improving performance evaluations, including role-plays designed to help pinpoint evaluation errors (Latham & Wexley, 1977); training in the use of behaviorally anchored rating scales; the use of field notes to provide concrete behavioral indicators (Bernardin & Walter, 1977); and the development of historical territory and personal data files (DeCarlo & Leigh, 1996).

6. Limitations and future research directions

This study is not without its limitations. To start with, it includes a convenience sample, and despite the fact that the response rate was fairly high, we were unable to determine whether or not the respondents in our study differed from those who did not take part. Previous researchers (e.g. Konovsky & Pugh, 1994; Netemeyer et al., 1997; Niehoff & Moorman, 1993) have all argued that the common-method bias in such a study may stem from the following causes: (a) measuring the independent and dependent variables at the same time; (b) measuring all of the variables with perceptions of a single sample group that may inflate the reported relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Notwithstanding, researchers have recognized that common-method variance could be overstated in certain sales settings (Churchill et al., 1985; Oliver & Anderson, 1994; Organ & Ryan, 1995). In this study, we used two groups of respondents (i.e. industrial salespeople and their immediate managers) to measure the constructs. Throughout this study we also tried to eliminate the second likely cause of the common-method bias.

The third limitation of this study is that causality could not be determined due to the cross-sectional nature of the data. Longitudinal research is required in order to examine the causal links proposed in the model. Another aspect that should be noted is that in this study we did not examine actual congruence between organizational culture and employees’ values, but instead focused on salespeople’s perceptions of PO fit. Recent studies (i.e. Ravlin & Ritchie, 2006) have confirmed that both perceived and actual fit with the organization have independent and interactive relationships with job attitudes. In this regard, it has been noted that perceptions of fit are important in their own right (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Kim, Cable & Kim, 2005; Kristof, 1996) and as Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) have suggested, direct assessments of perceived fit are more susceptible to a common-method bias than other measures and shed little light on the characteristics that underlie perceptions of fit-in.

Accordingly, while it is often recommended that supervisors provide ratings of employee OCB (e.g., Organ & Ryan, 1995; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine et al., 2000), our findings suggest that more research is needed in order to determine whether or not such ratings reflect perceptions or reality. In this respect, it has been suggested that the use of several evaluators of OCB, as independent experts or colleagues, notably contributes to the reliability of the measure (Allen, Barnard, Rush & Russell, 2000). Likewise, more work needs to done in order to better understand why those who engage in OCB are more likely to be seen as likeable and as having better overall job performance.

There is also a need for future research into the consideration of PO fit as a dependent variable. It is necessary to have a better understanding of what “fitting in” actually means to salespeople and “to fit and the mechanisms that stimulate fit”. With this in mind, it would be useful to examine those organizational variables that might positively influence PO fit. Among these variables, hiring, socialization and supervision processes stand out. For instance, if an employee does not “fit into” an organization, rather than leave, through the firm’s socialization program, they could change so that their PO fit improves, resulting in a greater OCB.

Research also needs to be done into personal and situational characteristics that mediate PO fit–outcome relationships. For instance, it could be of interest to investigate whether or not PO fit effects on “liking” and “performance appraisal” are mediated by work effort. In this case, we could propose an alternative hypothesis: high PO fit plus satisfaction plus commitment leads to greater work effort, including greater OCB, resulting in higher performance.

An additional area requiring more attention is the analysis of personal and organizational characteristics that might moderate the PO fit–outcome relationships. For instance, results of recent studies suggest that PO fit turns into a more influential variable when an individual has high self-esteem (Dineen, Ash & Noe, 2002). There is also preliminary evidence showing that relationships between managers and co-workers (Erdogan, Kraimer & Liden, 2004; Strauss et al., 2001) and even job performance (Shaw & Gupta, 2004) may influence the nature of the fit-in construct, thus moderating its relationship with resulting variables.

References


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