



# Perceived organizational support, organizational commitment and psychological well-being: A longitudinal study

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## ABSTRACT

Using longitudinal data ( $N = 220$ ), we examined the contribution of perceived organizational support and four mindsets of organizational commitment (affective, normative, perceived sacrifice associated with leaving and perceived lack of alternatives) to employee psychological well-being. In order to assess the contribution of support and commitment independently from workplace stressors, we controlled for the effects of role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload. Analyses showed affective organizational commitment to mediate a positive relationship between perceived organizational support and well-being. In addition, perceived organizational support negatively related to perceived lack of employment alternatives which, in turn, was negatively related to well-being. Normative commitment and perceived sacrifice associated with leaving were unrelated to well-being. The implications of these findings are discussed under the lenses of social exchange and conservation of resources theories.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, workplace well-being has received increasing amounts of attention from researchers and practitioners. Research has highlighted the detrimental effects of stress and psychological distress on individuals and organizations, which include poor physical health, reduced performance, absenteeism, and turnover (e.g., Beehr, Jex, Stacy, & Murray, 2000; Danna & Griffin, 1999; de Croon, Sluiter, Blonk, Broersen, & Frings-Dresen, 2004; Hardy, Woods, & Wall, 2003). As prior research has focused on the causes and consequences of ill-health, less attention has been paid to *positive employee well-being* (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Schaufeli, 2004; Wright & Cropanzano, 2000). Well-being is worth investigating, however, not only because understanding employees' "optimal functioning" is likely beneficial to organizations, but because fostering employees' health, happiness and betterment are legitimate goals and ends in themselves (Schaufeli, 2004; Wright, 2003).

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships of perceived organizational support (POS) and organizational commitment with employee psychological well-being. Recent research on stress and well-being has been largely based on the job demands-resources model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) but has neglected the possibility that relationships and exchanges with the organization may explain employee well-being, independently from the influence of role/job stressors. Previous research has demonstrated that POS, i.e., employees' "global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being" (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986, p.501), relates positively to various facets of well-being (e.g., Dupre & Day, 2007; Jones, Smith, & Johnston, 2005; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Stamper & Johlke, 2003). In parallel, we know from research that organizational commitment relates to employee well-being (e.g., Cropanzano, Rupp, & Byrne, 2003; Irving & Coleman, 2003; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnitsky, 2002; Zickar, Gibby, & Jenny, 2004). We intend to extend that

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line of research by investigating the relationship of POS to well-being as mediated by organizational commitment, while controlling for the influence of three major workplace stressors, role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload (e.g., Beehr et al., 2000; King & Sethi, 1997).

The relationships of POS and organizational commitment to work behavior have been largely conceptualized within a social exchange perspective (Blau, 1964). That is, POS is thought to represent employees' belief that the organization is willing to reward them for the effort made on its behalf (Rhoades et al., 2002), which in turn would induce a felt obligation to reciprocate on their part (Gouldner, 1960). This leads to employees experiencing increased organizational commitment and engaging in behaviors that benefit the organization (Lavelle, Rupp, & Brockner, 2007). We propose that the social exchange approach to POS and commitment can be supplemented by principles from Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993) in order to better understand why they also contribute to employee psychological well-being. We argue that, in parallel to their social exchange benefits for the organization, POS and commitment shape the resources necessary for employees to carry out their responsibilities as members of the organization, and via this process explain employees' psychological well-being.

In the next few sections, we review the literature on POS, organizational commitment and psychological well-being. In so doing, we discuss how the principles of COR theory can be applied to understand POS's and commitment's roles in shaping employees' resource availability and capacities, hence influencing employee well-being. We also present and discuss our hypotheses within a research model (cf. Fig. 1) that accounts for the influence of three major workplace stressors, role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload.

## 2. POS and organizational commitment

Commitment is a "force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevance to one or more targets" (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001, p. 301). Meyer & Allen's, 1991 three-component model distinguishes between affective, normative, and continuance commitment. Affective commitment (AC) reflects an identification with and involvement in the organization, normative commitment (NC) stems from a sense of obligation, and continuance commitment (CC) is based on a perceived necessity to stay with the organization. Further work on the dimensionality of commitment suggests that CC contains two separate components: the perceived sacrifice associated with leaving, or "high sacrifice" (HS) and the perceived lack

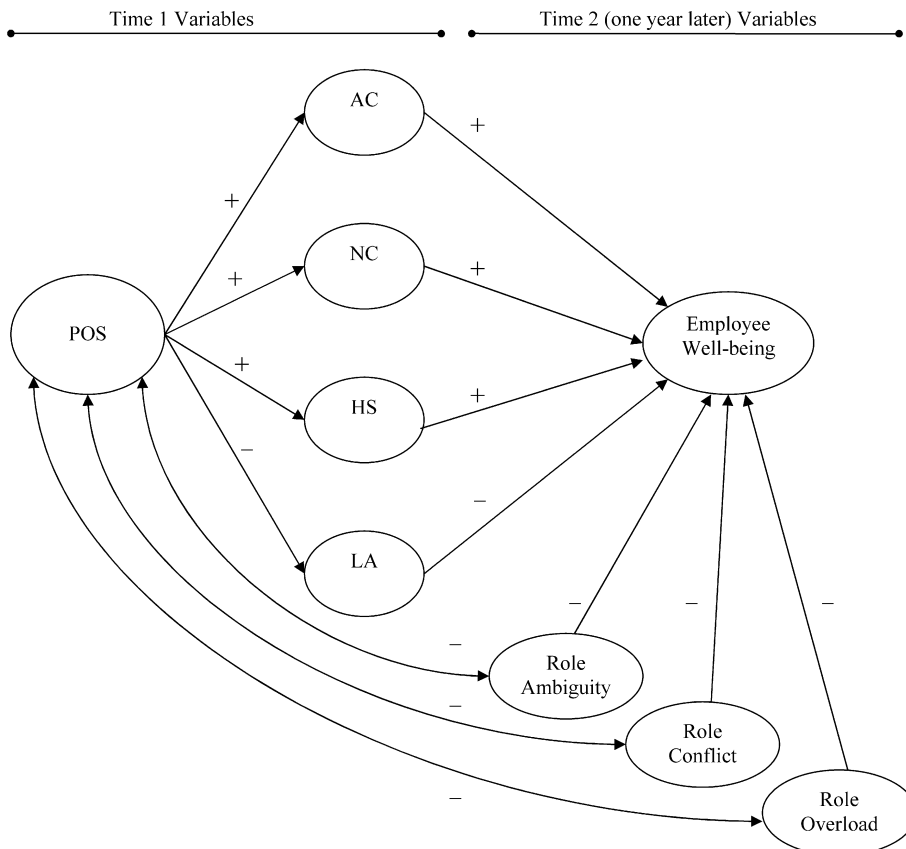


Fig. 1. Hypothesized model for the study.

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