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Organizational Goal Congruence and Job Attitudes Revisited

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ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL CONGRUENCE AND JOB ATTITUDES REVISITED

Person-organization fit is central to concepts such as Schneider's (1983) attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) paradigm. Researchers have argued that person-organization fit may be assessed by examining values (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991) and job requirements and individual competencies (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990). Following Schneider (1987), Vancouver and Schmitt (1991) identified member acceptance of organizational goals as a criterion of fit. As noted by Vancouver and Schmitt, goals reflect the values of both organization leaders (Schein, 1985) and members (Schneider, 1975), and thus "to measure organization member agreement on organizational goals is to measure a type of person-organization fit" (p. 334). They reported that member agreement on goals (i.e., goal congruence) was associated with positive job attitudes.

The purpose of the present study was to replicate and extend the work reported by Vancouver and Schmitt (1991). Specifically, we sought to: (a) replicate their findings of goal congruence scores as predictors of job satisfaction and organizational commitment using similar measures of those constructs; (b) determine if goal congruence scores would also be related to perceptions of organizational support and organizational politics; and (c) assess the extent to which goal congruence scores accounted for variance in job satisfaction and organizational commitment beyond that contributed by perceptions of organizational support and organizational politics.

Vancouver and Schmitt (1991) argued that higher levels of organizational goal congruence would be positively related to job attitudes. Below, we highlight some of their main points. First, in line with the interactionist perspective (Chatman, 1989), person-organization fit should be assessed in terms of both the person and the situation. On the person side, the individual employee may have his/her own goals for the organization. On the situation side, there is an aggregate or average assessment of members' goals.

Second, as noted by Schneider (1987), disagreement among employees on organizational goals may have negative effects on job satisfaction and commitment. A method for operationalizing this disagreement or fit comes from the constituency approach (e.g., Etzioni, 1961) to organizational goals, which focuses on organizational subsystems or units that are likely to share goals. Vancouver and Schmitt (1991, p. 335) argued that "goal congruence (or lack of it) between and within those units is likely to be important to the individuals in those groups."

Third, there may be two types of goal congruence: supervisor-subordinate goal congruence and member-constituency goal congruence. The former reflects agreement on goals between members at different levels in the organizational hierarchy, and the latter reflects agreement between an individual and all others within a single constituency.

Fourth, Vancouver and Schmitt (1991) emphasized that actual goal congruence rather than perceived goal congruence is conceptually relevant. They operationalized actual goal congruence using profile analysis (the *D* statistic; Cronbach & Gleser, 1953) to assess both absolute and relative differences between and among organization personnel. Supervisor-subordinate goal congruence was based on comparison of the member and his/her supervisor on ratings of importance of a set of goals for the organization. Member-constituency goal congruence was based on comparisons of goal importance of a nonsupervisor with all other nonsupervisors in that organizational unit.

One of Vancouver and Schmitt's (1991) findings was somewhat surprising. They found that member-constituency goal congruence was more highly related to favorable job attitudes than was supervisor-subordinate goal congruence. This result is inconsistent with both Reichers' (1986) report that commitment to management goals was positively related to organizational commitment and with several other studies in the leader-member exchange literature (e.g., Graen

& Schiemann, 1978). They explained this result as perhaps reflecting limited interactions between the members (who were teachers) and their supervisors (who were principals). Moreover, perhaps they did not actually tap "management goals," as the school principals were probably removed from higher management (i.e., school board, superintendent staff).

THE PRESENT STUDY

Attempting to replicate Vancouver and Schmitt's (1991) findings, we hypothesized that higher levels of goal congruence would be positively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. This notion is consistent with Abramis and Thomas' (1990) finding that communication about goals is related to employee satisfaction.

Eisenberger (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Eisenberger, Fasolo & Davis-LaMastro, 1990) has found that employees form global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization is supportive of them and that perceived organizational support is related to increased commitment, innovation, and reduced absenteeism. Batten and Schwab (1965, p. 13) wrote that individuals "engage in company politics because they believe that they can best achieve what they want in a devious, indirect, and underhanded way." Similarly, Kacmar and Ferris (1991) conceptualized organizational politics to be a negative for the organization and to include behaviors such as going along to get ahead rather than attempting to do things correctly and the perceptions that exchange elements rather than merit underlie pay and promotion. Agreeing that goal congruence may be an indicator of person-organization fit, we hypothesized that goal congruence would be positively related to employee perceptions of organizational support and negatively related to perceptions of organizational politics. Employees whose goals for the organization are similar to others in their unit are likely to receive and perceive greater organizational support, because they are working to achieve goals of greater consensus. Similarly, individuals whose goals for the organization are similar to others in their unit are likely to experience and perceive less political behavior, because individuals may be working with more common and less conflicting agendas.

METHOD

Subjects and Procedure

Questionnaires were mailed to all 2,103 employees of the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center. One thousand eighty-three (53.8%) employees (61.5% males and 38.5% females) returned completed questionnaires by mail. Because of criteria for representation of organizational units, analyses were conducted on a sample of 849 nonsupervisors, 103 supervisors, and 39 managers. Included were biodata items assessing minority status, age, tenure, supervisory status, education, and pay grade. About 20% of the responding employees classified themselves as members of a minority racial group. Respondent ages were: 17 to 29 (7.9%), 30 to 39 (23.0%), 40 to 49 (39.0%), 50 to 59 (26.6%) and 60+ years (3.5%). Responses to an item assessing years in the organization at the current site were: less than one year (12.1%), 1 to 3 years (25.9%), 4 to 10 years (26.0%), 11 to 15 years (14.6%), and 16 or more years of service (21.4%). Supervisory status reported by the respondents were: nonsupervisor (86.6%), supervisor (9.5%), and manager (3.9%). The sample was relatively well educated: 12 years or less of formal education (12.9%), 13 to 15 years (51.7%), 16 years (24.5%), and 17 or more years (10.9%). Pay scales used by the Federal Government are based upon grade level. Responses to a grade level item were: levels 1 to 4 (12.0%), levels 5 to 7 (19.2%), levels 8 to 10 (9.4%), levels 11 to 13 (43.3%), and levels 14 and higher (16.1%).

Measures

The importance of five different non-operational goals (March & Simon, 1958) were assessed: (a) "upgrade physical working conditions"; (b) "achieve excellence in aviation-related training"; (c) "increase efficiency and cost effectiveness"; (d) "increase equal opportunity"; and (e) "achieve outstanding customer service to the FAA and aviation community." Employees were asked to describe the importance of the listed

organization's goals on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = "of no importance"; 2 = "of very little importance"; 3 = "of some importance"; 4 = "of considerable importance"; and 5 = "of primary importance"). These goals were selected from twelve organizational employees' prioritized lists of organizational goals and from results of content analyses of organizational newsletters. The goals with highest priorities given by the employees and appearing most prominently in the newsletters were selected. The means and standard deviations of the goal importance responses to each of the five goals among the nonsupervisors, supervisors, and managers are presented in Table 1.

Job satisfaction was measured by: (a) a single item scale presented on a 5-point, Likert-type response scale (1 = "very dissatisfied"; to 5 = "very satisfied"), "Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your job?" and (b) the validated (McNichols, Stahl, & Manley, 1978) 4-item Hoppock (1935) job satisfaction scale presented with five rather than seven alternatives in order to fit on the available answer sheets. High scores reflect feelings of high job satisfaction. The means, standard deviations, and internal consistency reliability estimates (Cronbach's alpha) for these and the other scales are presented in Table 2.

The Hrebiniak and Alutto (1972) 4-item instrument was employed to assess organizational commitment. This scale measures the workers' calculative involvement with the organization by assessing workers' propensity to leave the organization as a function of alternative inducements (i.e., continuance commitment). High scores reflect greater commitment. Support was assessed by the Eisenberger, et al. (1986) 16-item short form of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support. This scale measures employees' general perceptions about the extent to which the organization values their contributions and well-being. High scores reflect perceptions of greater organizational support.

Organizational politics was measured by the 12-item Kacmar and Ferris (1991) Perceptions of Organizational Politics Scale. High scores reflect perceptions of greater levels of politics in the organization.

Goal Congruence Analyses

Following Vancouver and Schmitt (1991), we employed the Cronbach and Gleser (1953) *D* statistic profile score as the goal congruence measure. The present study differed from the Vancouver and Schmitt (1991) study in the measurement of supervisor-subordinate goal congruence. Vancouver and Schmitt were able to assess goal congruence between a school teacher and his/her principal (i.e., immediate supervisor). Because responses were anonymous, we were only able to calculate congruence scores between a nonsupervisor and the average goal importance for all supervisors (or managers) aggregated for a particular organizational unit. In addition, whereas Vancouver and Schmitt (1991) reported two levels (i.e., teacher and principal), we examined three levels, namely nonsupervisor, first-level supervisor, and manager (second-level supervisor or above) within units.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As shown in Table 1, there were significant but slight mean differences between nonsupervisors and supervisors/managers on the perceived importance for each goal: The nonsupervisors reported a lower level of goal importance.

The intercorrelation matrix is presented in Table 2. Confirming our hypotheses, the pattern of relationships was consistent with the trend reported by Vancouver and Schmitt (1991): Goal congruence scores were positively related to favorable job attitudes.

Contrary to results reported by Vancouver and Schmitt (1991), nonsupervisor-supervisor goal congruence scores were more strongly related to the job attitudes than nonsupervisor-nonsupervisor congruence. We assessed the relative contributions of the goal congruences by: (a) partialling out the effects of

both nonsupervisor-supervisor and nonsupervisor-manager congruence from the relationships between nonsupervisor-nonsupervisor congruence and the job attitudes, and (b) partialling out nonsupervisor-nonsupervisor congruence from the relationships of nonsupervisor-supervisor and nonsupervisor-manager congruences with the job attitudes. As indicated by the partial correlations shown in Table 2, only the nonsupervisor-supervisor congruence scores remained significantly, albeit weakly, related to the job attitudes. This is consistent with Vancouver and Schmitt's (1991) findings.

Vancouver and Schmitt (1991) addressed concerns expressed by Johns (1981) about possible spurious relationships between difference scores and the variables of interest. They entered the principal and teacher goal ratings into equations predicting job satisfaction and commitment, followed by supervisor-subordinate goal congruence scores. They found that the increments of R^2 (ΔR^2) after entering the goal congruence scores were significant (e.g., .017 for job satisfaction). We performed similar analyses for each type of goal congruence and found effect sizes ranging from .017 for nonsupervisor-supervisor congruence scores with Hoppock job satisfaction scores to .048 for nonsupervisor-supervisor congruence scores with politics scores.

To determine the variance in the congruence-job attitudes relationships that may be contributed by perceptions of organizational politics and organizational support, partial correlations were computed. As shown in Table 3, very little variance remained after politics and support perceptions were partialled out. For example, the relationship between nonsupervisor-supervisor congruence scores and Hoppock job satisfaction scores declined from a zero-order correlation of .33 to first-order correlations of .11, partialling out politics scores, and .09, partialling out support scores. When both were partialled out, the second-order coefficient was .07.

CONCLUSIONS

We emphasize several caveats before discussing the results. First, the subjects most likely responded to the survey in one sitting; thus, these data may be subject to common method variance. Second, the civilian government employees sampled in the present study may not be representative of private sector or military organizations, and replication in other settings is needed. Third, these data were cross-sectional. A longitudinal design might permit a more accurate assessment of the formulation and relationships of job attitudes and goal congruence. Fourth, whereas Vancouver and Schmitt (1991) assessed 14 organizational goals, we examined 5 goals. However, the effect sizes of the relationships between our measures of person-organization fit were similar to those reported previously (O'Reilly, et al., 1991; Vancouver & Schmitt, 1991).

The results presented here replicate the Vancouver and Schmitt (1991) findings, with the exception that nonsupervisor-supervisor goal congruence scores were most strongly related to favorable job attitudes. However, the partialling out of organizational support and organizational politics from the relationships of goal congruence with job satisfaction and commitment accounted for most of the variance. One implication of these results may be that the *D* statistic may not be the most useful approach to examine goal congruence or person-organization fit. An alternative may be the Q-sort procedure used by Caldwell and O'Reilly (1990; O'Reilly, et al., 1991); however, as their effect sizes were similar to those reported using the *D* statistic, it may not be of much greater utility. On the other hand, it is possible that person-organization fit as operationalized by goal congruence may be of little salience in the development of job satisfaction and commitment when compared to other situational factors. Perhaps person-organization fit is less important than previously thought. Research is needed to further explore goal congruence and other measures of person-organization fit. Studies should also examine the comparative strengths of goal congruence versus perceptions of the organization as predictors of job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

TABLE 1. Goal Importance for Non-Supervisors, Supervisors, and Managers

		NonSupv.		Supv.		Managers	
		Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
1.	Upgrade physical working conditions	3.20	.96	3.36	.91	3.54	.91
2.	Achieve excellence in training	3.98	1.01	4.33	.82	4.03	.93
3.	Efficiency and cost effectiveness	3.77	.96	4.03	.76	3.79	1.08
4.	Equal opportunity	3.37	1.09	3.49	.87	3.77	.99
5.	Outstanding customer service	4.24	.95	4.48	.70	4.53	.88

TABLE 2. Scale Characteristics and Intercorrelation Matrix

Variable	*Mean*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5
1. Hoppock Sat.	14.06	2.75	(.79)				
2. Commitment	13.64	4.09	.66	(.85)			
3. Global Sat.	3.58	1.16	.67	.48	(NA)		
4. Org'l Politics	39.29	11.58	-.62	-.59	-.55	(.93)	
5. Org'l Support	49.20	14.03	.68	.60	.58	-.84	(.95)
6. Nonsupv. - Nonsupv.	2.02	.90	.29	.29	.31	-.38	.36
7. Nonsupv. - Nonsupv. 1			-.07	-.07	-.03	.07	-.08
8. Nonsupv. - Supervisor	2.09	1.04	.33	.33	.34	-.41	.40
9. Nonsupv. - Supervisor 2			.17	.17	.14	-.19	.21
10. Nonsupv. - Manager	2.17	.95	.28	.28	.29	-.36	.34
11. Nonsupv. - Manager 2			.02	.02	.01	-.03	.03

Note: Cronbach's alpha is shown within parentheses. Nonsupv. - Nonsupv. = congruence between a nonsupervisor and other nonsupervisors (at least 4) in his/her unit; Nonsupv. - Supv. = congruence between a nonsupervisor and supervisors (at least 4) in his/her unit; Supv. - Manager = congruence between a nonsupervisor and managers (at least 2) in his/her unit. Higher values for congruence scores indicate higher levels of agreement. Correlation coefficients of .09 or greater are significant (one-tailed, $p < .01$). 1 = Partialling out both nonsupervisor-supervisor and nonsupervisor-manager congruence. 2 = Partialling out nonsupervisor-nonsupervisor congruence.

TABLE 3. Zero-Order, First-Order, and Second-Order Correlations Between Goal Congruence and Job Attitudes Partialling Out Organizational Politics and Support

Predictor Variable	Hoppock Job Satisfaction	Organizational Commitment
Commitment (Zero-Order)	.66	
1st-Order, Partialling Out Politics	.47	
1st-Order, Partialling Out Support	.43	
2nd-Order, Partialling Out Politics & Support	.42	
Nonsupervisor-Nonsupervisor Congruence (Zero-Order)	.29	.29
1st-Order, Partialling Out Politics	.08	.10
1st-Order, Partialling Out Support	.07	.11
2nd-Order, Partialling Out Politics & Support	.06	.08
Nonsupervisor-Supervisor Congruence (Zero-Order)	.33	.33
1st-Order, Partialling Out Politics	.11	.12
1st-Order, Partialling Out Support	.09	.12
2nd-Order, Partialling Out Politics & Support	.07	.10
Nonsupervisor-Manager Congruence (Zero-Order)	.28	.28
1st-Order, Partialling Out Politics	.08	.09
1st-Order, Partialling Out Support	.07	.10
2nd-Order, Partialling Out Politics & Support	.05	.07

Note: Correlation coefficients of .09 or greater are significant (one-tailed, $p < .01$).

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