

## INTRODUCTION

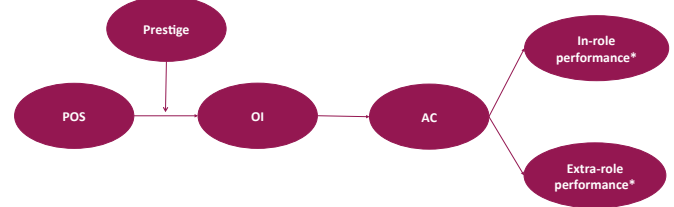
### Theoretical framework

Over the past decades, the dominant approach has been to conceptualize the relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and affective organizational commitment (AC) in terms of **social exchange processes**. Based on the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), organizational support theory holds that POS increases AC by creating an obligation to care about the organization's welfare and to help it to reach its goals (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001). Empirical evidence has supported the view that reciprocity and social exchange processes lie at the core of this relationship (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001).

However, some scholars have suggested that some aspects of the employee-employer relationship might be better understood in terms of self-definition and self-categorization, and not in terms of reciprocity and exchange (e.g., Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). Because POS enhances feelings of self-worth and esteem, an analysis in terms of **social identity perspective** would thus be necessary to complement the social exchange perspective in order to fully understand its impact on AC (Rhoades et al., 2001). Despite these theoretical propositions, empirical research has not examined how social identity processes play a role in the relationship between POS and AC.

Filling this gap, the objective of the present research is to empirically investigate how the social identity processes may provide a new insight into this relationship. More precisely, we examine how two specific variables rooted in the social identity theory, i.e. organizational identification (OI) and organizational prestige, contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between POS and AC. Furthermore, we examine how these mechanisms related to the social identity theory and underlying the POS-AC relationship extend to the prediction of employees' performance at work.

### Hypotheses



Note. POS = perceived organizational support; OI = organizational identification; AC = affective organizational commitment. \* Assessed from supervisor.

H1: OI mediates the relationship between POS and AC

H2: The relationship between POS and OI is moderated by organizational prestige

H3a: AC mediates the relationship between OI and in-role performance

H3b: AC mediates the relationship between OI and extra-role performance

## STUDY 1 : Test of H1 and H2

### Method

**Sample:** 253 employees from an international engineering consultancy company (response rate = 25.3%)

**Procedure:** A cross-sectional study (questionnaires)

**Measures:** POS: 4 items (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986) ( $\alpha = .79$ )

Organizational prestige: 3 items (2 items from Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003 and 1 item created for the study) ( $\alpha = .84$ )

OI: 6 items (Mael & Ashforth, 1992) ( $\alpha = .84$ )

AC: 5 items (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993) ( $\alpha = .80$ )

## STUDY 2 : Test of H1, H3a, and H3b

### Method

**Sample:** 179 employees from the Belgian postal service company (response rate = 39.78%)

**Procedure:** A cross-sectional study (questionnaires)

**Measures:** POS: 8 items (Eisenberger et al., 1986) ( $\alpha = .84$ )

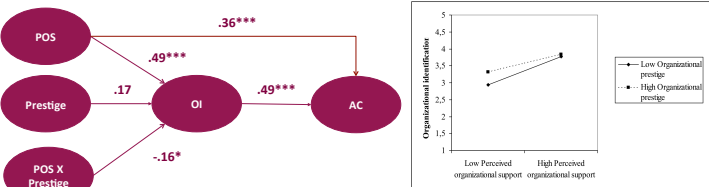
OI: 6 items (Mael & Ashforth, 1992) ( $\alpha = .82$ )

AC: 5 items (Meyer et al., 1993) ( $\alpha = .81$ )

In-role performance (assessed from supervisor): 5 items (Williams & Anderson, 1991) ( $\alpha = .90$ )

Extra-role performance (assessed from supervisor): 5 items (1 item from Eisenberger et al., 2001; 1 item from van Dyme, Graham, & Dienesch, 1994; and 3 items from Eisenberger et al., 2010) ( $\alpha = .89$ )

### Results



Note. POS = perceived organizational support; OI = organizational identification;

AC = affective organizational commitment.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

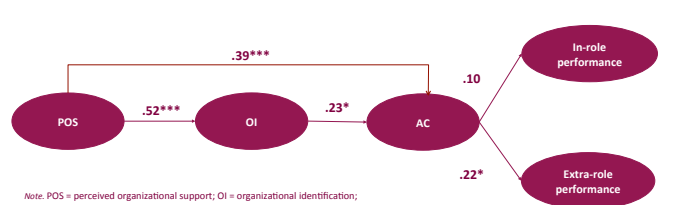
→ SEM: Although the hypothesized model fits the data well, a model which adds a path between POS and AC is significantly superior to the hypothesized model (Final model:  $\chi^2(178) = 361.11$ ; RMSEA = .06; NNFI = .96; CFI = .97)

→ OI partially mediates the relationship between POS and AC (Indirect effect = .21, BCa 95% CI = [.14; .29]) → H1 is supported

→ Organizational prestige moderates the relationship between POS and AC → H2 is supported

→ The indirect effect of POS on AC via OI is significant both when organizational prestige is high (Indirect effect = .11, BCa 95% CI = [.05; .18]) and when organizational prestige is low (Indirect effect = .21, BCa 95% CI = [.13; .31])

### Results



Note. POS = perceived organizational support; OI = organizational identification;

AC = affective organizational commitment.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

→ SEM: Although the hypothesized model fits the data well, a model which adds a path between POS and AC is significantly superior to the hypothesized model (Final model:  $\chi^2(399) = 846.09$ ; RMSEA = .08; NNFI = .91; CFI = .92)

→ OI partially mediates the relationship between POS and AC (Indirect effect = .16, BCa 95% CI = [.07; .26]) → H1 is supported

→ AC has no effect on in-role performance → H3a is not supported

→ AC totally mediates the relationship between OI and extra-role performance (Indirect effect = .06, BCa 95% CI = [.01; .14]) → H3b is supported

## DISCUSSION

### Summary

- OI partially mediates the relationship between POS and AC → consistent with (a) the assumption that identity processes play a role in the relationship between POS and AC (Lee & Peccei, 2007; Rhoades et al., 2001), and (b) previous studies in which POS was found to be positively related to OI (e.g., Sluss, Klimchak, & Holmes, 2008).
- Organizational prestige moderates the relationship between POS and OI → consistent with Tyler and Blader (2002) who found that employees are more strongly influenced by their own evaluation of the status of the organization as compared to evaluations based on external references.
- AC mediates the relationship between OI and extra-role performance but is not related to in-role performance → consistent with (a) the idea that AC is a more proximal determinant of attitudes at work than OI is (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008), (b) the idea that in-role performance is less affected by the employee-employer relationship than extra-role performance (van Knippenberg, 2000), (c) previous research indicating that AC is not significantly related to in-role performance (Vandewalle, van Dyme, & Kostova, 1995).
- **Limitations and future research:** (a) cross-sectional design → longitudinal studies with repeated measures are needed to confirm the causality of the relationships, (b) generalizability → replication of the studies in other work settings, and (c) common method bias.

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