

# Perceived organizational support and affective organizational commitment: Moderating influence of perceived organizational competence

KYOUNG YONG KIM<sup>1</sup>, ROBERT EISENBERGER<sup>2\*</sup> AND KIBOK BAIK<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Management, College of Business, City University of Hong Kong, Kowloon, Hong Kong, China

<sup>2</sup>Department of Psychology, University of Houston, Houston, Texas, U.S.A.

<sup>3</sup>College of Business Administration, Kookmin University, Seoul, Korea

## Summary

Perceived organizational support (POS), involving employees' perception that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being, has been found to be the work experience most strongly linked to their emotional bond to the organization (affective organizational commitment, or AC). We suggest that employees' perception concerning the organization's ability to achieve its goals and objectives (perceived organizational competence, or POC) may enhance this relationship by more effectively fulfilling socio-emotional needs. We conducted three studies with employees in the United States and South Korea to assess the interactive relationship between POS and POC and their distinctive antecedents. Our hierarchical linear modeling and ordinary least squared regression results showed that POC strengthened the relationship between POS and AC and that this association carried over to extra-role performance. Further, leader initiating structure contributed more to POC than to POS, whereas leader consideration contributed more to POS than to POC. These findings suggest POC plays an important role in moderating the relationship between POS and AC. Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

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Consider two new fourth-grade teachers employed in different schools who receive substantial praise and recognition from school administrators for the fine job they are doing. Based on past theory and empirical findings, we might expect that the teachers would be likely to develop the perception that their respective schools highly value their contributions and care about their well-being (perceived organizational support, or POS; Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Moreover, POS would likely enhance each teacher's emotional bond to his or her school (i.e., affective organizational commitment, or AC; Meyer & Allen, 1991). However, what if one of the schools was much less competent and effective than the other in fulfilling its goals and objectives? Say School A was run professionally and efficiently. By contrast, in School B, student schedules were usually incomplete at the start of each term. Textbooks and supplies often arrived late and sometimes not at all. The antiquated telephone system often malfunctioned. Computerized data were periodically lost because of the inexperienced support staff, and on and on. Other factors being equal, would POS lead to equivalent levels of AC for the two teachers? Or would the teachers' differing perceptions of organizational competence influence the POS–AC relationship?

AC has been considered a basic determinant of employees' dedication and loyalty (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). Accordingly, literature reviews report that AC is related to increased conventional and extra-role performance, lessened absenteeism and turnover, and increased well-being (Meyer & Maltin, 2010; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002; Riketta, 2002). Because of the important outcomes of AC for organizations and employees, attention has increased to AC's antecedents. Meta-analyses report that work

\*Correspondence to: Robert Eisenberger, Department of Psychology, University of Houston, 126 Heyne Building, Houston, Texas 77204, U.S.A.  
E-mail: reisenberger2@uh.edu

experiences are the main drivers of AC, with POS showing the strongest relationship with AC (Meyer et al., 2002). According to the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Gouldner, 1960), employees act on the basis of the norm of reciprocity to seek balance between the favorableness of their orientation toward the organization and the organization's orientation toward them. Thus, the high regard and caring conveyed by POS should help fulfill socio-emotional needs and be repaid, in part, by AC.

Yet, the value of POS to employees, and therefore its contribution to AC, may be influenced by employee perceptions regarding the competence of the organization in meeting its goals and objectives. Perceived competence has been considered important by both social perception and trust researchers. Competence is a primary dimension of social perception, including perceptions regarding individuals, groups and organizations (Aaker, Garbinsky, & Vohs, 2012; Aaker, Vohs, & Mogilner, 2010; Cuddy et al., 2009; Kervyn, Fiske, & Malone, 2012; Yzerbyt, Kervyn, & Judd, 2008). Judging individuals and collectives to be competent makes them valued targets for strengthened social relationships (Cuddy, Glick, & Beninger, 2011). Such perceived competence or ability has also been considered a component of trustworthiness (Mayer & Davis, 1999). An important aspect of the trustworthiness of the organization is its ability to carry out intended actions (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995).

Perceived organizational competence (POC) may enhance the value of POS to employees for several reasons. POS from organizations viewed as highly competent may be taken by employees as a more accurate indication of their accomplishments and thus more effectively meet their need for esteem (Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Lynch, 1998; Blau, 1964; Hill, 1987). Also, employees may also prefer to identify more with a highly competent organization, helping to meet their need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Further, highly competent organizations may be more effective in preventing and ameliorating stressful situations such as work overload and role conflict. Therefore, POC may strengthen the relationship between POS and AC.

The present research examines differential antecedents of POC and POS as well as the moderating influence of POC on the relationship of POS with AC and the outcomes of AC (Figure 1). Because leaders act as agents of the organization in relating to followers (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Levinson, 1965), supervisors' treatment of employees should influence POC and POS. Two dimensions of leadership behavior, initiating structure and consideration (Judge, Piccolo, & Ilies, 2004), may be differentially related to POC and POS. Leader initiating structure concerns clear specification of followers' roles and thus reflects the ability of the organization (POC) more than POS. In contrast, considerate leaders are empathetic (Fleishman & Salter, 1963) and thus better able to meet the socio-emotional needs of followers (Judge et al., 2004). Such fulfillment of socio-emotional needs would be more indicative of POS to employees than of POC.

Our findings have important implications for organizational support theory and the development of AC. First, from the social exchange perspective on which organizational support theory is partly based (Kurtessis et al., in press), high POC may increase the value to employees of POS by more effectively meeting socio-emotional needs

### Conceptual Model

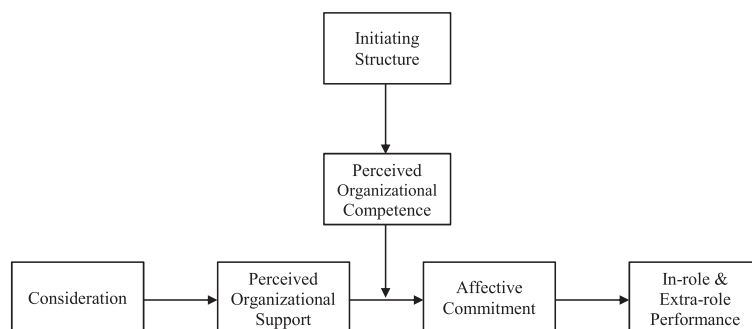


Figure 1. Conceptual model

and creating a stronger obligation to reciprocate with a favorable orientation toward the organization. Consistent with the social exchange view that fulfilling many socio-emotional needs depends on the worth ascribed to the benefactor (Blau, 1964), competence and perhaps other organization characteristics appear to play an important role in enhancing the value of POS. Second, our research finds that the positive influence of high POS plus high POC can be readily implemented by distinctive aspects of leadership (leader consideration and initiating structure, respectively), with positive results for extra-role performance. Although POS may be the strongest driver of AC, its influence may be enhanced substantially by organizational practices that promote POC.

### **Perceived organizational support and affective commitment**

Organizational support theory holds that the tendency of employees to view the organization as having a favorable or unfavorable orientation toward them is abetted by their personification of the organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Levinson (1965) noted that because the organization sets rules, policies, and norms that provide continuity, is responsible for the actions of its agents, specifies role behaviors, and exerts influence on individual employees through its agents, employees are prone to view the organization as having humanlike characteristics. Employees' personification of the organization is fundamental to POS because it provides a way for employees to simplify and summarize many of the varied interactions they have with the organization and its representatives. Because employees view the organization as a powerful humanlike entity with a favorable or unfavorable orientation toward them, POS serves to fulfill socio-emotional needs (e.g., esteem, affiliation, and emotional support) and leads to AC (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011).

POS is associated with employees' psychological well-being, their favorable orientation toward their work and organization, and behaviors helpful to the organization (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Kurtessis et al., in press; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Although POS and AC are strongly related (Meyer et al., 2002), they are conceptually and empirically distinct. Wayne et al. (2009) noted that POS is an affect-free cognition related to attributions concerning the favorableness of the organization's orientation toward the employee whereas AC, as conceived by Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), is an affect-laden mind state. Numerous studies have distinguished POS and AC, using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA; e.g., Armstrong-Stassen & Schlosser, 2010; Bambacas & Bordia, 2009; Byrne, Pitts, Chiaburu, & Steiner, 2011). Concerning the direction of the relationship between POS and AC, Rhoades, Eisenberger, and Armeli (2001) provided evidence that POS was positively related to change in AC.

According to organizational support theory, POS leads to AC by social exchange and self-enhancement processes (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). Concerning social exchange, Eisenberger and Stinglhamber (2011) argued on the basis of the reciprocity norm that employees seek a balance in their exchange relationships with the organization by reciprocating POS with AC. When the organization is perceived to value and care about them (POS), employees feel obliged to return the caring by developing AC (Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Tripoli, 1997). Accordingly, employees' felt obligation has been found to mediate the relationship between POS and AC (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001). Regarding self-enhancement, organizational support theory holds that POS meets socio-emotional needs such as esteem, affiliation, and emotional support, leading to greater organizational identification which, in turn, enhances AC. Thus, organizational identification mediated the relationship between POS and AC (Marique, Stinglhamber, Desmette, Caesens, & De Zanet, 2013).

### **Moderating role of perceived organizational competence**

A meta-analysis found that the strength of the relationship between POS and AC was heterogeneous (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), which suggests that moderators may influence this relationship. Although a literature search indicates there are over 240 studies on the POS–AC relationship, few studies have examined possible contextual influences on this relationship. These studies have tended to focus on human resource (HR) practices such as job insecurity (Lee & Peccei, 2007) and job autonomy (Aubé, Rousseau, & Morin, 2007). For example, Aubé et al. (2007) found that the relationship between POS and AC is weakened by high work autonomy, which, the researchers reasoned, was because employees with low control over their work depend more on the organization for support than those with high control.

Based on organizational support theory (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011), employees' development of AC in response to POS may be affected by their assessment of the competence of the organization in meeting its objectives. A considerable amount of research on social perception carried out over the last decade indicates that competence/effectiveness, assessed by such descriptive adjectives as intelligent, efficient, creative, and capable, is one of the primary dimensions of social perception (Cuddy et al., 2009; Fiske, 1998; Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2006; Yzerbyt et al., 2008). This competence/effectiveness dimension involves the perception that the observed individual, group or organization can effectively achieve preferred goals and objectives. Others' achievements are an important determinant of perceived competence (Wojciszke, 1994). Most research on the social perception of competence has been carried out focusing on individuals and groups as targets (Fiske et al., 2006). However, consistent with organizational support theory's assumption that employees personify the organization in order to assess the value of increased effort on behalf of the organization and to meet socio-emotional needs (Eisenberger et al., 1986), individuals form perceptions of generalized competence of organizations (Aaker et al., 2010, 2012; Gao & Mattila, 2014; Kervyn, Chan, Malone, Korpusik, & Ybarra, 2014). For example, such organizations as Apple, Google, and Southwest Airlines are seen as highly competent (Aaker et al., 2010).

This view of social perception is aligned with trust research. Ability or competence is one of the most widely studied aspects of trustworthiness (Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007), referring to the characteristics of another individual, group, or organization that lead to an acceptance of risk in dealing with others (Mayer et al., 1995). Perceived ability refers to the knowledge, competencies, skills, and characteristics that supervisors (Colquitt & Rodell, 2011; Lapierre, 2007) and top management and the organization (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Mayer & Davis, 1999; Searle et al., 2011) need to accomplish goals or follow through on their intentions. Ability involves the "can do" aspect of trustworthiness (Colquitt et al., 2007). Consistent with social perception theorists, trust scholars have suggested that individuals form a belief of collective ability of organizations (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2014; Searle et al., 2011). Specifically, in the domain of trust research, POC or ability has been defined as the generalized competencies of organizations with which the organizations can effectively meet their goals and responsibilities (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009). In sum, two converging streams of theory suggest that employees form a global perception on organizational competence or ability.

POC is conceptually different from related constructs. POC refers to a global perception regarding the organization's ability to achieve objectives and goals. POC, as POS, is a reflective construct serving as the common cause of the indicators. POC should be distinguished from specific organizational attributes that contribute to this general perception such as various types of leadership, product/service quality, innovation, customer service, financial indicators of success, and so on. POC is not intended to be a formative construct in which different types of competence might be assessed diagnostically and combined additively. Certainly, such a diagnostic approach regarding organizational competence would be useful. However, we argue that (a) employees form a global perception of organizational competence (POC) that is not captured by a formative construct, (b) POC has a unidimensional property as demonstrated by factor analysis, and (c) POC has unique predictors and consequences that cannot be accounted for by a formative approach. POC should also be distinguished from perceived external prestige or image, which refers to "how an employee thinks outsiders view his or her organization" (Smidts, Pruyn, & van Riel, 2001). Although POC and external prestige may be related, external prestige is influenced by distinctive cultural values. For example, in entrepreneurial capitalist societies, high-technology organizations tend to have greater external prestige than government agencies or companies that maintain and repair the existing infrastructure. Further, external prestige is influenced by marketing techniques (Perrow, 1961), including well-publicized public service activities and advertising that emphasize the public value of the organization's product or service. POC should be also differentiated from what has been termed effectance motivation or the need for competence (Meyer & Maltin, 2010; White, 1959), involving the personal disposition to be effective in one's own activities. POC refers to a general perception concerning the effectiveness of the organization, whereas effectance motivation or the need for competence refers to a disposition to be personally effectual.

POC may strengthen the association between POS and AC by more completely satisfying various socio-emotional needs. First, employees may view POS from organizations deemed highly competent as a more accurate

indication of their accomplishments, better meeting their need for esteem (Armeli et al., 1998; Blau, 1964; Hill, 1987). Second, employees receiving POS from organizations viewed as very competent may have greater expectations of a stable, welcoming environment, further meeting their need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Additionally, membership in a competent organization may contribute to a more positive self-identity, thereby fulfilling one's need to belong. Third, employees with POS from organizations they view as highly competent may experience greater fulfillment of the need for emotional support (Armeli et al., 1998; Hill, 1987) because such organizations are more effective in assessing stressful situations and finding ways to provide aid and comfort in such situations.

On the other hand, it may be the case that, contrary to the present view, POS and POC act independently to improve AC. Employees might view highly competent organizations simply as having an increased capacity to deliver favorable or unfavorable treatment to employees irrespective of POS. As the moderating influence of POC on the relationship between POS and AC has not been examined in prior research, we studied this proposed association.

*Hypothesis 1:* POC moderates the relationship between POS and AC such that POS is more strongly associated with AC when POC is high than when it is low.

### **Affective commitment and job performance**

AC should increase employee satisfaction when the organization fulfills its goals and objectives (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Shore & Wayne, 1993). Because in-role and extra-role performance contribute to the organization's goals and objectives, employees with high AC should show increased in-role and extra-role performance, as has been found in meta-analytic reviews (Meyer et al., 2002; Riketta, 2002). Therefore, by enhancing AC, POS should lead to increased performance. Accordingly, AC has been found to mediate the association between POS and performance (Casimir, Ng, Wang, & Ooi, 2014). However, our hypothesized moderating influence of POC on the relationship between POS and AC should influence the indirect effect of POS on performance via AC (i.e., conditional indirect effect). That is, the increased AC resulting from POS should lead to greater in-role and extra-role performance when POC is high than when POC is low. Technically, this is a case of first-stage mediated moderation (Edwards & Lambert, 2007) in which the moderator (POC) influences the initial relationship between the independent variable (POS) and the mediator (AC), followed in the second stage by the influence of the mediator (AC) on the outcome variable (in-role and extra-role performance).

*Hypotheses 2 and 3:* The conditional indirect effects of POS on (H2) in-role and (H3) extra-role performance via AC are stronger when POC is high than when POC is low.

### **Differential antecedents of POS and POC**

Because supervisors act as organizational agents in directing subordinates' performance and coaching and rewarding them, employees ascribe many of the supervisor's actions to the organization as a whole. To the extent that POC enhances the relationship between POS and AC, it is important to understand possible distinctive antecedents of POS and POC. Two broad domains of leader behavior, initiating structure and consideration (Fleishman, 1973; Judge et al., 2004), are of particular interest because they may be differentially related to POC and POS.

Leaders who provide high initiating structure establish clear expectations and standards for subordinates' roles and performance (Bass, 1990). They also develop uniform work procedures and afford communication channels with subordinates to effectively accomplish tasks and goals. Buchanan (1974) and Morris and Steers (1980) argued that formalizing rules and procedures that prescribe and coordinate the activities of the individual employee may enhance perceptions of organizational dependability and thereby contribute to organizational commitment. Such effective delineation of work responsibilities, which result in high job performance (Judge et al., 2004), may be seen as indicative of organization's competence as supervisors are viewed by subordinates to be agents of the



organization (e.g., Eisenberger, Aselage, Sucharski, & Jones, 2004). Therefore, leader initiating structure should be more strongly associated with POC than with POS.

By comparison, leader consideration involves expressed empathy, caring, respect, and support for subordinates (Bass, 1990; Fleishman & Salter, 1963). Considerate supervisors and managers have been characterized as friendly and approachable, receptive to subordinates' new ideas and dissenting opinions, and offering empowerment and autonomy (Bass, 1990; DeRue, Nahrgang, Wellman, & Humphrey, 2011; Judge et al., 2004; Lambert, Tepper, Carr, Holt, & Barelka, 2012; Oldham & Cummings, 1996). Such communication of positive valuation from supervisors, as organizational representatives, should be strongly indicative of POS, but not necessarily so strongly indicative of organizational competence.

*Hypothesis 4:* Leader consideration is more positively related to POS than to POC.

*Hypothesis 5:* Leader initiating structure is more positively related to POC than to POS.

We carried out three studies to investigate the moderating influence of POC on the relationship between POS and AC. Study 1 examined the moderating influence of POC on the relationship between POS and AC, with consequences for in-role and extra-role performance. Study 2 involved a systematic replication of the first study with a longitudinal design to provide better evidence regarding the causal ordering of the relationship between POS and AC. Study 3 examined initiating structure and consideration as differential antecedents of POC and POS.

## Study 1

### *Method*

#### **Sample and procedures**

Nine hundred and eighteen invitations to participate in the online survey were disseminated to employees of a local governmental organization in the southwestern region of the United States. Employees were invited to participate through their organization e-mail system and completed the survey during work hours. A total of 363 (40 percent) employees responded. The employees held a variety of jobs: health services (57 percent), police (26 percent), maintenance (9 percent), informational technology (5 percent), and emergency services (3 percent).

Thirty-six percent of participants were male, had an average age of 48.7 years, and had an average tenure of 11.5 years. Fifty-nine percent graduated from college, 29 percent took some college courses, 9 percent completed high school, and 3 percent did not complete high school. These employees were evaluated by 143 supervisors (on average, 2.5 employees per supervisor), 40 percent of whom were male, with an average age of 51.4 years and an average tenure of 15.1 years.

#### **Measures**

Except where otherwise noted in this and the following studies, employees responded using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Interviews with HR managers and employees indicated that organization members identified the department as their primary employer rather than the city government in which the department was embedded. Selection of organization members' department or division as a primary organizational unit for a study in a loosely structured or conglomerate-type organization is useful when employees view the embedded unit as their primary employer (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). Therefore, we examined attitudes of employees toward their department instead of the overall city government.

*Perceived organizational competence* ( $\alpha = .95$ ). We used the six-item person perception scale (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002) to measure POC, using the employee's department as the referent. While Fiske et al. (2002) used the scale to measure how one thinks the referent is viewed by others in terms of competence, subsequent studies (e.g., Aaker et al., 2010, 2012; Gao & Mattila, 2014) used the perceived competence scale to assess the extent to which one thinks the referent is competent (i.e., personal beliefs). As our theoretical argument is concerned with personal beliefs about the referent competence, consistent with the previous studies, we asked participants to rate the extent to which each adjective (competent, confident, capable, efficient, intelligent, and skillful) applied to their department using a 5-point Likert-type anchor set (1 = *slightly*, 5 = *extremely*).

We have argued that the conceptualization of organizational competence in the social cognition literature is essentially the same as the conceptualization of organizational ability in the organizational trustworthiness literature. Because our empirical measure of POC was derived from the social cognition literature, we carried out a scale validation study to examine its equivalence with the organizational ability measure most commonly used in the trustworthiness literature (Mayer & Davis, 1999). We disseminated paper surveys to 122 employees from three organizations (bank, department store, and educational service) in South Korea. One hundred employees completed surveys (return rate = 82 percent). They were asked to rate the six-item POC scale ( $\alpha = .94$ ) that we used for our main study and the six-item perceived ability scale ( $\alpha = .96$ ) (Mayer & Davis, 1999). Consistent with our expectation, POC shared most of the variance with perceived ability ( $r = .93$ ,  $p < .01$ ). We performed a CFA to examine the discriminant validity of the two variables. The results showed that a two-factor model treating two variables distinctively did not have a significantly better fit than a one-factor model combining the two variables ( $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 1.60$ ,  $ns$ ; CFI = 0.95; TLI = 0.93; RMSEA = 0.12 for both models). Thus, POC and perceived ability are not distinguishable, and they are essentially the same.

*Perceived organizational support* ( $\alpha = .90$ ). Because of time constraints, employees were asked to rate six high-loading items from the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS; Eisenberger et al., 1986). Extensive evidence for the scale's unidimensionality, reliability, and predictive validity has been reported (Kurtessis et al., in press; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

*Affective commitment* ( $\alpha = .77$ ). Employees were administered Allen and Meyer's (1990) six-item AC scale. Meta-analytic evidence for the scale's high reliability and predictive validity has been found (Meyer et al., 2002).

*Performance*. Supervisors were asked to rate five in-role performance items ( $\alpha = .89$ ; Lynch, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 1999) and five extra-role performance items ( $\alpha = .93$ ; Lynch et al., 1999) for each of their subordinates. Sample items for in-role performance include "this employee performs tasks that are expected of him/her" and "this employee fulfills responsibilities specified in his/her job description." Sample items for extra-role performance include "this employee keeps well-informed where his/her opinion might benefit the Department" and "this employee takes action to protect the Department from potential problems." A 5-point Likert-type anchor set was used to rate each item (1 = *disagree*, 5 = *very strongly agree*).

*Control variables*. Employees' gender, educational level, and tenure have been found to be significantly related to AC (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 2002). Thus, based on previous research, we controlled for employees' gender, tenure, and educational level to avoid alternative explanations for the relationship between POS and AC. Supporting the control of those variables, Meyer et al.'s (2002) meta-analysis shows that employee's gender, educational level, and tenure are widely used demographic variables in a commitment study.

## Results

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, and correlations. As anticipated, POS was positively related to AC ( $r = .67$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and AC was positively related to extra-role performance ( $r = .15$ ,  $p < .01$ ). However, AC was not significantly related to in-role performance ( $r = .05$ , *ns*).

### Discriminant validity

Because both POS and POC measure employees' perceptions about their organization, it is important to determine whether or not POC is distinguishable from POS. To examine the distinctiveness of POS and POC, we conducted a CFA. The two-factor model showed significantly better fit than the one-factor model, which combined the indicators from POS and POC,  $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 636.22$ ,  $p < .01$ . The two-factor model also provided better fit index values than the one-factor model (CFI two-factor model = 0.99 and one-factor model = 0.82; TLI two-factor model = 0.98 and one-factor model = 0.77; RMSEA two-factor model = 0.05 and one-factor model = 0.19). These results suggest that POS and POC are distinct constructs.

We next conducted a series of CFAs to examine the distinctiveness of the five constructs that assessed employees' perceptions and performance: POC, POS, AC, in-role performance, and extra-role performance. We compared the fit of five nested models using chi-squared difference tests (Bentler & Bonett, 1980). The most differentiated, five-factor model fit the data well (CFI = 0.95; TLI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.057) and significantly better than the alternative models. Each indicator had a high loading (range: 0.36–0.92) on its respective factor. Therefore, we treated the five constructs as distinct in subsequent analyses.

### Test of hypotheses

Because our dataset was multilevel in nature, we used hierarchical linear modeling for the analysis, with grand mean centering of all predictors. As shown in Table 2 and consistent with Hypothesis 1, POC moderated the relationship between POS and AC such that POS was more strongly associated with AC when POC was high than when it was low ( $\gamma = 0.06$ ,  $p < .05$ ). We plotted the relationship between POS and AC at  $\pm 1$  SD of POC. As shown in Figure 2, the relationship between POS and AC was significant for both high POC ( $b = 0.52$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and low POC ( $b = 0.40$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Thus, POC influenced the strength of the POS–AC relationship, but low POC did not eliminate the relationship.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations (Study 1)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender	0.64	0.47	—							
2. Educational level	4.41	0.84	−0.08	—						
3. Tenure	3.07	1.25	0.04	0.04	—					
4. POC	3.56	1.03	−0.04	−0.16**	0.07	(0.95)				
5. POS	4.39	1.50	−0.03	−0.17**	0.13**	0.65**	(0.90)			
6. Affective commitment	4.40	1.32	−0.11*	−0.05	0.10*	0.58**	0.67**	(0.77)		
7. In-role performance	4.24	0.69	0.08	−0.06	0.18**	0.10	0.11*	0.05	(0.89)	
8. Extra-role performance	3.75	0.93	0.00	0.04	0.10*	0.08	0.11*	0.15**	0.68**	(0.93)

Note.  $N = 363$ . Cronbach's alphas are provided in parentheses on the diagonal. *SD* = standard deviation; POC = perceived organizational competence; POS = perceived organizational support. Gender was coded as 0 = male, 1 = female. Educational level was coded as 1 = completed grade school, 2 = some high school, 3 = complete high school, 4 = some college, 5 = complete college.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

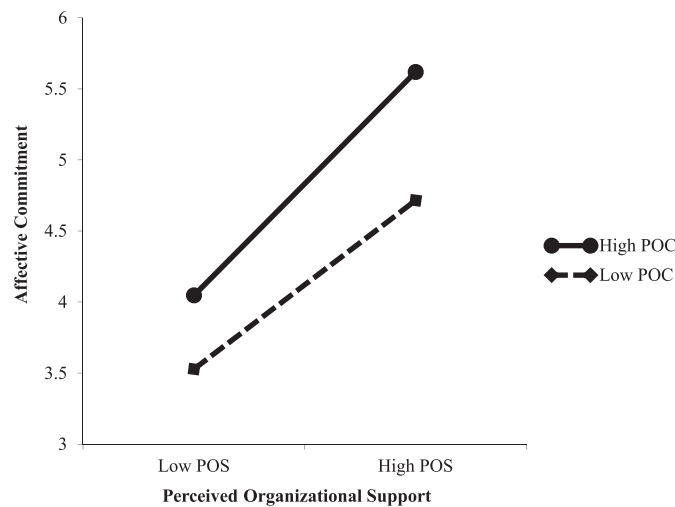


Table 2. Hierarchical linear modeling results: main effects and interaction effects on affective commitment, in-role performance, and extra-role performance (Study 1)

Predictor	Dependent variables		
	Affective commitment	In-role performance	Extra-role performance
	Model 1 $\gamma$ (SE)	Model 2 $\gamma$ (SE)	Model 3 $\gamma$ (SE)
Intercept	4.47 (0.09)**	4.22 (0.06)**	3.82 (0.09)**
Control variables			
Gender	−0.20 (0.10) <sup>†</sup>	0.05 (0.07)	−0.02 (0.09)
Tenure	0.01 (0.03)	0.10 (0.02)**	0.08 (0.03)*
Educational level	0.10 (0.05) <sup>†</sup>	−0.03 (0.04)	0.08 (0.05)
Independent variables			
POC	0.34 (0.06)**	0.02 (0.04)	−0.02 (0.05)
POS	0.45 (0.04)**	0.01 (0.03)	−0.01 (0.04)
POS × POC	0.06 (0.02)*	−0.02 (0.02)	−0.03 (0.02)
Affective commitment		0.00 (0.03)	0.09 (0.04)*
Pseudo- $R^2$	0.50	0.06	0.04

Note.  $N=363$ . <sup>†</sup> $p < .10$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

Affective Commitment Regressed on POS and POC (Study 1)



Note. Affective commitment as a function of employees' POS at low (−1 SD) and high (+1 SD) levels of POC. SD = standard deviation.

Figure 2. Affective commitment regressed on perceived organizational support (POS) and perceived organizational competence (POC; Study 1). Note. Affective commitment as a function of employees' POS at low (−1 SD) and high (+1 SD) levels of POC. SD = standard deviation

Hypotheses 2 and 3 proposed that the conditional indirect effects of POS on (H2) in-role and (H3) extra-role performance via AC are stronger when POC is high than when POC is low. Based on evidence of significant interactive effects of POS and POC on AC, we examined the effect of AC on in-role and extra-role performance. As shown in

Table 2, AC did not predict in-role performance ( $\gamma = 0.00$ , *ns*). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported. However, AC was significantly related to extra-role performance ( $\gamma = 0.09$ ,  $p < .05$ ). We therefore examined the conditional indirect effect of POS on extra-role performance alone.

We used a Monte Carlo method to examine the conditional indirect effect because it is not only free from any assumption on the sampling distribution (Preacher, Zyphur, & Zhang, 2010) but also works well in a multilevel dataset (Pituch, Stapleton, & Kang, 2006). The Monte Carlo results showed that the conditional indirect effects of POS via AC on extra-role performance were significant and stronger for high POC ( $b = 0.05$ ,  $p < .05$ ) than for low POC ( $b = 0.04$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

## Study 2

Although Study 1 substantiated the hypothesized moderating influence of POC on the POS–AC relationship, there were good reasons for a systematic replication of the study. First, the cross-sectional design used in the study may have inflated the observed relationships among self-reported variables owing to common method variance (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). For example, the measurement of POS and AC at the same time point increased the risk that mood states may have influenced the predicted relationships (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Second, the study design did not provide good evidence concerning causal ordering between POS and AC. These issues can be addressed with a longitudinal design. We are aware of only one study (Rhoades et al., 2001) that used a longitudinal design to establish whether POS was associated with change in AC and not simply the reverse. Therefore, we replicated Study 1 using a longitudinal design. Specifically, to obtain better evidence of the direction of causality concerning the relationship between POS and AC, we tested the effect of POS measured at Time 1 on AC measured at Time 2, controlling for AC measured at Time 1.

## Method

### Sample and procedures

We distributed online survey invitations to full-time employees in a social welfare organization located in the southwestern region of the United States at two time points over a 2-year interval. Of 396 invitations sent at Time 1, 297 were returned (response rate: 75 percent). Of these respondents, 145 employees participated at Time 2 (response rate: 37 percent). Fifty-six supervisors provided performance evaluations at both Times 1 and 2. Based on the final sample, on average, 3.2 employees were evaluated by each supervisor.

Seventy-nine percent of the employees were female, had an average age of 48.2 years, and had an average tenure of 10.7 years. Sixty percent completed college, 22 percent completed some college, 16 percent completed high school, and 2 percent did not complete high school. Of the supervisors sample, 69 percent were female, had an average age of 52.7 years, and had an average tenure of 15.0 years. Employees were engaged in the following jobs: mental health services (49 percent), adult intellectual and developmental disability services (27 percent), child intellectual and developmental and disability services (14 percent), and administrative services (10 percent).

### Measures

*Perceived organizational competence.* Employees rated POC at Time 1 using the same six items as in Study 1 ( $\alpha = .94$ ).

*Perceived organizational support.* Employees assessed POS at Time 1 using the eight-item version of the SPOS ( $\alpha = .91$ ; Eisenberger et al., 1986).

*Affective commitment.* Employees rated Allen and Meyer's (1990) six-item scale at Time 1 ( $\alpha = .80$ ) and Time 2 ( $\alpha = .86$ ).

*Performance.* Supervisors rated employees' performance using five in-role items (Lynch et al., 1999) and five extra-role items (Lynch et al., 1999) both at Time 1 (in-role:  $\alpha = .90$ ; extra-role:  $\alpha = .93$ ) and Time 2 (in-role:  $\alpha = .97$ ; extra-role:  $\alpha = .95$ ).

*Control variables.* Consistent with Study 1, we included employees' gender, tenure, and educational level as controls.

## Results

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, and correlations. As predicted, POS at Time 1 was positively related to AC at Time 2 ( $r = .44, p < .01$ ), and AC at Time 2 was positively related to extra-role performance at Time 2 ( $r = .29, p < .01$ ). However, as in the first study, AC at Time 2 was not significantly related to in-role performance at Time 2 ( $r = .14, ns$ ).

### Discriminant validity

We conducted CFAs to examine the discriminant validity of the five constructs that assessed employees' perceptions and performance: POC, POS, AC, and in-role and extra-role performance. As our ratio of observations to parameters was low, we used parceling with three parcels for each construct and with the item-to-construct balance technique (Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002). The hypothesized five-factor model fit the data well (CFI = 0.98; TLI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.05) and significantly better than alternative models. The results also indicated that each indicator had high loading (range: .71–.98) on its respective factor. Based on the distinctiveness of the five factors, they were treated separately in the following analyses.

### Test of hypotheses

We utilized hierarchical linear modeling with grand mean centering to test our hypotheses. To provide evidence of the causal ordering of the relationship of POS with AC and in-role and extra-role performance, we controlled for the values of AC and in-role and extra-role performance at Time 1. As shown in Table 4 and consistent with Hypothesis 1, POC moderated the relationship between POS and AC ( $\gamma = 0.14, p < .05$ ). We plotted the relationship between POS and AC at  $\pm 1$  SD of POC. As shown in Figure 3, POS was positively associated with AC at high POC ( $b = 0.26, p < .05$ ), but not at low POC ( $b = -0.02, ns$ ).

We then examined the conditional indirect effects of POS via AC on in-role and extra-role performance (Hypotheses 2 and 3). Based on the evidence of a significant moderating effect of POC on the relationship between POS and AC, we examined the effect of AC on in-role and extra-role performance. As in Study 1, Table 4 shows that AC did not predict in-role performance ( $\gamma = 0.03, ns$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported. In contrast, AC was significantly related to extra-role performance ( $\gamma = 0.12, p < .01$ ). We therefore examined the conditional indirect effect of POS on extra-role performance. We utilized the Monte Carlo method for testing the conditional indirect effects based on the same reasoning as in Study 1. The results indicated that the conditional indirect effect of POS via AC on extra-role performance was significant for high POC ( $b = 0.03, p < .05$ ) and not for low POC ( $b = 0.00, ns$ ). Therefore, as in Study 1, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations (Study 2).

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Gender	0.79	0.40	—										
2. Educational level	4.40	0.82	−0.28**	—									
3. Tenure	10.72	7.88	0.00	−0.14	—								
4. POC	6.09	0.95	−0.07	−0.03	−0.03	(0.94)							
5. POS	5.00	1.36	−0.15	0.07	0.01	0.63**	(0.91)						
6. Affective commitment	5.16	1.21	−0.14	0.07	0.12	0.59**	0.71**	(0.80)					
7. Affective commitment	5.00	1.34	−0.05	0.01	0.15	0.28**	0.44**	0.55**	(0.86)				
8. In-role performance	4.30	0.70	−0.00	0.00	0.22**	0.02	0.12	0.10	0.13	(0.90)			
9. In-role performance	4.34	0.73	0.08	0.10	0.10	−0.12	0.02	−0.01	0.14	0.57**	(0.97)		
10. Extra-role performance	4.02	0.83	−0.07	0.05	0.31**	−0.04	0.11	0.08	0.18*	0.80**	0.52**	(0.93)	
11. Extra-role performance	4.15	0.81	0.07	0.11	0.20*	−0.08	0.04	0.00	0.29**	0.52**	0.74**	0.64**	(0.95)

Note. *Ns* range from 131 to 145. Cronbach's alphas are provided in parentheses on the diagonal. *SD* = standard deviation; POC = perceived organizational competence; POS = perceived organizational support. Gender was coded as 0 = *male*, 1 = *female*. Educational level was coded as the following: 1 = *completed grade school*, 2 = *some high school*, 3 = *complete high school*, 4 = *some college*, 5 = *complete college*.

a. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 4. Hierarchical linear modeling results: main effects and interaction effects on affective commitment, in-role performance, and extra-role performance (Study 2).

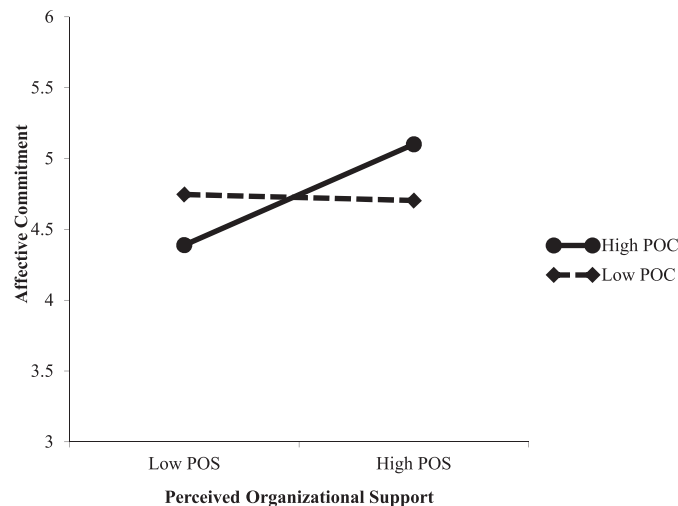
Predictor	Dependent Variables		
	Affective	In-role	Extra-role
	Commitment (T2)	Performance (T2)	Performance (T2)
	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	$\gamma$ (SE)	$\gamma$ (SE)	$\gamma$ (SE)
Intercept	4.73 (0.22)**	4.12 (0.12)**	3.96 (0.13)**
Control Variables			
Gender	0.15 (0.22)	0.15 (0.12)	0.19 (0.12)
Tenure	−0.03 (0.12)	0.06 (0.06)	0.00 (0.00)
Educational level	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)	0.03 (0.07)
Dependent variable (T1) <sup>a</sup>	0.43 (0.11)**	0.54 (0.08)**	0.59 (0.08)**
Independent Variables			
POC	0.01 (0.14)	−0.10 (0.07)	−0.10 (0.07)
POS	0.12 (0.09)	0.01 (0.05)	−0.06 (0.05)
POS X POC	0.14 (0.07)*	0.07 (0.04) <sup>†</sup>	−0.06 (0.04)
Affective Commitment (T2)		0.03 (0.04)	0.12 (0.04)**
Pseudo $R^2$	0.33	0.38	0.43

Note. Ns range from 131 to 145.

Dependent variable of each model measured at Time 1 was controlled. For example, affective commitment measured at Time 1 was included as a control in Model 4 in which affective commitment measured at Time 2 was a dependent variable.

<sup>†</sup> $p < .10$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

Affective Commitment Regressed on POS and POC (Study 2)



Note. Affective commitment as a function of employees' POS at low (−1 SD) and high (+1 SD) levels of POC. SD = standard deviation.

Figure 3. Affective commitment regressed on perceived organizational support (POS) and perceived organizational competence (POC; Study 2). Note. Affective commitment as a function of employees' POS at low (−1 SD) and high (+1 SD) levels of POC. SD = standard deviation



## Study 3

The results of the first two studies suggest that POC moderates the POS–AC relationship. Because AC has benefits for employees' organizational performance, loyalty (Meyer et al., 2002; Riketta, 2002), and well-being (Meyer & Maltin, 2010), it is important to understand the distinctive antecedents of POC and POS. Employees view supervisors as organizational agents (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Levinson, 1965). Thus, two dimensions of leader behavior, initiating structure and consideration, may be differentially related to POC and POS. Study 3 investigated these two aspects of leader behavior as distinguishing antecedents of POC and POS.

### *Method*

#### **Sample and procedures**

We disseminated paper surveys to 251 employees from 46 diverse organizations in South Korea. Sixty-one percent were in the services industry, 26 percent were in public administration, 9 percent were in the manufacturing industry, and 4 percent were in finance and insurance. Each supervisor was asked to randomly choose a subordinate to receive a paper survey and to evaluate the subordinate's performance. An investigator distributed the survey to each chosen subordinate. The subordinate was asked to put her completed survey into an envelope, which the investigator collected. One hundred and twenty-four subordinates completed surveys (49 percent), providing 124 matched supervisor–subordinate pairs. Fifty-eight percent of the subordinates were male. Ten percent had a masters/doctoral degree, 84 percent had a bachelor's degree, and 6 percent completed high school. They worked in a wide range of jobs: customer service (40 percent), general management (39 percent), marketing/sales (12 percent), research and development (5 percent), and manufacturing and production (4 percent). Of the supervisors, 67 percent were male. Twenty-seven percent had a masters/doctoral degree, 69 percent had a bachelor's degree, and 4 percent completed high school.

#### **Measures**

Prior to survey administration, we followed a translation–back-translation procedure (Brislin, 1980) to confirm that all the English items were accurately translated into Korean. Specifically, the English scales were translated into Korean by one of the authors who was fluent in Korean. The translated versions of scales were then translated back into English by a bilingual research assistant. The back-translated versions were compared with the original scales, and if there were any discrepancies, the translated version was revised accordingly.

*Initiating structure* ( $\alpha = .90$ ). Employees assessed the 10-item initiating structure subscale of the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ—Form XII; Stogdill, 1963). Sample items are “my supervisor decides what shall be done and how it shall be done” and “my supervisor maintains definite standards of performance.” Because employees have a more direct knowledge of supervisors' contributions to initiating structure and may find it easier to judge supervisors' contributions than upper managements' contributions, in this study, we examined employees' perceptions of supervisors' contributions to initiating structure.

*Consideration* ( $\alpha = .91$ ). Employees assessed the 10-item consideration subscale of LBDQ (Stogdill, 1963). Sample items are “my supervisor looks out for the personal welfare of group members” and “my supervisor is friendly and approachable.” LBDQ has been used in the sample of Korean in the past research (e.g., Won, 2006).

*Perceived organizational competence* ( $\alpha = .89$ ). Employees assessed POC using the same six items as in Study 2 (Fiske et al., 2002).

*Perceived organizational support* ( $\alpha = .87$ ). Previous research has provided evidence that the SPOS (Eisenberger et al., 1986) had good psychometric properties such as high reliabilities, discriminant validity, and predictive validity in the context of South Korea (e.g., Lee & Peccei, 2007). Thus, we used the same items as in Study 2 to measure POS.

*Affective commitment* ( $\alpha = .85$ ). Allen and Meyer's (1990) six-item AC scale was shown to have high internal consistency, discriminant validity and predictive validity in the context of South Korea (e.g., Lee & Peccei, 2007). Thus, we used the same six items as in Study 2.

*Performance*. To increase the predictive validity of the performance measures used in Studies 1 and 2, we added two in-role items (Lynch et al., 1999) and three extra-role items (Lynch et al., 1999; George & Brief, 1992). Supervisors were asked to rate, in total, seven in-role performance items ( $\alpha = .84$ ) and eight extra-role performance items ( $\alpha = .92$ ) for each of their subordinates. The added in-role performance items are "this employee always engages in activities that will directly affect his/her performance evaluation" and "this employee fails to perform essential duties" (reverse scored). Sample added extra-role items are "this employee encourages coworkers to try new and more effective ways of doing their job" and "this employee always looks for new ways to improve effectiveness of his/her work."

*Control variables*. Previous studies reported that South Korean employees' tenure was positively related to AC, and gender and educational level were negatively related to AC (Chang, 2006; Lee & Corbett, 2006). Therefore, consistent with Study 2, we included employees' gender, tenure, and educational level as controls.

## Results

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, and correlations. As predicted, POS was positively related to AC ( $r = .65, p < .01$ ), and AC was positively related to in-role ( $r = .28, p < .01$ ) and extra-role performance ( $r = .47, p < .01$ ).

### Discriminant validity

We performed CFAs to examine the distinctiveness of the seven constructs that assessed employees' perceptions and performance: initiating structure, consideration, POC, POS, AC, in-role performance, and extra-role performance. Consistent with Study 2, given our small sample size, we used parceling to keep the cases-to-parameters ratio high (Little et al., 2002). Again, we utilized the item-to-construct balance technique with two parcels for each construct (Little et al., 2002). The hypothesized seven-factor model fit the data well (CFI = 0.99; TLI = 0.99; RMSEA = 0.04) and significantly better than the alternative models (six-factor model: CFI = 0.91, TLI = 0.86, RMSEA = 0.14; five-factor model: CFI = 0.86, TLI = 0.81, RMSEA = .16; four-factor model: CFI = 0.83, TLI = 0.78, RMSEA = 0.17; three-factor model: CFI = 0.77, TLI = 0.72, RMSEA = 0.19; two-factor model: CFI = 0.75, TLI = 0.70, RMSEA = 0.20; one-factor model: CFI = 0.57, TLI = 0.49, RMSEA = 0.26). All indicators showed substantial loadings on their respective factors (range: .75–.98). Therefore, the factors were treated as distinct in the subsequent analyses.

### Test of hypotheses

The data were collected from 124 subordinates, each of whom had a different supervisor who rated the subordinate's performance. Thus, unlike Studies 1 and 2, ordinary least squared regression could be used to analyze the data. Hypotheses 4 and 5 proposed that leader consideration is more positively related to POS than to POC (H4) and leader initiating structure is more positively related to POC than to POS (H5). Consistent with both hypotheses, and as shown in Table 6, consideration was more strongly related to POS ( $b = 0.63, p < .01$ ; standardized  $\beta = .65$ )

Table 5. Descriptive statistics and correlations (Study 3).

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender	0.42	0.49	—									
2. Educational level	2.07	0.48	−0.16	—								
3. Tenure	1.60	0.96	−0.26**	0.00	—							
4. Initiating structure	5.14	0.92	−0.07	0.03	0.03	(0.90)						
5. Consideration	5.21	1.06	−0.02	0.00	−0.07	0.67**	(0.91)					
6. POC	3.86	0.64	−0.02	−0.02	−0.04	0.52**	0.61**	(0.89)				
7. POS	4.81	1.04	0.00	−0.02	−0.08	0.45**	0.67**	0.67**	(0.87)			
8. Affective commitment	4.87	1.08	−0.12	−0.13	0.05	0.44**	0.59**	0.59**	0.65**	(0.85)		
9. In-role performance	5.50	0.72	0.00	−0.02	0.20*	0.10	0.28**	0.24**	0.28**	0.28**	(0.84)	
10. Extra-role performance	5.17	0.81	0.01	−0.01	0.07	0.32**	0.41**	0.48**	0.47**	0.47**	0.68**	(0.92)

Note. *N* = 124. Cronbach's alphas are provided in parentheses on the diagonal. *SD* = standard deviation; POC = perceived organizational competence; POS = perceived organizational support. Gender was coded as 0 = *male*, 1 = *female*. Educational level was coded as the following: 1 = *high school diploma*, 2 = *bachelor degree*, 3 = *master's degree/doctoral degree*. a.\**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .01.

Table 6. Regression analysis results: main effects and interaction effects on POC, affective commitment, in-role performance, and extra-role performance (Study 3).

Predictor	Dependent variables				
	POS	POC	Affective commitment	In-role performance	Extra-role performance
	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11
	$\gamma$ (SE)	$\gamma$ (SE)	$\gamma$ (SE)	$\gamma$ (SE)	$\gamma$ (SE)
Intercept	4.80 (0.09)**	3.86 (0.06)**	4.88 (0.09)**	5.50 (0.08)**	5.17 (0.09)**
Control variables					
Gender	0.01 (0.15)	0.00 (0.09)	−0.26 (0.14) <sup>†</sup>	0.11 (0.13)	0.16 (0.13)
Tenure	−0.03 (0.07)	−0.01 (0.05)	0.09 (0.07)	0.19 (0.06)**	0.08 (0.06)
Educational level	−0.05 (0.15)	−0.04 (0.09)	−0.31 (0.14)*	0.02 (0.13)	0.07 (0.13)
Independent variables					
Initiating structure	0.02 (0.10)	0.14 (0.06)*	0.01 (0.10)	−0.17 (0.09) <sup>†</sup>	0.01 (0.09)
Consideration	0.63 (0.09)**	0.28 (0.05)**	0.23 (0.10)*	0.17 (0.09) <sup>†</sup>	0.01 (0.09)
POC			0.38 (0.15)*	0.04 (0.14)	0.25 (0.14) <sup>†</sup>
POS			0.33 (0.09)**	0.08 (0.09)	0.14 (0.09)
POS × POC			0.20 (0.08)*	−0.12 (0.07)	−0.16 (0.08)*
Affective commitment				0.10 (0.08)	0.19 (0.08)*
F-value	19.37**	15.68**	18.07**	3.30**	6.54**
R <sup>2</sup>	0.45	0.39	0.55	0.20	0.34

Note: N = 124. POC = perceived organizational competence; POS = perceived organizational support.

<sup>†</sup> $p < .10$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

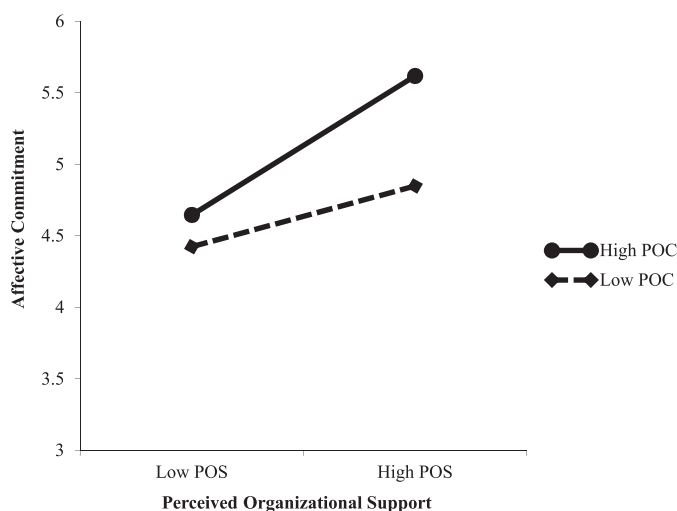
than to POC ( $b = 0.28$ ,  $p < .01$ ; standardized  $\beta = .47$ ), and initiating structure was more strongly related to POC ( $b = 0.14$ ,  $p < .05$ ; standardized  $\beta = .21$ ) than to POS ( $b = 0.02$ ,  $ns$ ; standardized  $\beta = .02$ ).

As shown in Table 6 and in accord with Studies 1 and 2, POC moderated the relationship between POS and AC ( $b = 0.20$ ,  $p < .05$ ). We plotted the relationship between POS and AC at  $\pm 1$  SD of POC. As shown in Figure 4, POS was positively associated with AC at high POC ( $b = 0.47$ ,  $p < .01$ ), but not at low POC ( $b = 0.20$ ,  $ns$ ). We then examined whether the moderating influence of POC on the relationship between POS and AC carried over to performance. We used the SPSS macro PROCESS (Model 7, Hayes, 2012). As in Studies 1 and 2, Table 6 shows that AC was related to extra-role performance ( $b = 0.19$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and not in-role performance ( $b = 0.10$ ,  $ns$ ). This allowed us to test the conditional indirect effect of POS on extra-role performance via AC for high and low levels of POC. Based on the confidence interval, the conditional indirect effect of POS via AC on extra-role performance was significant for high POC ( $b = 0.09$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and not low POC ( $b = 0.04$ ,  $ns$ ). Thus, the moderating influence of POC on the relationship between POS and AC carried over to extra-role performance.

## Discussion

### Theoretical implications

Our finding that the relationship between POS and AC was enhanced by POC is consistent with the organizational support theory, which holds that, based on social exchange, employees seek a balance in the favorableness of the relationship between the organization and themselves. By fulfilling socio-emotional needs, POC increases the

*Affective Commitment Regressed on POS and POC (Study 3)*

*Note.* Affective commitment as a function of employees' POS at low ( $-1$  *SD*) and high ( $+1$  *SD*) levels of POC. *SD* = standard deviation.

Figure 4. Affective commitment regressed on perceived organizational support (POS) and perceived organizational competence (POC; Study 3). *Note.* Affective commitment as a function of employees' POS at low ( $-1$  *SD*) and high ( $+1$  *SD*) levels of POC. *SD* = standard deviation

perceived value of POS to employees, which may be balanced with AC (cf. Blau, 1964; Eisenberger et al., 2001; Foa & Foa, 1974; Kurtessis et al., in press). Organizations perceived to be highly competent may provide an increased value of POS to employees by better fulfilling socio-emotional needs. Specifically, POC conveys that POS represents accurate judgments of employee contributions to the organization, better meeting the need for esteem (Armeli et al., 1998; Blau, 1964; Hill, 1987). POC may also indicate to employees that the organization is likely to provide a stable, welcoming environment and contribute more to positive self-identity, thereby more fully meeting the need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). POC may indicate that the organization will better observe and ameliorate stressful situations, thereby better fulfilling the need for emotional support. Moreover, employees experiencing fulfillment of socio-emotional needs as a result of a combination of high POS and high POC may view their values as being similar to those of the organization and its representatives. Such value similarity has been found to enhance AC (Meyer, Becker, & Van Dick, 2006). This fulfillment of socio-emotional needs may also lead to stronger exchange relationships between subordinates and supervisors, also contributing to AC (Kurtessis et al., in press).

POC, as studied by social perception and trustworthiness researchers, appears to be conceptually equivalent and, as indicated by our convergent validity study, results in highly correlated measures. The present research extends prior research on POC as an aspect of social perception (e.g., Aaker et al., 2010; Kervyn et al., 2014) and trustworthiness (Mayer & Davis, 1999) to its moderating influence on the relationship between POS and AC. First, although a few studies have extended social perception to organizations, they have focused on marketing issues in which potential and actual customers assess the attractiveness of organizations based on POC (Aaker et al., 2010, 2012; Gao & Mattila, 2014). The present findings extend the study of perceived competence to the employee–organization relationship, including employees' views of organizations as better able to meet their needs. Second, there have been no studies to date relating POC, based on the organizational trustworthiness approach (Mayer & Davis, 1999), to AC. The present findings extend the study of trustworthiness by showing that POC is an important contextual variable that can strengthen the POS–AC relationship.

Two general dimensions of leader behavior, initiating structure and consideration, contributed differentially to POC and POS. Because subordinates view leaders as organizational agents (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Levinson,



1965), employees should generalize their treatment by supervisors to the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2010). Initiating structure, involving the establishment of clear standards and expectations (Bass, 1990), conveys the perception to subordinates of a knowledgeable and effective manager. Accordingly, initiating structure contributed more to POC than to POS. By contrast, consideration, involving caring and concern for subordinates' welfare (Fleishman & Salter, 1963), conveys managers' support for subordinates. Thus, consideration contributed more to POS than to POC.

While leadership behavior predicts employees' perceptions on organizational support and competence, recent studies have suggested that employees can have distinctive social exchange relationships with supervisors and with organizations (i.e., target similarity effect) (e.g., Lavelle, Rupp, & Brockner, 2007; Vandenberghe, Bentein, & Stinglhamber, 2004). Thus, employees only partly generalize attributions concerning their treatment from their supervisor to the entire organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986), and leadership behavior may be more strongly related to supervisors' support and competence than to comparable perceptions regarding the organization.

While POS and POC formed separate factors, had interactive effects on AC, and had distinguishing antecedents, these two constructs were strongly related. The correlation between POS and POC varied from .63 to .65 across the three studies, somewhat limiting the distinctiveness of the constructs. Although POS may incline employees toward POC, the normalized scores of 22 percent of the participants in Study 1, 23 percent in Study 2, and 19 percent in Study 3 differed by at least one standard deviation in the relationship between POS and POC. Further, the significant interactions in the three studies were of substantial magnitude.

In our three studies, we consistently found that the moderating influence of POC on the POS–AC relationship carried over to extra-role performance. However, no such relationship was found for in-role performance. Past studies have also found that AC relates more strongly to extra-role performance than to in-role performance (e.g., Riketta, 2002). Because in-role performance is more clearly specified for employees than extra-role performance, is easier for supervisors to monitor, and usually has more direct negative consequences for employees when performance is poor, in-role performance may generally be less susceptible to the influence of AC than is the case for extra-role performance. The target similarity effect (e.g., Lavelle et al., 2007) may also explain the lack of significant relationship between AC and in-role performance. Extra-role behavior, involving actions that benefit the organization, equates the perceived source of AC (the organization) with the employees' major response to it. In contrast, in-role performance may be viewed by employees with high AC as more helpful to supervisors' fulfillment of their responsibilities of directing and evaluating required performance than to the organization. Given different exchange relationships that employees may have with organizations and with supervisors, employees' in-role performance may be more strongly predicted by AC to supervisors rather than by AC to organizations.

### **Differences in strength of findings across studies**

While POC was found to moderate the relationship between POS and AC across the three studies, in Studies 2 and 3, the moderating influence of POC on the POS–AC relationship was stronger than in Study 1 in that no relationship was found when POC was low in those studies. In Study 2, this stronger outcome may have been due to the use of a repeated-measures design to control for method variance or the long, 2-year interval between assessments of POS and AC. The findings may also have been due to the difference in organizational characteristics. POC may have been more salient for the social welfare agency employees (Study 2) than the municipal employees (Study 1). The viability of the social welfare agency was heavily dependent on the ingenuity of top management in obtaining government contracts whereas the municipal organization had less incentive for innovation. Moreover, social welfare organization was monitored by government agencies for meeting performance standards whereas there was less monitoring of the municipal organization. Finally, the organizational climate in the municipal organization examined in Study 1 stressed loyalty and effective social relationships more than competence. The municipal organization may have attracted and retained employees who found this relational social climate congenial (Schneider, 1987), and this climate may have influenced organization members' values though social and material rewards (Schaubroeck, Lam, & Cha, 2007). Thus, the moderating influence of POC may have been weaker in the municipal organization than in the other two organizations.

### **Practical implications**

The present research has important practical implications. In our research, the lessening of the relationship of POS with AC and resulting extra-role performance when POC was low was surprisingly strong, with no reliable relationship found in two of the three studies. Organizations with low or average POC might take practical steps to increase POC because AC benefits organizations with increased loyalty and performance, and AC benefits employees with greater well-being. The present findings that leader initiating structure contributes to POC suggest that socialization training for managers might include techniques for, and a discussion of, the benefits of leader initiating structure. Considering that even small changes in employees' performance can have considerable influence on organizational financial performance (Cascio, 1991), socialization training for facilitating leader initiating structure may benefit the bottom line.

### **Methodological advantages and disadvantages**

Methodological advantages and disadvantages of the present research should be considered. We found a moderating influence of POC on the relationship between POS and AC in two nations having markedly different cultural characteristics. These similar moderating effects, obtained in the United States, with its individualistic culture, and in South Korea, with its collectivistic culture (Hofstede, 1984), lend credence to the generality of the findings. Further, we assessed the extra-role performance from a different source than the attitudinal variables. The use of a longitudinal design in Study 2, with a 2-year interval between POS and AC, together with the measurement of initial AC as a control variable, provides evidence of the causal direction of the relationship between POS and AC. On the other hand, our methodology has the drawback that the attitudinal variables were assessed from the same source. However, same-source bias does not appear to contribute substantially to interaction effects (Siemsen, Roth, & Oliveira, 2010) and, therefore, does not appear to limit conclusions involving the moderating influence of POC on the relationship between POS and AC. Further, POS, POC, and AC are internal psychological processes that are best assessed by the individuals experiencing the processes (Sackett & Larson, 1990). Method bias might be more of an issue concerning the relationships of initiating structure and consideration with POC and POS, which should be studied longitudinally in future research.

### **Future research**

Although we reported a scale validation study showing the convergent validity of the POC measure with the most widely used trustworthiness measure of ability (Mayer & Davis, 1999), additional work is needed to specify the exact structure and dimensionality of the construct. Also, it will be important to consider the distinctiveness of the construct and the incremental variance that POC explains beyond other constructs. This can be a stepping stone for future research involving both commitment and organizational support.

Future research might extend our findings to the possible moderation by POC of the relationship of POS with normative and continuance commitment. Although POS is more strongly related to AC than to the other two types of commitment (e.g., Meyer et al., 2002), social exchange theory holds that POS should also lead to an experienced indebtedness to the organization as reflected in normative commitment (e.g., Panaccio & Vandenberghe, 2009). Because competent organizations are able to make various aspects of the job more satisfying, employees with high POC should show a strengthened relationship between POS and normative commitment. Further, by following up POS with substantial benefits for employees, POC might enhance the relationship between POS and the perceived high sacrifice component of continuance commitment (e.g., Powell & Meyer, 2004; Vandenberghe et al., 2007).

Leader initiating structure and consideration provided differential antecedents of POC and POS. Future research might examine other leadership behaviors as differential antecedents of POC and POS, for example, charismatic leadership and servant leadership. Charismatic leaders articulate an appealing vision and set high performance expectations and motivate subordinates to meet high expectations (House, 1977; Yukl, 1999). Charismatic leadership is likely to reflect more on POC than on POS. In contrast, servant leaders are more primarily focused on serving and meeting subordinates' needs (Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004). For servant leaders, relationships with

subordinates take precedence over task itself. They value their subordinates, intend to develop them, and help them to flourish (Stone et al., 2004). These behaviors are likely to increase POS more so than POC.

It would also be of practical benefit to identify HR practices that do double duty by enhancing both POS and POC, whose interaction increases AC and its favorable consequences. For example, expected reward for high performance has been found to be associated with increased POS (Eisenberger, Rhoades, & Cameron, 1999), presumably because it represents a recognition of employee accomplishments. Because this HR practice requires that management effectively manage the incentive system, it may contribute POC as well as POS. Also, procedural justice, which has been found to be strongly related to POS (Kurtessis et al., in press), may convey the competence to manage the procedures for important outcomes fairly, thereby enhancing POC as well as contributing to POS.

## **General implications of organizational support theory for understanding commitment**

From the viewpoint of commitment as a stabilizing force whose affective, normative, and continuance dimensions bind individuals to a course of action (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001) or as a unidimensional volitional bond involving dedication and responsibility for the target (Klein, Molloy, & Brinsfield, 2012), organizational support theory has important implications for commitment's development. Organizational support theory emphasizes employees' attributions concerning valuation by the organization. The theory holds that, based on perceived positive valuation (POS), employees respond with commitment on the basis of reciprocity and identification with the organization. The present findings, involving a strong relationship of POS with AC when POC is high, are consistent with this view.

Beyond the present study's findings, we discuss here two general implications of organizational support theory for the development of commitment. First, organizational support theory aids our understanding of the circumstances under which similar degrees of commitment may develop to separate entities within the organization (e.g., supervisor, workgroup, and team). Employee perceptions of support, similar to POS, develop to embedded entities within the organization that provide important sources of informational, socio-emotional, and tangible support, leading to commitment to those entities (e.g., Bishop, Scott, & Burroughs, 2000; Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002). Moreover, to the extent that employees' view these targets as having shared characteristics, favorable treatment from one target should influence commitment to the other targets (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). For example, the extent to which employees' favorable relationship with their supervisor (leader-member exchange) influences commitment to a different target (the overall organization) depends on the employees' view that the targets had similar characteristics (Eisenberger et al., 2010).

Secondly, organizational support theory has implications for practical steps to enhance commitment. Because much is known about producing POS, employers can readily build POS to enhance commitment. Employee attributions concerning the reasons for receiving favorable treatment play a key role in the development of POS. Thus, the relationship between favorableness of job conditions and POS was six times stronger when employees believed that the organization had high, as opposed to low, discretion over the job conditions (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli & Lynch, 1997). That is, initiatives by organizations and their representatives perceived by employees to be undertaken at the organization's option or choice, as opposed to those that appear to be forced by government regulations, contractual obligations, a competitive job market, and so on, are highly effective in enhancing POS. Favorable HR practices and policies clearly communicated and viewed by employees as discretionary can have a powerful influence on POS and, in turn, commitment. This understanding of the role of attributions in the development of POS provides a clear way to strongly increase POS and therefore commitment.

## Conclusion

The present findings suggest that although POS is a major driver of AC, this relationship depends, in part, on employees' evaluation of organizational competence. Organizations perceived to be highly competent may better meet employees' socio-emotional needs by providing a more creditable source of feedback to promote self-esteem, by conveying a more stable environment to enhance belongingness, and by offering a greater prospect of sympathy and effective action to reduce stress. Our results indicate that organizations can promote leader initiating structure and consideration to facilitate POC and POS and their interactive effects.

## Author biographies

**Kyoung Yong Kim** is an Assistant Professor in the Management Department at the College of Business, City University of Hong Kong. His research interests include employee–employer relationships, leadership, and high-performance work practices.

**Robert Eisenberger** is a Professor of Psychology at the University of Houston. His main research interests are employee–organization relationships, employee motivation, and creativity.

**Kibok Baik** is a Professor of Management at the Kookmin University, Seoul, Korea, and serves as the editor of *Korean Leadership Quarterly*. His main research interests are leadership, management thoughts, and historicity of the firm.

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