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Support, trust, satisfaction, intent to leave and citizenship at organizational level
A social exchange approach

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to propose to test a research model to gain a better understanding of the connection between perceived support, trust, satisfaction, intention to quit and citizenship at the organizational level.

Design/methodology/approach – A total of 355 white-collar employees were recruited among alumni of a business school in France. Structural equation modeling was used to test the predicted relationships.

Findings – Except for the relation between perceived organizational support (POS) and intention to leave, study results showed strong support in favour of the different hypothetical relations in the research model.

Research limitations/implications – The results are based on a single sample and a transversal research design. For these reasons, the data should be approached with caution.

Practical implications – The paper highlights the importance of considering trust over and above organizational efforts directed at supporting employees through a show of appreciation for their contribution and concern for their well-being.

Originality/value – This paper provides data that lead to a better understanding of the relationship between POS, trust and satisfaction for the purpose of predicting outcomes such as intention to leave an organization and citizenship behaviour towards an organization.

Keywords Job satisfaction, Trust, Citizenship, White collar workers, Business schools, France

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

In the last decade, perceived organizational support (POS) has been the focus of much attention (Allen *et al.*, 2003; Bishop *et al.*, 2005; Howes *et al.*, 2000; Jawahar and Hemmasi, 2006; Pearce and Herbik, 2004; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002; Rhoades *et al.*, 2001; Settoon *et al.*, 1996; Stamper and Johlke, 2003; Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe, 2003, 2004; Wayne *et al.*, 1997). In their literature review on POS (73 studies published between 1986 and 2001), Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) showed that POS is linked, respectively, to satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) and intention to leave the organization. Recent results indicate that POS increases satisfaction (Allen *et al.*, 2003). Other studies show that satisfaction increases OCB (Organ *et al.*, 2006) and decreases intention to leave the organization (Poon, 2004). Therefore, POS and satisfaction are

different constructs linked by similar outcomes. Rare indeed are the studies explaining how POS affects satisfaction and, at the same time, how satisfaction decreases the intention to leave the organization and increases OCB. Wayne *et al.* (1997, p. 83) propose that:

> [...] perceptions of being valued and cared about by an organization also enhance employees' trust that the organization will fulfill its exchange obligations of recognizing and rewarding desired employee attitudes and behavior.

Recently, Poon *et al.* (2007) were the first to provide empirical data showing the role of trust in the connection between POS and employee satisfaction with an organization. Unfortunately, Poon *et al.* (2007) did not integrate into their study employee outcomes such as citizenship behaviour and intention to leave the organization. Although trust has been studied abundantly (Dufresne and Offstein, 2008; Salamon and Robinson, 2008; Zhang *et al.*, 2008; Erdem and Aytemur, 2008), the literature has failed to sufficiently consider the contribution of trust for the purpose of describing the consequences of POS on desired employee outcomes such as citizenship behaviour and intention to leave through satisfaction.

We propose to test a research model (Figure 1) to gain a better understanding of the connection between perceived support, trust, satisfaction, intention to leave and citizenship at the organizational level.

Hypotheses development

POS and trust in an organization

Eisenberger *et al.* (1986) defined POS as an employee's perception of the way the organization values his or her contribution and cares about his or her well-being. POS may be considered as an intangible element of exchange between the employee and his or her organization. Thus, POS responds to important social and emotional needs of the employee. Empirical literature has identified many practices and variables that contribute to the perception of organizational support by employees, such as intrinsic and extrinsic job conditions (Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe, 2003), challenging job content (Tremblay and Roger, 2004), developmental experiences (Wayne *et al.*, 1997), time off for education (Shore and Shore, 1995), participation in decision making, fairness of rewards and opportunity for growth (Allen *et al.*, 2003). But, Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) emphasize that an important condition is required for an
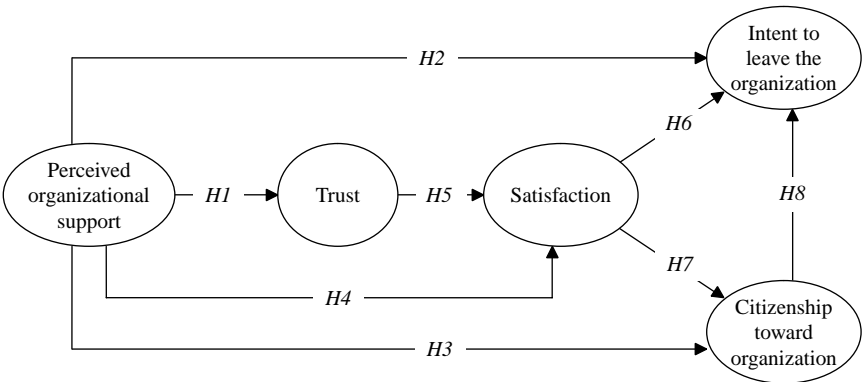
Figure 1.
Research model

employee to perceive a human resources management practice as a form of support. The practice must not be prompted by government policy or union negotiations. Thus, a wage increase or improved working conditions following a strike or government measure are not perceived by employees as organizational support.

Zand (1972) defines trust as a psychological state that makes an individual vulnerable to a third party. Depending on the context, the individual is then more or less dependant on the person whom he or she trusts. Trust serves to reduce risk in a context of uncertainty (Porter *et al.*, 1975; Mayer *et al.*, 1995). As a result, it is necessary to act and interact. Trust is a concept based on affective, cognitive (McAllister, 1995) and conative components (Lewis and Weigert, 1985). The affective component refers to the belief in the benevolence of the other party during the exchange relationship (inspired by moral virtues such as honesty and integrity). The cognitive component refers to the belief that the other party is reliable (based on competency, past experience and information held on the person) (Mayer *et al.*, 1995). Finally, the conative component serves to anticipate the reaction or behaviour of individuals in different situations. It is a hypothesis concerning the future possible conduct that a person might believe into be able to act. To be lasting, a long-standing relationship implies a minimum of benevolence and reciprocity. Trust lubricates social relations in an organization and regulates exchange between individuals (Arrow, 1974). For exchange to be long lasting and coordinated, rules and standards structuring relations between an organization and its employees must be established. Even more so, from an ethical standpoint, trust is indispensable for acting together. Trust serves to reduce risk in a context of uncertainty (Porter *et al.*, 1975; Mayer *et al.*, 1995). Therefore, in a relationship between two entities, trust allows one entity (an employee, for example) to be able to count on the statements and promises of the other entity (the organization, for example).

The trust of employees in the organization is crucial to developing a healthy at the workplace (Cook and Wall, 1980). The development of trust is a process based on the belief that the other party will respect their commitments (Robinson, 1996) and that their intentions are benevolent (Donney and Cannon, 1997). Thus, the fact of properly treating salaried workers is a sign of benevolence towards them and increases employee trust in the organization (Robinson and Morrison, 1995). In conjunction with the results of empirical studies showing that trust of an organization increases when employees perceive that the organization shows concern for their well-being and values their contributions (Dulac *et al.*, 2008; Guzzo and Noonan, 1994; Whitener, 2001), we feel justified to postulate that:

H1. POS is positively related to trust.

POS and intention to leave the organization

In their review literature, Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) report a negative connection between POS and intention to leave an organization. Accordingly, employees who feel supported by their employer are less likely to examine outside job possibilities and lack diligence in the workplace. Indeed, it would appear reasonable to assume that an organization encourages employees to remain in its employ when the organization shows concern for their material and psychological well-being by seeking to establish a serene social context and a positive working climate. Thus, in accordance with previous empirical research, the more an employee feels that his or her organization is developing human resources policies centered on professional well-being, the less he or she will be inclined to

leave the employ of the organization (Allen *et al.*, 2003; Masterson *et al.*, 2000; Rhoades *et al.*, 2001; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002; Wayne *et al.*, 1997). Consequently:

H2. POS is negatively related to intention to leave an organization.

POS and organizational citizenship
Organ (1988, p. 4) defines OCB as:

> [...] discretionary individual conduct, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal system of compensation contributing to the general proper functioning of the organization that does not arise from the prescribed role or tasks of the job, in other words, the specific terms of a contract between employees and organizations; this behaviour arises rather from personal choices, such that its omission is not generally understood as punishable.

Since it increases organizational efficiency by increasing production, improving the quality of service provided, raising client satisfaction or decreasing customer complaints (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000), OCB is valued by employers (Organ *et al.*, 2006).

Recent literature reviews on POS (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002) and OCB (Organ *et al.*, 2006) concur regarding the positive link between the two concepts. The fact of POS being linked to OCB is explained by the fact that an employee who perceives support from his or her organization feels a moral debt that encourages the desire for reciprocity in the form of citizenship behaviour directed towards the organization (OCB-O). Many empirical studies corroborate the predictions of the social exchange theory (McFarlane-Shore and Wayne, 1993; Moorman *et al.*, 1998; Settoon *et al.*, 1996; Wayne *et al.*, 1997). Given currently available empirical data and recent developments in the literature, we consider it justified to postulate that:

H3. POS is positively related to OCB-O.

POS and employee satisfaction
Satisfaction is one of the attitudes most studied in an organizational context (Dorfmann and Zapf, 2001; Lease, 1998). Researchers are increasingly embracing the idea that satisfaction must be analyzed as the result of an evaluation process (Bowling *et al.*, 2006; Judge *et al.*, 2000; Testa, 2001; Weiss, 2002). In accordance with this position, it might be said that the state of satisfaction merely constitutes the result of an evaluation process through which the salaried worker condemns or appreciates the quality of his or her relations in the workplace. A negative evaluation of the working environment generates employee dissatisfaction. On the other hand, a positive evaluation leads the employee to feel satisfaction. In the latter case, the employee feels gratitude towards the organization and the need to build a durable relationship based in part on the desire for reciprocity (MacKenzie *et al.*, 1998).

A long tradition of empirical research has shown that job satisfaction is affected by good working conditions (Latham, 2007). For Shore and Tetrick (1991), the influence of POS on job satisfaction is compatible with the literature on person-organization fit, whereby the employee expects the organization to fulfill the obligation to satisfy his or her needs. In their literature review, Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) report a positive and significant link between POS and job satisfaction. This link suggests that when the employer takes the initiative to improve an employee's working conditions by, for example, proposing to increase or expand his or her expertise, employer decisions are then perceived as signals of support that increase employee job satisfaction. In keeping

with the results of literature on support establishing a positive connection between POS and satisfaction (Allen *et al.*, 2003; Eisenberger *et al.*, 1997; Shaffer *et al.*, 2001), we feel justified to postulate that:

H4. POS is positively related to satisfaction.

Trust and satisfaction
As raised earlier, Blau (1964) suggested considering trust because the effect of trust is to guarantee lasting respect of mutual commitments between the entities involved in the relationship. Until recently, the connection between trust and satisfaction has been studied primarily from the standpoint of relations between the employee and his or her supervisor (Flaherty and Pappas, 2000; Goris *et al.*, 2003; Pillai *et al.*, 1999). Several recent empirical studies have provided results showing a positive link between trust and satisfaction at the organizational level (Gil, 2008; Macky and Boxall, 2007). Thus, based on the proposals of Blau (1964) and available empirical data, it is reasonable to assume that employee trust in the ability of an organization to respond to his or her needs (career progression, remuneration, performance evaluation or, then again, training), increases job satisfaction. Therefore:

H5. Trust is positively related to satisfaction.

Satisfaction, intention to leave the organization and OCB-O
It is now widely accepted in the literature on human resources management and organizational behaviour that the more an employee is satisfied with the working conditions offered by his or her organization, the less the employee is likely to leave the organization (Lauver and Kristof-Brown, 2001; Poon, 2004), and, the more the employee will make voluntary efforts to help the organization achieve greater efficiency (Blakely *et al.*, 2003; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000). In accordance with trends in the literature on the connections between satisfaction, intention to leave the organization and OCB-O, we are justified in expecting to observe the following relations:

H6. Satisfaction is negatively related to intention to leave the organization.

H7. Satisfaction is positively related to OCB-O.

OCB-O and intention to leave
Chen *et al.* (1998) were the first to perceive the predictive potential of workplace citizenship on turnover. This can be explained principally by the central characteristic of OCBs. OCBs are discretionary behaviours. Thus, when employees experience lasting dissatisfaction with their organizations or jobs, and cannot leave due to lack of external professional opportunities, it is less risky for them to reduce OCBs than to express this discontent through diminishing efforts at work. Indeed, an employee who decreases efforts at work may face sanctions from a supervisor, whereas employees who diminish their OCBs will not face sanctions, since OCBs are discretionary behaviours not formally required. Since the research of Chen *et al.* (1998), a number of studies have provided data on the association between OCBs and intention to leave the organization (Chen *et al.*, 2005; Coyne and Ong, 2007; Wayne *et al.*, 1997). Thus, consistent with earlier research we propose:

H8. OCB-O is negatively related to intention to leave the organization.

Method

Participants

A survey was sent to alumni of a business school in France. In total, 1,200 alumni were contacted by e-mail, using a web survey. Participation in the study was voluntary. The participants were 355 working adults with French citizenship. The rate of return was approximately 30 per cent (29.58 per cent). The sample included 182 women and 173 men, with an average age of 30.6 (ranging from 21 to 60 years of age) standard deviation (SD = 7.26) and a mean of seven years of professional experience (ranging from one to 37 years) (SD = 6.5). Participants represented a variety of industries, including consulting (20 per cent), logistics and distribution (19 per cent), health (18 per cent), computer science and new information technologies (16 per cent), banking (14 per cent) and business services (13 per cent).

Measures

Since this study was conducted in a French-language context, several measures were adapted. Only two (OCB-O, Grima, 2007; satisfaction, Paillé, 2008) of the five measurement scales used in this study had already been validated in a French-language context. In order to maximize the psychometric properties of the measurement scales of POS, trust in the organization, satisfaction and intention to leave the organization, the procedure recommended by Brislin (1980) was followed. The three measurement scales were subjected to a process of double translation (from English to French and French to English). Before contacting the participants, a pilot study was conducted on an independent group of 12 French-speaking persons to test the double translation.

Perceived organizational support. The scale of POS create by Eisenberger *et al.* (1986) groups together 35 items. Researchers rarely use the entire scale and often prefer to choose a shorter version. An overview of the situation showed that there was no coherence. Indeed, while some researchers chose four items (Stinglhamber *et al.*, 2006), others chose six (Eder and Eisenberger, 2008), eight (Settoon *et al.*, 1996) or nine items (Wayne *et al.*, 1997). In this study, we elected to follow the example of Eisenberger *et al.* (2002) for the measurement of POS. Eisenberger *et al.* (2002) selected three high-loading items from the SPOS (Items 1, 4 and 9; with factor loadings, of 0.71, 0.74 and 0.83, respectively; see Table I in Eisenberger *et al.* (1986). Electing to follow the example of Eisenberger *et al.* (2002) has the advantage of limiting possible conceptual overlapping with items in the measurement of trust in an organization. The three items are as follows: "My organization appreciates my contribution;" "My organization considers my aspirations and values;" "My organization really cares about my well-being." In their study, Eisenberger *et al.* (2002) used this short scale twice and obtained a reliability score with Cronbach's alpha of 0.74 for Study 1 and 0.75 for Study 2.

Trust in an organization. Based on the crucial review of McEvily and Tortoriello (2008) and Lewicki *et al.* (2006) felt that the measure of trust was debatable because after having drawn up an inventory of 119 trust measures, McEvily and Tortoriello concluded that the vast majority of the scale had been used only once. Trust in organization was measured with a selection of three items of the scale created by Cook and Wall (1980). For the three items, the word "management" was replaced by "organization". The three items are as follows: "I can trust my organization to make sensible decisions for the future of the organization;" "I feel quite confident that my organization will always try to treat me fairly;" and "My organization can be relied on to uphold my best interests." In the Cook and Wall (1980) study, Cronbach's alpha for the measure is 0.85 for Study 1 and 0.80 for Study 2.

Items	Loadings
Perceived organizational support	
My organization appreciates my contribution	0.898
My organization considers my aspirations and values	0.883
My organization really cares about my well-being at work	0.896
Organizational satisfaction	
Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with this organization	0.891
I am generally satisfied with the kind of work I do in this organization	0.767
Most of my colleagues appreciate this organization	0.563
Intention to leave the organization	
There is a good chance that I will leave this organization in the next year	0.827
I frequently think of leaving this organization	0.873
I will probably look for a new organization in the next year	0.921
Citizenship to organization	
I attend functions that are not required but help the organization's image	0.614
I attend information sessions that agents are encouraged but not required to attend	0.875
I attend and actively participates in organization meetings	0.780
Trust in organization	
I can trust my organization to make sensible decisions for the future of the organization	0.950
I feel quite confident that my organization will always try to treat me fairly	0.965
My organization can be relied on to uphold my best interests	0.781

Table I.
Results of the confirmatory factor analysis of self-rating items

Intention to leave the organization. Intention to leave the organization was measured using the Lichtenstein *et al.* (2004) scale which includes the following three items: "There is a good chance that I will leave this organization in the next year;" "I frequently think of leaving this organization;" and "I will probably look for a new organization in the next year." In the Lichtenstein *et al.* (2004) study, Cronbach's alpha for the measure is 0.83.

Organizational satisfaction. Satisfaction was measured with a selection of three among five items of the Hackman and Oldham (1975) scale. Following Shaffer *et al.* (2001), and to avoid confusion with intention to quit, the two items referring to thoughts of quitting were eliminated. The three items are: "Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with this organization;" "I am generally satisfied with the kind of work I do in this organization;" and "Most of my colleagues appreciate their work." In a French-language context (Paillé, 2008), Cronbach's alpha for the measure is 0.70.

OCB-O. OCB-O was measured with the Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1994) scale. This measure is used regularly (Diefendorff *et al.*, 2002; Foote and Tang, 2008; Zoghbi-Manrique de Lara, 2008). The measure includes the following three items: "I attend functions that are not required but help the organization image;" "I attend information sessions that agents are encouraged but not required to attend;" and "I attend and actively participate in organization meetings." In literature on OCBs, Cronbach's alpha fluctuates between 0.65 (Coyne and Ong, 2007; German sample) and 0.83 (Restubog *et al.*, 2008). In a French-language context (Grima, 2007), Cronbach's alpha for the measure is 0.67.

Finally, items were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (disagree completely) to 5 (agree completely).

To test the hypothesized model, a covariance matrix was used as input to AMOS 5.0 (Arbuckle, 2003). Several statistical indices were used to examine the findings. The larger and more significant the value for the χ^2-test, the more the model differs from perfect adjustment. Other indices are also employed, including the root mean square error of

approximation (RMSEA), whose expected value must ideally be less than 0.05 (Schermelleh-Engel *et al.*, 2003); the comparative-fit index (CFI); the Tucker-Lewis-fit index (TLI). The rules concerning the threshold of acceptability for certain indices vary according to the source. Some researchers recommend values greater than 0.90 (Medsker *et al.*, 1994), while others set the threshold at 0.95 (Hu and Bentler, 1999). We chose to consider the adjustment acceptable if the values ranged between 0.90 and 0.95.

Results

Although Turnipseed (2002) deems the use of self-reported measures justifiable when the relations examined are directed at variables reflecting the psychological conditions of people at work, it is important to detect the presence of a common variance bias. Following Tsui *et al.* (1997), a confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the 15 self-rating items that measure support, trust, satisfaction, citizenship and intention to leave at the organizational level. Table I shows that the results supported a five-factor structure, with an adjusted goodness-of-fit index of 0.948 and a root-mean-square residual of 0.052.

Table II provides means, SD and correlations among the variables of the study. The reliability coefficients of the scales used in this research ranged between 0.69 (OCB-O) and 0.92 (POS and trust), near and higher than the 0.70 recommended threshold of Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). In this study, reliability coefficients (Table II) were consistent with the literature (see measurement section above). The variance inflation factor (VIF) test was used to detect possible multicollinearity among variables. Data indicated the absence of multicollinearity if the VIF value ranges between 0.10 and 10 (Neter *et al.*, 1989). In the present research, the VIF value ranged from 1.05 (OCB) to 2.20 (satisfaction).

The fit indices were $x^2(82) = 147.80$, $p < 0.000$, RMSEA $= 0.048$, CFI $= 0.981$ and the TLI $= 0.976$. These results indicate that the overall fit of the model was acceptable. Table II offers an overview of the results achieved through testing of the research hypotheses. All research hypotheses were supported. *H3* postulating a negative link between POS and intention to leave was not significant ($\beta = -0.157$, *t*-value $= -1.563 < |t|$ value $= 1.96$).

To achieve more rigorous results, the research model (Figure 1) was compared to an alternative model. In order to provide a more streamlined model, the alternative model eliminated the link between POS and intention to leave the organization, because data in Table III showed this link to be non-significant. If Δx^2 is significant, one may conclude that the alternative model is more parsimonious than the research model, and if Δx^2 is not significant, one may conclude that the alternative model is less parsimonious than the research model. The results indicated that the adjustment to the alternative model was acceptable $x^2(83) = 153.1$, $p < 0.000$, RMSEA $= 0.049$, CFI $= 0.980$ and the TLI $= 0.980$.

Variables	Mean	SD	POS	Trust	Satisfaction	Intention to leave	OCB-O
POS	2.78	0.97	(0.92)				
Trust	3.44	1.08	0.483**	(0.92)			
Satisfaction	3.38	0.85	0.643**	0.447**	(0.77)		
Intent to leave	2.85	1.05	−0.594**	−0.381**	−0.661**	(0.90)	
OCB-O	3.58	0.70	0.222**	0.112*	0.161**	−0.126*	(0.69)

Table II.
Correlations matrix

Note: Significant at $^*p < 0.05$ and $^{**}p < 0.01$

Research hypothesis	Standardized estimates	Unstandardized estimates SE	t-value	P
H1: POS → Trust	0.516	0.062	9.977	0.000
H2: Trust → Satisfaction	0.174	0.049	3.278	0.001
H3: POS → Intention to leave	− 0.157	0.048	− 1.563	ns
H4: POS → OCB-O	0.171	0.090	2.369	0.018
H5: POS → Satisfaction	0.617	0.064	10.762	0.000
H6: Satisfaction → Intention to leave	− 0.518	0.091	− 7.000	0.000
H7: Satisfaction → OCB-O	0.291	0.047	2.453	0.014
H8: OCB-O → Intention to leave	− 0.308	0.099	− 4.102	0.000

Table III.
Path analysis results

Because Δx^2 was significant, Δx^2 (1) = 5.3, $p < 0.025$, we could conclude that the alternative model was more parsimonious than the research model.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to improve our knowledge of connections between POS, trust, satisfaction, citizenship behaviour and intention to leave at the organizational level. In doing so, this study responds to the suggestion of Poon *et al.* (2007) who recommended pursuing their research by integrating several outcomes such as behaviours associated with contextual performance and employee withdrawal. This study was prompted by a lack of empirical data allowing a more precise examination of the specific role of trust on the consequences of POS on desired employee outcomes such as citizenship behaviour and intention to leave through satisfaction. Our results were obtained by combining:

- the results of the literature review by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) on POS; and
- earlier research data on satisfaction showing that satisfaction increases OCB and decreases intention to leave an organization.

Thus, this study contributes to improving our knowledge of the relationship between POS, trust and satisfaction for the purpose of predicting outcomes such as intention to leave an organization and citizenship behaviour towards an organization.

Contributions

An important contribution may be explained by the fact that this study proposes better consideration of the role of trust in the link between POS and satisfaction. Until now, only Poon *et al.* (2007) have examined this link limiting, however, their investigation to the study of the effect of trust on the link between POS and satisfaction. The fact that Poon and his colleagues chose not to integrate into their model outcomes such as citizenship behaviour and intention to leave constitutes an important limitation to their study. Since our results provide data beyond this limitation, the present study makes an important contribution to the literature. Therefore, we tested a model that proposes examining the links between POS, trust, satisfaction, OCB-O and intention to leave the organization. Except for the link between POS and intention to leave the organization (discussed below), this study's findings are consistent with previous research that has found POS to be positively associated with trust (Dulac *et al.*, 2008), satisfaction

(Shaffer *et al.*, 2001) and OCB-O (Moorman *et al.*, 1998). The findings are also consistent with previous data showing:

- that satisfaction and OCB-O are positively linked (Yoon and Suh, 2003);
- that satisfaction and intention to leave are negatively related (Poon, 2004); and
- that OCB-O and intention to leave are negatively related (Coyne and Ong, 2007).

Our results go beyond the research of Poon *et al.* (2007) because they complete the links between POS, satisfaction and trust. Our findings suggest that a workplace that encourages trust sustains employees in their desire to cooperate (OCB-O), which in turn decreases intention to leave the organization.

Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) note that in a relationship of exchange, something must be given and something returned. Thus, as suggested by our results, the employer and employees can exchange POS against outcomes through trust and satisfaction. Therefore, POS is an important input: when employees feel supported, they accept to remain with the organization (low intention to leave) and cooperate in the form of OCB-O. While POS contributes to explaining the development of the process of social exchange between and organization and its employees, trust explains why the process of social exchange is maintained over time to obtain from employees a decrease in intention to leave and an increase in OCB-O through satisfaction. Our findings support the idea that trust contributes to understanding how POS is linked to outcomes through satisfaction. Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005, p. 876) argue that the process begins when at least one participant make a "move". Trust is a necessary condition (Blau, 1964) for each party (organization and employee) to make a "move".

However, one surprising result of the research concerned the link between POS and intention to leave an organization. While our data indicated that POS increases OCB, POS did not explain the intention of employees to leave their organization. The results of the literature review by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002), supported by more recent empirical data (Chew and Wong, 2008) report a positive link between POS and intention to leave the organization. Our research is in direct contradiction to the most widespread results in the literature on POS. Two explanations may be advanced to explain this result. First, the result may be explained by the presence of trust in the research model. Following Robinson (1996), trust is the process of exchange where one party (employee) believes that the other party (organization) is fulfilling its obligations. One possible explanation is that trust can reduce the influence of POS on intention to leave. Second, the result may be explained by the possible influence of a mediating value between POS and intention to leave an organization which, unfortunately, was not considered in this study. The results of earlier empirical research suggest considering some possible variables. Several studies have shown the mediating role of affective commitment (Allen *et al.*, 2003; Bishop *et al.*, 2000) or psychological contract (PC) breach and violation (Dulac *et al.*, 2008) between POS and intention to leave at the organizational level.

Practical implications
This study has interesting practical possibilities. While Wayne *et al.* (1997, p. 83) argue that:

> [...] high levels of POS create feelings of obligation, whereby employees not only feel that they ought to be committed to their employers, but also feel an obligation to return the employers' commitment by engaging in behaviours that support organizational goals.

Blau (1964) argues that social exchange requires trusting others to discharge their obligations. This previous comment illustrates the practical implications of this study. HRM practices, such as rewards and favourable job conditions, implemented or used by an organization in support of its employees may not immediately have the effects anticipated on outcomes (citizenship and intention to leave, for instance). The primary practical implication of our findings is that managers and leaders must be aware that HRM practices used by organizations to support employees may not suffice to increase citizenship and decrease intention to leave through employee satisfaction. Therefore, it is important to consider trust because, as our results suggest, trust plays an important role in a context of support at the organizational level. Our study highlights the importance of considering trust over and above organizational efforts directed at supporting employees through a show of appreciation for their contribution and concern for their well-being. Managers must be aware of the fact that in a context of support, employees are placing themselves in a situation of vulnerability when they grant their trust to their employer. When an employee grants trust by developing desired attitudes (low intention to leave) and behaviour (high citizenship), the employee takes the risk that the employer will not fulfill its obligations by using HRM practices as support, for example. As argued by Schoorman *et al.* (2007, p. 346), "the level of trust is an indication of the amount of risk that one is willing to take". Since employees take a risk when they grant their trust, it is important that organizational representatives develop efforts to maintain this trust. Indeed, the perception of a breach (real or imaginary) of trust may immediately generate mistrust which would further produce negative attitudes and behaviour (Zhao *et al.*, 2007). Organizational representatives must consider the fact that it is important to promote all forms of action and practices contributing to the development of employee trust in an organization. Earlier research has shown that the establishment of trust in an organization may be sustained by ability, benevolence and integrity (Davis *et al.*, 2000). Parallel to the establishment of trust, managers and leaders must be made aware of the negative consequences of PC breach and violation. As indicated in recent results (Dulac *et al.*, 2008), this precaution is vital to maintaining the effects of POS on desired outcomes on the long-term. Therefore, management of trust must not be neglected in order for the consequences of POS to be long lasting and for POS to improve organizational efficiency.

Limitations and future research
Despite its contribution to the literature, the present study has a number of limitations. First, the results are based on a single sample and a transversal research design. For these reasons, the data should be approached with caution. Future investigations could use a longitudinal research design to verify the stability of the observed correlations over time. Second, the choice of collecting data with self-reported measures may, nonetheless, lead to a bias in common variance liable to overestimate research results, particularly due to a latent positive-negative evaluation of the organization by the participants or to the phenomenon of social desirability (Spector, 1987). Future research could add more sources (self- and supervisor-rating) so as to neutralize the threat of common variance. Third, Poon *et al.* (2007) propose considering the possibility of an inverse causal relation between POS and satisfaction. Comparably, and although our intention in this paper was not to test the potentially reciprocal relationship between POS and OCB, some might conclude, and rightly so, that employees feel that their

organization supports them because they have developed citizenship behaviours. Future research might attempt to resolve this problem. In addition, although the current study's contribution is based on the fact that the sample is comprised of French employees, any generalization of the findings is limited by the cultural context in which the data were collected.

The encouraging results of this study suggest several avenues to explore in future research. As indicated earlier, the results indicate the presence of a variable explaining the lack of connection between POS and intention to leave an organization. Affective organizational commitment and PC breach and violation were identified earlier as two possible variables. Future research might replicate and expand this study using affective organizational commitment and PC breach and violation as mediators. Indeed, PC is defined as a set of unwritten expectations, promises and reciprocal obligations between employees and their organization (Rousseau, 1989). When an organization keeps its promises to employees (for example, wages, working conditions and job security) this creates an obligation by the employee to give back to the organization what the employee has received from the organization (Guzzo and Noonan, 1994). The fact that an organization keeps its promises in turn encourages the employee to deploy efforts for the organization (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2005). In the same way that respect of PC has positive impacts on attitudes in the workplace, PC breach and violation have different impacts. From a cognitive perspective, PC breach results in a difference between what the employee receives from the organization and what was promised. From an emotional standpoint, PC breach leads to emotional reactions such as feeling betrayed by the organization (Robinson and Morrison, 2000). Empirical data show that PC breach and violation decrease employee commitment, OCBs and satisfaction (Robinson *et al.*, 1994; Robinson and Rousseau, 1994; Robinson and Morrison, 1995; Tekleab *et al.*, 2005). Therefore, a replication to, and extension of, this study considering the contribution of PC might provide interesting results.

Likewise, the recent results of Dulac *et al.* (2008) show that PC breach and violation both have an impact on intention to leave the organization. However, only the violation of PC decreases affective commitment and trust at the organizational level. Additionally, POS decreases the impact of PC breach and violation. The result is that high POS may ease feelings of betrayal experienced by employees when an organization fails to keep its promises. Trust in the organization instils hope in employees that the organization will take steps in the future to compensate for the prejudice sustained. One future avenue of research might consist of integrating recent developments discussed earlier in our research model to examine the impact of POS through PC breach and violation, on trust in the organization, satisfaction, intention to leave the organization and citizenship.

Finally, our research was tested at the level of the "organization" entity. Recent research has reported the pertinence of considering other entities such as "colleagues" or even "supervisors". Future research might test this model at the level of colleagues or supervisors. Then again, another approach might consist of preferring a longitudinal research design to verify the stability of the research model in time.

Conclusion

This study improves our knowledge of connections between POS, trust, satisfaction, citizenship behaviour and intention to leave at the organizational level. Trust was considered in this paper better to understand the process by which POS affects outcomes,

such as intention to leave an organization and citizenship behaviour towards an organization through satisfaction. Although our study shows the role of trust in a context of support, additional research is necessary to explore beyond limitations identified.

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