Organizational Identification and Commitment: Correlates of Sense of Belonging and Affective Commitment

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The general purpose of this work is to analyze the overlap between organizational identification and commitment. Specifically, our study focuses on the analysis of the differences and similarities between sense of belonging (a dimension of organizational identification) and affective commitment (a dimension of organizational commitment). In order to do this, we analyzed their discriminant validity and raised their relationship with variables that previous research had showed like precedent and subsequent variables of them: value congruence, perceived support, organizational citizenship behavior, and intention to continue in the organization. A total of 292 people at one organization completed surveys measuring the variables previously described. The results showed that sense of belonging and affective commitment are different concepts and they have different relationships with relation to precedent and subsequent variables. Affective commitment seems to be more useful than sense of belonging to predict organizational citizenship behavior aimed at the organization and intention to continue. Some practical implications are described.
Keywords: organizational identification, organizational commitment, sense of belonging, work behavior.

El objetivo general de este trabajo es analizar el solapamiento existente entre los conceptos de identificación y compromiso organizacional. Concretamente, nuestro estudio se centra en el análisis de las diferencias y similitudes entre el sentido de pertenencia (dimensión de la identificación organizacional) y el compromiso afectivo (dimensión del compromiso organizacional) abordando para ello el análisis de su validez discriminante y su relación con variables que la investigación previa ha mostrado como antecedentes o consecuentes de los mismos: congruencia de valores, percepción de apoyo, comportamiento de ciudadanía organizacional e intención de continuar en la organización en el futuro. Un total de 292 personas pertenecientes a una única empresa cumplimentaron un cuestionario que permitía medir las variables anteriormente descritas. Los resultados hallados muestran que el sentido de pertenencia y el compromiso afectivo son dos constructos diferentes, que presentan diferentes relaciones tanto con las variables antecedentes como con las consecuentes. El concepto de compromiso afectivo parece ser más útil a la hora de predecir el comportamiento de ciudadanía organizacional dirigido hacia la organización y la intención de continuar en el futuro. Se describen algunas implicaciones prácticas de los resultados hallados.
Palabras clave: identificación organizacional, compromiso organizacional, sentido de pertenencia, conducta laboral.

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Organizational identification and commitment are considered to be two concepts that show employees' psychological attachment to the organization (Harris & Cameron, 2005). The overlapping that exists between both concepts and the usefulness of continuing to maintain interest in them has been questioned. Our study analyses this overlapping and to do so, it focuses on establishing whether these constructs are empirically distinguishable. Firstly, by analysing the discriminant validity of sense of belonging as one of the dimensions of organizational identification, and affective commitment as one of the dimensions of organizational commitment; and secondly, by analyzing the relationship between these constructs and other variables that prior research has demonstrated are antecedent or consequent: value congruence, perceived support, organizational citizenship behavior and intent to stay.

Below we shall present the theoretical contextualization and definitions of each one of the variables analysed in this study.

Organizational Identification

The concept of organizational identification (OI) has not received much attention from work and organizational psychology. It began to be studied with greater interest in the late 80's when Ashforth and Mael (1989) highlighted the relevance of Tajfel's social identity theory (1978) in studying organizational behavior (Riketta, 2005). From Ashforth and Mael's perspective, OI is a specific form of social identification; it's the perception of oneness with or belongingness to the organization where the individual defines him or herself in terms of their membership in a particular organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). When belonging to the organization forms part of one's social identity, the organization's norms and values are incorporated into that person's self-concept and people think and act on behalf of the organization to which they belong (van Dick et al., 2004a). In this sense, OI is a determinant variable for explaining many desirable consequences for the organization (van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2004b).

Various definitions have been proposed for OI (see for example, O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Patchen, 1970), but all of them imply that the organizational member has linked his o her organizational membership to his or her self-concept cognitively (feeling a part of the organization, internalizing the organization's values, etc.), emotionally (experiencing attraction and a desire to continue belonging to the organization, etc.) or cognitively and emotionally at the same time (Riketta, 2005).

The multiple definitions that exist in relation to OI is probably based on the fact that there is no agreement on whether social identity includes more than one dimension and, if so, what these dimensions are. The theoretical foundations of the multi-dimensionality of social identity can be found in the very definition suggested by Tajfel (1978) and the empirical foundations in works by Ellemers, Kortekaas, and Ouwerkerk (1999), Hinkle, Taylor, Fox-Cardamone, and Crook (1989) and Jackson (2002), for example. Along these lines, particularly noteworthy is Cameron's work (2004) which identifies three dimensions that were later adapted to the study of OI (Harris & Cameron, 2005):

– The cognitive centrality of the organization to the self-concept: each of us belongs to many social groups, but not all of them have the same psychological meaning for us or the same importance for our self. Centrality is manifested in cognitive accessibility of a social identity; in other words, the frequency and speed with which membership in a group, in this case, membership in an organization, comes to mind.

– The contribution of the organization to self-esteem: this dimension refers to the emotional valence of social identity, to the subjective evaluation of a social group and the subsequent emotions experienced (feelings of happiness or regret, for example) that it generates. For example, experiencing positive affect towards the group would mean feeling good about being a member of the group and positively valuing this membership.

– Interpersonal ties with other members of the organization: reflects the extent to which individuals feel like they are part of the group by virtue of a common bond with other members. This dimension basically refers to a sense of belonging to the group.

Maslow (1954) described belonging as a basic human need. Anant (1966) defines belonging as a sense of personal involvement in a social system so that person feels he or she is an essential and integral part of that system. Based on this definition, Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, and Collier (1992) identify as essential elements to developing a sense of belonging, on the one hand, the experience of feeling valued, needed and accepted by other people, groups or environments; and on the other hand, the person's perception that his or her characteristics are similar to or complement those of the people that belong to the system; in other words, the experience of fitting in with or of being congruent with other people, groups or environments through shared or complementary characteristics.

Most of the research on sense of belonging has focused on students in relation to their educational centres or some element of these such as for example, the class or pair group, with attention paid to the implications to the students remaining at the centres and to aspects such as their motivation, academic performance and behavioral problems (Johnson et al., 2007). But studying sense of belonging in labour field is rather new.

Relationship between Organizational Identification and Commitment.

Added to the fact that there are various definitions of OI, it has often been confused with other constructs relevant to understanding organizational behaviour such as for example, organizational commitment (OC), job satisfaction or work involvement. What's certain is that the distinction with OC is particularly difficult. Some authors see OI as just another facet of organizational commitment (Mael & Ashforth, 1992) and others even use them as synonymous terms (Riketta, 2005).

Perhaps the approach most emphasized in studying OC is the theory offered by Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974). These authors sustain that OC consists of identification and involvement with a specific organization which means a strong belief and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, the will to make considerable efforts on its behalf and the desire to remain as member of the organization. Currently, most researchers believe that OC is a multi-dimensional attitude (Meyer, Allen, & Topolnysky, 1998). In recent years, Meyer and Allen's model (1991) has dominated research into this concept. These authors distinguish between affective commitment (defined in a very similar manner as it was defined by Porter et al., (1974): the employee wishes to remain at the organization), continuance commitment (based on a recognition of the costs associated with leaving the organization and the lack of work alternatives available) and normative commitment (refers to a sense of obligation towards the organization) (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Precisely, in light of the definitions presented, the affective component of OC is that which presents greater overlapping with the construct of OI (Riketta, 2005).

The contributions of some authors have aimed to differentiate OI from OC. For example, Ashforth and Mael (1989) describe that OC can make it possible to attain individual goals that do not necessarily benefit the group. Moreover, commitment is often considered to be an affective state and OI more as a perceptual or cognitive state (perception of overlapping of the self and the group). Gautam, van Dick, and Wagner (2004) allude that OI is very flexible in the sense that it depends on the saliency of the group and on the context of the interactions with other groups; whereas, OC is an attitude that once established is relatively stable and enduring. OI and commitment are developed based on different sources which gives rise to differences in the consequences deriving from them: OI is developed based on perceived similarity with the organization and based on the idea of sharing a destiny, whereas commitment is developed based on the exchange of resources between the organization and the employee. This leads the members of the organization who highly identify with it to think and act in accordance with the group's norms and values as they have been incorporated into their self-concept. However, highly committed members will be more guided by formal aspects of their job descriptions and supervisor's control. Finally, an employee who works far from his or her organization may very much identify with it but in order for an individual to be very committed to the organization, there must be a real exchange between the employee, colleagues, supervisors and the organization itself.

The empirical evidence related to the relationship between OI and OC is inconsistent as it shows relationships of very different intensities (from 0 to 0.80, see Riketta, 2005). Studies by Cole and Bruch (2006), Gautam et al. (2004), Mael and Tetrick (1992) and van Knippenberg and Sleebos (2006) verify whether these two constructs are empirically distinguishable through the use of confirmatory factor analysis and find that they are two different yet related constructs.

One way to check to what point it is necessary to distinguish OI and OC is to compare the correlates of OI and OC. If no differences are found or if these differences are only found in correlations that are not important to the research or practice, it may be better to abandon one of these concepts in order to prevent conceptual confusion. To this regard, in his meta-analysis, Riketta (2005) discovered that OI seems to differ in the correlations with some work-related attitudes, behaviors and intentions: it is less intensely related to job satisfaction, absenteeism and the intent to stay at the organization than OC; however, OI is more associated with the development of extra-role behavior and work involvement. van Knippenberg and Sleebos (2006) show that once the effect of OI is controlled, OC was the only one significantly related to perceived organizational support, job satisfaction and the intent to leave the organization. But these results seem to be modulated by the type of instrument used to evaluate OI, and therefore, by the type of definition it is given. It has also been found that different dimensions of OI are differentially related to employment consequences (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; van Dick et al., 2004b). For example, Harris and Cameron (2005) found that only the group's contribution to self-esteem dimension (OI) and affective commitment (OC) dimension were negatively and significantly associated with the intent to leave the organization and that only this dimension of OI predicted the perceptions of self-efficacy.

The aim of this work is to provide new empirical evidence that helps differentiate or show the similarity between OI and OC. In this case and given the complexity of both constructs, our analysis will focus on the OI dimension that alludes to sense of belonging and on the affective dimension of OC. To do so, we shall analyse their discriminant validity and their relationships with other constructs which previous research has shown to be antecedents or consequences of them: value congruence and perceived support as antecedents, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and intent to stay at the organization in the future as consequent.

Antecedents of OI and OC: Value Congruence and Perceived Support

Various studies show that the congruence between the people and characteristics of the organization can have an important impact on the people's attitudes and behavior (Chatman, 1989, for example). This congruence occurs when the organization is able to meet employee needs, when fundamental characteristics are shared between the organization and the employee, or when these two situations occur at the same time (Kristof, 1996). In this sense, one fundamental characteristic of the employees and of the organization are the "values" (Finegan, 2000). Rokeach (1973) defines a value as an enduring belief that a specific mode of behaving or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to the opposite or reverse. Thus, a value will guide our behaviour over time and in different contexts.

Empirical evidence has been found that shows that a fit of values between the person and the organization is related to commitment (Chatman, 1989; 1991; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). For their part, Mael and Tretrick (1992) used scales to measure the OI that was based on the shared characteristics and experiences between the employee and the organization. But as far as sense of belonging specifically, we have not found any studies that empirically analyse the relationship that exists. Despite this, we shall remember that one of the essential elements to the development of a sense of belonging is the perception that the characteristics of the individuals are articulated with the system or environment. Thus, value congruence could also be considered as a predictor of the development of sense of belonging.

In order to delve further into the role of value congruence in predicting OI and OC, we have decided to differentiate the perception of how the employee's values and the supervisor's values fit on the one hand, and the perception of how the employee's values and the organization's values fit on the other hand.

Organizational support theory (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997) supposes that meeting socioemotional needs and showing the organization's readiness to reward increased work effort leads employees to developing global beliefs related to the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (perceived organizational support). Just as employees develop global perceptions with respect to the support the organization provides them, they also develop general views related to the degree to which supervisors value their contributions and care about their well-being (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002). Various studies have shown the existence of a positive association between perceived support from the organization and perceived support from the supervisor (Eisenberger et al., 1997 and Yoon & Thye, 2000, for example).

It is assumed that perceived organizational support can increase the employee's affective bond to the organization and it has been found to be positively related to affective OC (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990 and Hutchison, 1997, for example). The employee could also develop identification with the organization depending on the extent to which the perceived support is able to satisfy his or her needs for praise and approval (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986). According to Bell and Menguc (2002), an organization that provides support to its members is more likely to have employees that share the organization's values and goals; in other words, that high levels of support can give rise to a greater OI. In fact, the results of their study show a relationship between perceived organizational support and OI. As with the case above, we have not found any studies that specifically analyse the relationship that exists between sense of belonging and the perception of support. Despite this, we shall remember that one of the essential elements for the development of sense of belonging is having felt valued, needed and accepted. To this sense, the perceived support from both the organization as well as the supervisors could also be considered predictors of the development of sense of belonging.

To delve even further into the relationship that exists between perceived support and the development of commitment and sense of belonging, we are also going to include the perception of support from colleagues in the study.

Consequents of OI and OC: OCB and Intent to Stay in the Future at the Organization.

OCB has been defined in several different ways, but in general it alludes to employee activities that exceed the formal job requirements and contribute to effective functioning of the organization (Finkelstein & Penner, 2004). Most of the conceptualizations proposed in relation to OCB suggest two different dimensions depending on the objective (Finkelstein & Penner): OCB aimed at individuals (OCBI, behaviors that are directed at people or specific groups within the organization) and OCB aimed at the organization (OCBO, behaviors that target the organization per se).

van Knippenberg (2000) argues that OI promotes a sense of oneness with the organization which makes the person adopt the organization's perspective and goals as if they were his or her own, and this eventually influences his or her performance. Because in-role performance is determined by various factors outside the person's direct control, the positive effect of OI on performance would be more obvious when showing extra-role behaviours or OCB. Moreover, the other members would also play a significant role in the self-concept of the employees that highly identify with the organization. Helping others would make sense as long as this would contribute to helping oneself (van Dick, Grojean,

Christ, & Wieseke, 2006). Studies conducted by Bell and Menguc (2002), O'Reilly and Chatman (1986), Riketta (2005) and van Dick et al. provide empirical evidence that supports the relationship described between OI and OCB. In relation to the specific dimension of sense of belonging, no studies have been found that have analysed the possible relationship. With respect to OC, several studies show the existence of a significant relationship with development of OCB (LePine, Erez, & Johnson, 2002, for example).

Employees who leave is one of the most important problems organizations face because it has a significant and immediate effect on organizational effectiveness (Bishop, Scott, & Burroughs, 2000). Many researchers such as Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) have demonstrated that the intent to do something is the most direct predictor of the behavior. In this sense, most research that has attempted to predict voluntary turnover have chosen to use measures related to the intent to show this behavior or the intent to stay at the organization as an employee.

When a person heavily identifies with an organization, the organization becomes a part of their self-concept and the individual becomes psychologically connected to the organization in such a way that their own future is defined by the organization's future (van Dick et al., 2004a). Studies by van Dick et al. and by Harris and Cameron (2005) show the existence of a relationship between OI and intent to leave. The last of these studies shows that the dimension sense of belonging significantly correlated with intent to leave, but it was not a significant predictor of this. In relation to the consequences deriving from CO, numerous studies can be found that show the relationship that exists with intent to leave (for example, Vandenberghe & Bentein, 2009). A meta-analysis completed by Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky (2002) shows that out of all of the commitment dimensions, affective commitment is the one that has the strongest relationship with intent to leave and actual turnover.

Method

Participants

Participating in the study was a total of 292 workers from the GSS Group, which is a company that specializes in contact centre services. 13.90% of the employees at said company participated in the study and all of them were members of the Operations Department. 67.1% were women and 32.5%, men. Mean age was 33.07 (SD = 8.27). With regard to educational level, 5.1% had primary school education, 47.9% secondary education and, finally, 45.5% had college degree. The period of time served by these workers at the organization ranged from one month to 10 years (M = 28.74 months, SD = 22.80 months) and more than half worked part-time (54.8%).

Instruments

The study participants completed a questionnaire that included the following measures:

Affective commitment. A Spanish adaptation of the reduced version of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) created by Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) was used to evaluate this construct. The original scale was translated to Spanish and a bilingual person in English and Spanish evaluated the equivalency of the content of each item in order to carry out this adaptation. Some changes were made in this adaptation in order to adjust the items to standard Spanish expressions. This instrument includes 9 items that have a Likert-type response format which ranges from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). Some examples of the items are: *"I'm really concerned for the future of this company", "I tell my friends this is a great company to work for"*. The internal consistency obtained was 0.91.

Sense of belonging. In this case, an adaptation to Spanish and the organizational environment of seven of the 18 items comprising the scale developed by Hagerty and Patusky (1995) was used to evaluate the psychological state of sense of belonging. The same procedure described above was followed to carry out this adaptation. Said scale has a response format that ranges from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). Some examples of the items used are: *"I don't really fit in this company", "I could disappear for days and nobody at the company would miss me"*. The internal consistency index obtained was 0.77.

Congruence between the personal values, the supervisor's values and the organization's values. To evaluate this congruence, a Spanish adaptation of the list of values described in McDonald and Gandz (1992), and the same procedure employed by Finegan (2000) was used: the participants were provided with the definition of each value and then were asked to evaluate the value taxonomy three times: in relation to the importance each value had for them, in relation to the importance they believed each value had for their supervisor, and finally, in relation to the importance they believed each value had for the organization. In all cases, the importance was evaluated with a 5-point Likert type response format that ranges from 1 (not very important) to 5 (very important). Once this information was obtained, the degree of fit existing between the employee and supervisor, and between the employee and the organization was calculated. To do so, the assessments of the importance attributed to each value by the employee and by the supervisor, and by the employee and by the organization were subtracted in absolute terms so as to calculate the distance between them. Once these distances were calculated, the total differences found were added together giving rise to two variables: one that referred to the fit or distance between the employee and supervisor, and another that referred to the fit or distance between the employee and the organization.

Perceived support. The perception of the support received from colleagues, the supervisor and from the organization was evaluated. To evaluate support perceived from colleagues a scale comprised of 5 items was created with a response format that ranges from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). Some examples of the items are: *"My colleagues help me whenever I need it", "I have a good relationship with my co-workers"*. The internal consistency index obtained was 0.83. The scale employed in the study by Lynch, Eisenberg, and Armeli (1999), adapted to Spanish following the same procedure described above in relation to the affective commitment and sense of belonging scales, was used to evaluate both the perceived support from the supervisor as well as the perceived support from the organization. Said scale comprises 8 items with a response format that ranges from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). Some of the items are: *"... really cares about my well-being", "... help me when I have a problem"*. The internal consistency indexes obtained were: 0.86 (supervisor support) and 0.85 (organization support).

Organizational citizenship behavior. A Spanish adaptation of the scale designed by Lee and Allen (2002) (Dávila & Finkelstein, 2010) was used to evaluate this type of behavior. The scale is comprised of 16 items with a 5-point Likert type response format that ranges from 1 (never) to 5 (always). This instrument makes it possible to evaluate two dimensions: OCBO and OCBI. Some of the items are: *"Demonstrate concern about the image of the organization", "Give up time to help others who have work or nonwork problems"*. The internal consistency obtained in this study was 0.85 for the first factor and 0.74 for the second.

Intent to stay at the company in the future. It was operationalized through an item which asked the employees to evaluate the likelihood of remaining in their job at the company one year later. A 5-point Likert type response format that ranges from 1 (not at all likely) to 5 (highly likely) was used.

Procedure

The researchers arranged visits with the various services comprising the GSS Group telephone platforms to apply the questionnaire to different groups of no more than 15 employees, formed randomly throughout the workday using a non-probability sampling method. The questionnaires were applied in training rooms prepared for this purpose. The employees' participation in the research was completely voluntary and they were informed that their data would be kept completely confidential so as to respect the participants' anonymity.

Results

To achieve the proposed objective, confirmatory factor analyses, correlation analyses and multiple regression analyses were carried out using the statistical analysis packages IBM SPSS Statistics 19 and IBM SPSS Amos 19.

In order to analyse the discriminant validity of the sense of belonging and affective commitment, three measurement models were contrasted that varied based on the number of factors and the correlation or independence between them. In all cases, the maximum likelihood method was used in order to conduct the confirmatory factor analyses. The goodness-of-fit indexes related to each one of the models are found in Table 1. As can be seen, the only two models that in general acceptably fit with the data are the orthogonal two-factor model and the related two-factor model. The related two-factor model presents slightly better goodness-of-fit indexes and the χ^2 test of differences shows that such differences are significant ($\Delta\chi^2_{(1)} = 7.56$, $p < .01$). Based on these results, it could be concluded that the sense of belonging and affective commitment scales evaluate two different constructs, although they are related. Despite this, it must be kept in mind that the χ^2 test of differences has the same weaknesses as χ^2, meaning it could be influenced by the sample size and tend to show trivial differences as significant.

As far as the relationship between sense of belonging and affective commitment with other variables, Table 2 shows the correlations, means and standard deviations for all of the variables analysed.

The results obtained (Table 2) showed that there was a significant correlation between sense of belonging and affective commitment ($r = .14$, $p < .05$). In relation to the antecedent variables, it was established that sense of belonging was significantly and negatively related to the distance of values between the employee and the supervisor ($r = -.18$, $p < .01$) and between the employee and the organization ($r = -.19$, $p < .01$); and significantly and positively to the three types of perceived support

Table 1
Results of confirmatory factor analyses

Model	χ^2	df	p	χ^2/df	CFI	GFI	RMSEA	IFI	TLI
One-factor	676.67	104	.00	6.50	.74	.71	.13	.74	.70
Orthogonal two-factor	296.08	104	.00	2.84	.91	.89	.08	.91	.90
Oblique two-factor	288.52	103	.00	2.80	.91	.89	.07	.91	.90

Table 2

Means, standard deviations and correlations for variables analysed

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Sense of belonging	—						
2. Commitment	.14*	—					
3. Fit E-S.	−.18**	−.40**	—				
4. Fit E-O.	−.19**	−.63**	.59**	—			
5. PSC	.45**	.23**	−.25**	−.16**	—		
6. PSS	.24**	.39**	−.66**	−.39**	.33**	—	
7. PSO	.22**	.61**	−.39**	−.67**	.23**	.49**	—
M	4,36	2.81	18.75	26.67	4.25	3.72	2.99
SD	.65	.87	15.84	19.39	.68	.78	.84

Variables	1	2	3	4	5		
1. Sense of belonging	—						
2. Commitment	.14*	—					
3. OCBO	.17**	.63**	—				
4. OCBI	.24**	.15**	.45**	—			
5. Intent to stay	.16**	.30**	.26**	.06	—		
M	4.36	2.81	3.51	4.05	3.40		
SD	.65	.87	.76	.53	1.31		

Note: *p < .05; **p < .01. Commitment: affective commitment; Fit E-S: distance between the employee and supervisor; Fit E-O: distance between the employee and the organization; PSC: perceived support from colleagues; PSS: perceived support from the supervisor; PSO: perceived support from the organization; OCBO: OCB aimed at the organization; OCBI: OCB aimed at individuals; Intent to stay: intent to continue one year later.

(PSC: $r = .45$; $p < .01$; PSS: $r = .24$; $p < .01$; PSO: $r = .22$; $p < .01$). With respect to affective commitment, the relationship pattern found is the same as for sense of belonging, with differences in the intensity of these relationships: it was significantly and negatively associated to the distance of values between the employee and the supervisor ($r = −.40$; $p < .01$) and between the employee and the organization ($r = −.63$, $p < .01$); and was significantly and positively associated with the three types of perceived support (PSC: $r = .23$; $p < .01$; PSS: $r = .39$; $p < .01$; PSO: $r = .61$; $p < .01$).

When the relationship between sense of belonging and the consequent variables was analysed (Table 2, bottom), we found that all of the existing relationships were positive and significant (OCBO: $r = .17$, $p < .01$; OCBI: $r = .24$, $p < .01$; intent to stay: $r = .16$, $p < .01$). The same was also found with respect to affective commitment, but the magnitude of these relationships changed (OCBO: $r = .63$, $p < .01$; OCBI: $r = .15$, $p < .01$; intent to stay: $r = .30$, $p < .01$).

To delve further into depth in the relationships between the antecedent variables and sense of belonging and affective commitment, a regression analysis was carried out where the antecedent variables were entered as predictors of sense of belonging and affective commitment, respectively. The results (Table 3, top) showed that the perceived support from colleagues was the only significant predictor in predicting sense of belonging ($\beta = .41$, $p < .001$). However, the most important predictor of affective commitment was the distance between the employee's and the organization's values ($\beta = -.40$, $p < .001$), followed by the perceived support from the organization ($\beta = .30$, $p < .001$). The predictive variables accounted for 21% of the variance in sense of belonging and 47% of the variance in affective commitment.

As in the previous case, in order to delve deeper into the relationships found a regression analysis was carried out where commitment and sense of belonging were entered as predictors of the consequent variables (Table 3, bottom). It was verified that affective commitment was the only significant predictor of OCBO ($\beta = .62$, $p < .001$). As for OCBI, the most important predictor was sense of belonging ($\beta = .22$, $p < .001$) but affective commitment also appeared to be a significant predictor ($\beta = .12$, $p < .05$). Finally, commitment was the most important predictor of intent to stay ($\beta = .28$, $p < .001$) although sense of belonging was also a significant predictor ($\beta = .12$, $p < .05$). When the collinearity between affective commitment and sense of belonging was analysed (*Tolerance* = .97; *FIV* = 1.02), the statistics show that this was reduced. The percentages of explained variance were 41% for OCBO, 6% for OCBI and 9% for intent to stay.

Table 3

Summary of regression analysis for predicting sense of belonging and affective commitment, and for predicting OCB and intent to stay

Variables	Sense of belonging			Commitment		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Fit E-S.	.00	.00	.06	.00	.00	.01
Fit E-O.	.00	.00	−.10	−.01	.00	−.40***
PSC	.39	.05	.41***	.09	.05	.07
PSS	.07	.06	.09	.07	.07	.06
PSO	.02	.06	.03	.31	.06	.30***
R^2		.21			.47	

Variables	OCBO			OCBI			Intent to stay		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Sense of belonging	.09	.05	.07	.18	.04	.22***	.24	.11	.12*
Commitment	.54	.04	.62***	.07	.03	.12*	.42	.08	.28***
R^2		.41			.06			.09	

Note: * $p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$. Commitment: affective commitment; Fit E-S: distance between the employee and supervisor; Fit E-O: distance between the employee and the organization; PSC: perceived support from colleagues; PSS: perceived support from the supervisor; PSO: perceived support from the organization; OCBO: OCB aimed at the organization; OCBI: OCB aimed at individuals; Intent to stay: intent to continue one year later.

Discussion

The results found allowed us to support the discriminant validity of sense of belonging and affective commitment. Both constructs are related, but are empirically distinctive. These results are coherent with those previously found by Cole and Bruch (2006), Gautam et al., (2004), Mael and Tetrick (1992) and van Knippenberg and Sleebos (2006). The relationship established between them adopts a low value (*r* = .14) using the margins identified by Riketta (2005) in the meta-analysis carried out with prior studies as a reference.

With respect to the association of these constructs with other variables, both sense of belonging as well as affective commitment showed to be significantly associated with all of the antecedent variables studied. But only the perceived support from colleagues made it possible to significantly predict sense of belonging, and only the fit between the employee's and the organization's values, and the perceived support from the organization significantly predicted affective commitment. When the relationship with the consequent variables was analysed, significant relationships were found in all cases, but sense of belonging was only capable of significantly predicting OCBI and intent to stay. This was not the case of affective commitment which proved to be a significant predictor of the two types of OCB and intent to stay. The results found are discussed below.

As manifested by the results, the strategies that foster commitment don't necessarily foster a sense of belonging.

The only common factor is perceived support, but in order to generate a sense of belonging the source of support must be the person's colleagues and in the case of affective commitment, the support must come from the organizational itself. These results are in line with those contributed by van Knippenberg and Sleebos (2006), who found that affective commitment was the only construct associated to perceived organizational support once the effect of organizational identification was controlled. According to these authors, given that organizational commitment is developed based on the exchange of resources between the organization and the employee, a high perception of organizational support would elicit the expectation that efforts in benefit to the organization would be rewarded by the organization on the one hand, and would generate an obligation to repay the organization for the support received on the other hand. For this reason, a high perception of organizational support is more largely associated with commitment to the organization.

In relation to the consequent variables, sense of belonging seems to have a limited utility in predicting OCB and intent to stay because it only appears to be a significant predictor of OCBI and intent to stay, and together with affective commitment accounted for small percentages of variance in these variables. These results are coherent with those noted by Riketta (2005) in that OI was less intensely related to intent to stay, but are not completely consistent with the data showing that OI is more largely associated with the development of extra-role behaviour, because this

greater association would only be present when OCB is aimed at individuals. This result may be related to the type of occupational bond the employees have with the organization. In this sense, Feather and Rauter (2004) showed that OCB was positively related to OC and OI only for the group of permanent employees, but not for the employees linked to the organization through a temporary contract. Although this study did not consider the type of bond between the employees and the organization, information obtained after the fact showed that a high percentage of the employees who participated in the study were connected to the organization via a temporary contract. The work by Cole and Bruch (2006) showed that the hierarchical level of the employees can also give rise to differences in predicting intent to leave: OC was negatively associated with the intent to leave in the upper and middle hierarchical group, and OI was negatively associated to intent to leave only in the case of the lowest hierarchical level. All of the subjects in our study pertained to the lowest hierarchical level.

Both affective commitment as well as sense of belonging appear to have a small capacity to explain OCB aimed at individuals and intent to stay at the organization which is probably due to the fact that other additional variables may be significantly contributing to this explanation, such as perception of justice (Zhou, 2009) or job satisfaction (Whitman, van Rooy, & Viswesvaran, 2010).

In light of the results obtained, in principle the affective commitment construct would seem to be more useful than sense of belonging. But could we say based on this that commitment is more useful than organizational identification? This question is difficult to answer. Proposing to choose one construct over the other based on the current empirical evidence available would still be very risky because it cannot be generalized in absolute terms that the commitment concept is more useful. The role these constructs may have in the development of other desirable consequences for the organization has still not been explored. For example, Hagerty et al. (1992) describe sense of belonging as an important element for mental health and social wellbeing. Along these lines, it is possible that sense of belonging has consequences that are more focused on the individual which in turn may have implications for other aspects of a more relational or organizational nature. Most reasonable in this situation would be to continue analyzing the differences between the dimensions of each construct and, based on these and the utility of each one of them for predicting desirable consequences within the organization, generate a new construct that is capable of incorporating all of the aspects of interest on a theoretical and practical level without overlapping or redundancy. The results found can be a consequence of the OC and OI dimensions evaluated as well as of the instruments used to measure them. It is possible that similar relationships are not established when analyzing dimensions other than commitment (continuance or normative

commitment) and OI (cognitive centrality for the self-concept or the organization's contribution to self-esteem). For example, although the dimensions of OI are positively related, they can be relatively independent in some cases. An organization may be very central to an employee's self-concept, but the employee may experience negative feelings in relation to the organization or not have a sense of bond with his or her colleagues (Harris & Cameron, 2005).

On the other hand, with respect to the relationship that may exist between OI and OC, future studies could also approach the possible mediating role OC or OI may play in predicting other variables. For example, Bergami and Bagozzi (2000) demonstrated that OI is indirectly related to OCB through affective commitment. However, Sass and Canary (1991) alluded that identification could be considered a process and commitment a consequence of this process.

Based on the results obtained, the strategies to use to foster affective commitment and sense of belonging would be different. In the case of affective commitment, it would be desirable to promote value congruence within the organizations and perceived organizational support. McDonald and Gandz (1991) describe some of the possible strategies to promote value congruence: recruit and select candidates with values that are congruent with the organization's, socialize employees in the organization's values or carry out actions to modify the organization's values thus responding to the needs perceived by its employees or by the environment in which it is found. In relation to perceived support from the organization, Eisenberger et al. (1986) described that symbolic benefits (recognition and praise, for example) and materials (salary and incentives, for example) increase perceived support as employees attribute them to the organization's willingness and not to outside factors that may have required the organization to provide them (pressure from unions, for example).

On the contrary, to stimulate a sense of belonging to the organization, the best thing to do would be to generate practices that are able to encourage the perception of support from colleagues, such as by creating cohesive work teams and other strategies that may foster the establishment of healthy interpersonal relations among employees.

As far as the limitations of the study, it must first be emphasized that this study was completely based on self-reporting measures. Our interest was not focused on obtaining a precise measure of the concepts studied but rather on discerning people's perceptions on each aspect. Another limitation was the use of a transversal design given its implications when establishing causality relationships. It would have been desirable to have used a longitudinal design to analyse the development of the sense of belonging and commitment over time, how the antecedent variables act in this development and to what extent they are associated to the consequent variables described. Finally, the fact that the sample is from a single organization that

fundamentally does one type of service could have had some type of effect on the variance observed when measuring some variables.

Our results help show that OI and OC are different constructs that also present differences with respect to their origin and consequences. Only a more in-depth analysis of the differences between their dimensions would make it possible to choose to maintain one construct or another, or to create a new one that is capable of holding all of the facets of interest both theoretically as well as practically in an effort to avoid redundancy and overlapping.

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