

# Work Congruence and Excellence in Human Resource Management:

Empirical Evidence from the Israeli Nonprofit Sector

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*Two data samples ( $N_1 = 244$ ,  $N_2 = 155$ ) were used to test hypotheses regarding the effect of person-organization fit and met expectations (ME) on the performance of nonprofit employees. One first sample was collected from employees of a public sector organization. Findings revealed job satisfaction and organizational commitment were higher in employees who better fitted the organizational sphere and in those who better fulfilled their expectations. These employees' intentions of voice, in-role performance, and organizational citizenship behavior also increased as a result of higher ME. The second sample was collected from employees of a third sector organization. These findings also supported the centrality of ME in determining work outcomes. The authors conclude that expectations exert a notable effect on work outcomes for nonprofit employees. Moreover, person-organization fit has a secondary effect. Several theoretical and practical implications of these results, especially for nonprofit systems, are noted in the final section.*

*Keywords: human resource management; met expectations; job satisfaction; organizational commitment; nonprofit sector*

What is the secret of organizational excellence and success? What are the conditions that foster performance and make some organizations better than others? The scientific community has suggested many competing answers to these questions. Examples are better goal setting (Hollensbe & Guthrie, 2000), effective organizational structure (O'Toole & Meier, 1999), greater creativity and innovation (Golembiewski & Vigoda, 2000), improved flexibility and adherence to dynamic environments (Priem, Rasheed, &

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Kotulic, 1995), and more intelligent leadership (Gerstner & Day, 1997). No one disputes that excellent human resource management is a momentous element and is inherently built into the fabric of all the various answers.

Effective human resource management is a crucial and elementary construct of successful organizations whether private, public, voluntary, or other. But should we always and under all conditions focus on bringing the best qualified human forces into organizations? This question is not as simple as it might seem. It carries economic and social implications related to cost-benefit considerations of purchasing the most expensive product in the labor market, with no assurance that it suits the organization's needs. This question also illuminates a dilemma in exceedingly productive markets where the competition for quality employees is exacting.

Excellence in contemporary human resource systems is a precondition that allows modern organizations to grow and prosper. Organizations have always searched for the finest and most expert employees available in the labor market and will continue to do so. Nevertheless, today, many organizations face another pressing need, which somehow competes with the goal of employing only the best human resource. This is the necessity to identify, locate, recruit, and retain the best fitted and most congruent individuals for specific work, jobs, and organizations; the craft of creating congruence between people and organizations proves to be the most urgent mission for modern human resource systems.

The goal of this study was thus threefold: (a) to develop a better understanding of the meaning of congruence in the workplace and to suggest one way of measuring it, (b) to explore the relationship between aspects of work congruence and a variety of work outcomes in two nonprofit organizations, and (c) to draw conclusions on possible implications of these relationships for organizations in general and for the nonprofit sector especially.

## THE ESSENCE OF WORK CONGRUENCE AND ITS MEANING IN THE NONPROFIT SECTOR

Congruence between individuals and organizations generally refers to an employees' basic compatibility with their workplaces and specific jobs. It also reflects individuals' levels of fulfilled aspirations and expectations from various constructs of the work sphere such as coworkers, supervisors, physical conditions, rewards, career development, or social relations (Blau, 1964; Vroom, 1964). More specifically, theory has suggested two core aspects of

individual-organizational congruence: person-organization fit (POF) and employees' level of met expectations (ME).

Bretz and Judge (1994) suggested that POF reflects the interface between people and institutions. They proposed four different perspectives of such a fit. The first assesses the degree to which individual knowledge, skills, and abilities match job requirements. The second determines the degree of congruence between individual needs and organizational reinforcement system and structure. The third matches patterns of organizational values and patterns of individual values. The fourth perspective concerns individual personality and perceived organizational image as key constructs of POF. According to Wanous, Poland, Premack, and Davis (1992) employees' ME represents the discrepancy between what people encounter on the job in the way of positive and negative experiences and what they expected to encounter. Expectations also reflect a set of anticipations about what individuals are able to fulfill in the workplace and, more important, the actual sense of personal capability of making these aspirations real.

The classic works of Vroom (1964) and Blau (1964) prepared the ground for our theoretical understanding and inquiry of fit and expectations in the workplace. In fact, one of the most significant assumptions by these researchers was that fit and expectations are mutually related. When one's personal characteristics and attitudes are close to those of the workplace, a better fit is achieved between employees and their organizations. Moreover, people need to fit their work environments as much as organizations need to fit the people. Such a better fit enhances employees' ME while expectations significantly affect employees' motivation, perceptions, and performance in the workplace. Vroom thus concluded that fit and expectations are essential for motivating people at work. Hence, expectations and actual capability to fulfill them are elementary for appropriately matching employees with particular jobs or work environments. They represent a psychological state of mind differently framed by individual according to their ambitions and personal characteristics, which needs to cohere with the collective demands and expectations in a wider organizational context. Managers who do a better job of successfully matching individuals with their workplace also promote levels of ME and increase the general congruence, which is so essential for a successful organizational process (Chatman, 1989).

Work congruence, fit, and expectations have been mentioned in their general organizational context. But this study focuses on work congruence in nonprofit organizations for two reasons that somehow conflict. The first

rests on similarities between nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and the second is based on inherent differences between them. Clearly, the public and the third sector are similar in that both are not-for-profit organizations, primarily service-oriented, and measured by performance indicators that are substantially different from those of the private and for-profit sector. However, these two sectors also differ in terms of organizational culture, climate, and atmosphere as well as in structure and size (Glisson & Martin, 1980; Ostroff & Schmitt, 1993). For example, third-sector organizations highly benefit from and are inspired by the active involvement of volunteers who, as described elsewhere, contribute to a more spontaneous and participatory culture, a better flow of information, and the healthy creation of informal social contacts in the organization. Public-sector organizations are more subject to bureaucratic forms of action and highly inflexible routines that are less favorable to employees and to citizens as clients (Vigoda, 2001).

As suggested by Herman and Renz (1999), nonprofit and for-profit organizations have a wide range of managerial similarities, and this calls for better applicability of theories from the more established field (for-profit) to the relatively new field (nonprofit). To increase effectiveness and attain higher performance, nonprofit organizations need to use correct management knowledge, methods, and skills previously tested and supported in for-profit firms. The general theory of work congruence, rooted in business management, organizational behavior, and human resource management (e.g., Chatman, 1989, 1991; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991), may be transferable to the nonprofit sector and may contribute to its exploration and good managerial development. In respect of this view, our study reexamined conventional knowledge in an unconventional arena.

The other view may suggest that work congruence deserves special attention and consideration in the nonprofit sector precisely due to its being markedly different from for-profit agencies. Although all employees must have a certain level of fit and adherence with their organizational climate and atmosphere, the environment of nonprofit organizations is unique and highly distinguished from ordinary for-profit companies where materialistic values take the lead in individual-organizational relationships. Recent studies have suggested that employees in the nonprofit sector face a substantially different organizational atmosphere and culture from that encountered by employees in for-profit organizations. For example, Brower and Shrader (2000) found that profit and nonprofit boards differed in types of ethical climates and Armstrong (1992) argued that voluntary and nonprofit organizations frequently apply different styles for management of commitment and diversity among personnel. These studies and others pro-

mote the idea that the nonprofit sector consists of a more co-operative culture than does the culture of other organizations and that its internal managerial processes deserve special examination and consideration.

In line with this, the meaning of fit as well as the nature of expectations may be substantially different in for-profit and nonprofit organizations. For example, employees in for-profit firms are primarily expected to respond properly to market demands and economic transitions that may affect the firms' stability, profitability, and competitiveness. They are encouraged to put clients first and to even put the more significant clients ahead of others. In addition, they work under consistent and continuous pressure to comply with any decision that may potentially increase the firms' economic outputs. Compared with the for-profit sector, employees in modern nonprofit organizations are expected to adjust to an even more complex and demanding environment. Such an environment has always emphasized social goals and conveyance of services to vast and highly heterogeneous populations, but in recent years, it has also become highly committed to better economic outputs.

On the social side, employees in the nonprofit sector, unlike their counterparts in for-profit companies, are not allowed, at least formally, to put wealthy or important clients first or to provide them with any special treatment. This is especially relevant to public organizations, which are expected to use their "public capital" only for the purpose of enhancing "public goods." Such organizations are encouraged to treat every client equally according to strict rules of fairness and equity and under more demanding ethical norms (DeLeon, 1996). Consequently, they are obliged to work under fairly strict regulations of compensation, they meet a different style of managerial leadership, and most important, they are subject to heavier pressures due to the demands of accountability. This makes the work site in public and other nonprofit agencies more formal, slow to adjust to the environment, and highly centralized in various respects (Golembiewski & Vigoda, 2000).

Progress on the economic side is even more evident. Indeed, until recent years, nonprofit organizations were simply seen as working but not for profit. They were deemed natural spending authorities that could not (and perhaps should not) be analyzed by simple terminology or knowledge relevant to the free market. Moreover, it was quite acceptable that public and third sector organizations be directed by the state or by voluntary entrepreneurial proxies of the state to spend the people's money on (good) public causes as they saw fit. Therefore, a prevalent, albeit informally anchored perception was that these systems should not bother too

much with traditional cost-and-benefit dilemmas or other economic calculations that private companies confront daily. However, new trends in theory and practice in managing the public sector (e.g., new public management: Lynn, 1998; Stewart & Ranson, 1994) as well as the growing share and influence of third sector organizations in modern economics (e.g., Gidron & Kramer, 1992; O'Connell, 1989) have reframed our understanding and perceptions of these systems. One of the most consequential results was a quest for employees of a different type who are better able to meet the needs of nonprofit agencies. Today, this new generation of employees is expected to be both capable and ready to work under multidirectional and sometimes even conflicting demands. They are encouraged to pay more attention to business requirements, such as improved effectiveness and efficiency, compliance with proper economic demands, and wise spending of collective resources. But on the other hand, they are required to sustain a high level of social norms such as accountability, transparency, and strict standards of morality as well as sound equality and fairness criteria in treating all citizens. Integrating these demands (the social and the economic) is undoubtedly a complex task. It can be fulfilled only with highly fitted personnel and more responsive and flexible organizations that invest effort into human resource management processes and improve their strategies of person-organization adaptation. The question of congruence between employees and their nonprofit working sites has accordingly become more complicated and has emerged as important and meaningful for nonprofit organizations of the modern age. Growing pressures to improve the performance of such agencies and the possibility that more knowledge on work congruence can advance these goals directed us in this study. They stimulated us to investigate the meaning and nature of work congruence in one public and one third sector agency and to explore the relationship of work congruence with employees' performance.

#### **WORK CONGRUENCE AND PERFORMANCE IN THE NONPROFIT SECTOR: A DOUBLE CHALLENGE**

Human resource management faces the double challenge of bringing better fitted individuals into organizations and making organizational arenas compatible with individuals' needs and expectations. There is a compelling demand to develop ideas, theory, strategies, and practical guidelines to improve the interface between employees, employers, and their work environment and to elaborate comprehensive insight that can help human

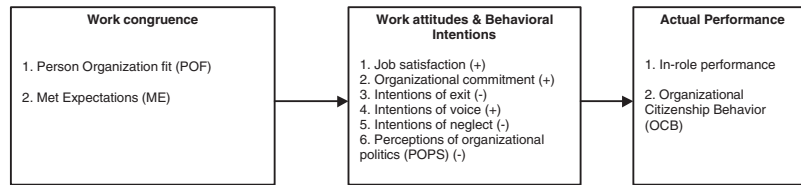


Figure 1. A General Relationship Between Work Congruence and Work Performance

resource managers get better results and improved performance. Undoubtedly, this challenge must also be met by the growing number of nonprofit organizations in modern societies. They serve large numbers of citizens, and their contribution to society is enormous. Theory must suggest better explanations for the predictors and determinants of performance in these arenas as well as assist in staffing these systems with more qualified, sensitive, and highly productive professionals who are more adaptable and sensitive to citizens' needs and requests (Rourke, 1992). One way is to rely more heavily on current knowledge available in business management studies, human resource theory, and organizational behavior theory.

Figure 1 presents the general flow of relationships between work congruence and work performance as stemming from these research fields. Empirical evidence exists in support of the idea that work congruence is related to various work outcomes. First, it has a potential effect on work attitudes and behavioral intentions, and in the longer run, it may result in transformations in employees' and organizations' actual performance. For example, an early study by O'Reilly (1977) found that lack of personality-job congruence was related in complex ways to less positive affect toward work. In a more recent study, O'Reilly et al. (1991) found that POF represented an organizational culture profile that predicted job satisfaction and organizational commitment a year after fit was measured and actual turnover 2 years after. Chatman (1991) supported these findings and concluded that employees whose values most closely match those of their firms' feel most satisfied and intend to and actually remain with the organization longer. Bretz and Judge (1994) added that POF has a positive effect on tenure, job satisfaction, and several aspects of career success. These findings were reconfirmed in numerous more recent studies and replications (e.g., Mueller, Iverson, & Jo, 1999; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Vandenberghe, 2000). An examination of employees' ME as a construct of work congruence yielded quite similar results. Wanous et al. (1992) conducted an exten-

sive meta-analysis of 31 studies and 17,241 people and found that ME was negatively related to intentions to leave the organization and positively related to job survival and job performance. A study by Hom, Griffeth, Palich, and Bracker (1998) found that ME had direct and indirect effects through other mediators on turnover precursors, namely, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Using path analysis and LISREL VIII, Vigoda (2000a) examined the relationships among POF, ME, the Perception of Organizational Politics Scale (POPS), in-role performance, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) in the public sector. Job congruence proved negatively related to POPS and positively related to employee performance. Moreover, POF positively affected ME, whereas POPS mediated the relationship between job congruence and employee performance as represented by in-role and extrarole (OCB) behaviors.

Therefore, we argue that high work congruence as represented by better POF and high ME denotes a more effective and adaptive human resource management, which contributes to more job satisfaction, better organizational commitment, and lower intentions of exit. Furthermore, the general idea put forward here suggests that higher work congruence in the nonprofit sector increases individual and, consequently, organizational performance across a wider set of organizational variables such as greater willingness of voice, lower tendencies to negligent behavior, and lower levels of perceived organizational politics (POPS). With time, these may also enhance in-role performance and OCB. Note, however, that except for Vigoda (2000b), all the studies mentioned previously were conducted in a general organizational context. As far as we could find, no study so far has tried to closely examine these relationships in the wider sphere of the nonprofit sector or to single out specific implications that may allow comparative views with for-profit arenas. As noted earlier, beyond some similarities between nonprofit and for-profit organizations, the former still operate in a unique atmosphere and climate. The nonprofit sector differs considerably from the for-profit in many cultural aspects such as duties, goals, values, compensation, and style of leadership (Armstrong, 1992; Brower & Shrader, 2000; Rainey, 1991). Thus, it seems worth examining a wider congruence-excellence set of relationships in nonprofit systems in which economic and market forces combine with social values. Accordingly, we elaborated the following three hypotheses intended to test a variety of relationships between work congruence and performance, specifically in the nonprofit sector.

*Hypothesis 1:* POF and ME of employees in the nonprofit sector are positively related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intentions of voice.

*Hypothesis 2:* POF and ME of employees in the nonprofit sector are negatively related to intentions of exit and neglect and to perceptions of organizational politics.

*Hypothesis 3:* POF and ME of employees in the nonprofit sector are positively related to in-role performance and OCB, as reported by supervisors.

## METHOD

### Sample and Procedure

Two samples were used to test the hypotheses. The first ( $N_1 = 244$ ) consisted of employees from one large public sector agency dealing with local governance services, and the second ( $N_2 = 155$ ) consisted of employees from a smaller, third sector organization that provides day care services for children. Data from these samples were collected between 1997 and 1998 in the northern area of Israel. The return rate was 86.5% for  $N_1$  and 77.5% for  $N_2$ . Employees in the first sample were asked to provide information about organizational and/or structural and personal variables, ME, POF, and a variety of work outcomes. The second sample allowed for a deeper investigation of the relationship between ME and work outcomes; a measure of POF was not included. Participation in the entire research was voluntary, and employees were assured full confidentiality. In addition, beyond self-reported data, supervisors in the two organizations were asked to provide information on employees' in-role performance as well as OCB. Thus, this article has the advantage of presenting two separate sources of information (self-reports and objective reports) coming from two nonprofit organizations (one public and one third sector).

Table 1 presents a list of the research measures and several descriptive characteristics of the two samples. Means and standard deviation values were found close to or the same as the general values in the overall population of the two studied organizations. This finding increases the representative power of our samples. Cronbach's alpha values were good and mostly well above the minimum requirement of .60 suggested by Nunnally (1967). All these attest to the appropriate construction of the research samples.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Reliability of the Research Variables**

Variable	Study 1 (Public Sector)			Study 2 (Third Sector)		
	M	SD	$\alpha$	M	SD	$\alpha$
Research variables						
Person-organization fit	3.41	.65	.77	—	—	—
Met expectations	3.07	.66	.83	3.21	.75	.85
Job satisfaction	3.55	.70	.76	3.75	.66	.70
Organizational commitment	3.69	.78	.89	4.05	.87	.90
Intentions of exit	2.00	.82	.83	1.78	.92	.84
Voice	3.19	.73	.77	2.78	.80	.62
Neglect	1.90	.65	.70	1.79	.66	.63
Perception of organizational politics	3.04	.59	.76	2.69	.78	.77
In-role performance	4.22	.63	.92	4.38	.54	.91
Organizational citizenship behavior	3.61	.61	.90	3.62	.65	.81
Demographic variables						
Age	44.86	10.23	—	46.05	9.80	—
Education	2.73	1.44	—	1.64	1.19	—

Note: *N* for Study 1 ranges between 217 and 244 due to missing values. *N* for Study 2 ranges between 125 and 155 due to missing values. Measurement scale for all ordinal variables is 1 to 5.

### Measures

*ME.* According to Wanous et al. (1992), employees' ME represent the discrepancy between what they encounter on the job in the way of positive and negative experiences and what they expected to encounter. We measured this variable on a nine-item scale devised by Lee and Mowday (1987). Respondents were asked to describe how well their expectations regarding their immediate supervisors, kind of work, coworkers, subordinates, physical working conditions, financial rewards, career futures and organizational identification, and overall jobs had been met in recent months. The scale ranged from 1 (*less than expected*) to 5 (*more than expected*). Reliability was .83 in Study 1 and .85 in Study 2, similar to the .85 reliability found by Lee and Mowday.

*POF.* A comprehensive, 15-item scale for the measurement of POF was proposed by Bretz and Judge (1994). It was intended to cover the four different perspectives of fit as mentioned previously: (a) fit in knowledge, skills, and abilities; (b) fit in needs and reinforcement system and structure; (c) fit in values; and (d) fit in individual personality and perceived organizational image. We applied all four dimensions of Bretz and Judge's scale with one exception: We included only 13 items, having decided that two items

were unsuited to a nonprofit sector setting. The scale included two sets of questions, the first asking respondents to indicate how descriptive each statement was of their current organizational environments. The second set asked them to indicate how well each statement personally described them. Naturally, the two sets were quite similar in content, and in all, we used 26 (13 × 2) items in our analysis. In line with Bretz and Judge, the amount of fit was operationalized as the sum of the differences between responses to corresponding items on the two sets of questions. The scale for each item was 5 points ranging from 1 (*not at all true*) to 5 (*definitely true*). Reliability of this scale was .77.

*POPS.* The variable perceptions of politics was measured by the shorter version of POPS, which was first developed by Kacmar and Ferris (1991) and reexamined by Kacmar and Carlson (1994). These studies, like this one, defined POPS as the degree to which respondents viewed their work environment as political and therefore unjust and unfair. Following Kacmar and Carlson's study, we used the most parsimonious set of only a 12-item scale for this variable. Sample items are (a) "Favoritism rather than merit determines who gets ahead around here," (b) "Rewards come only to those who work hard in this organization" (reverse-scored), and (c) "There is a group of people in my department who always get things their way because no one wants to challenge them." The scale ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), so that a higher score meant higher perception of organizational politics. Reliability of the scale was .76 in Study 1 and .77 in Study 2, which is quite similar to that reported in other studies (e.g., .74 in Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; .76 in Parker, Dipboye, & Jackson, 1995).

*Job satisfaction.* The measure of job satisfaction used in this study was developed by Schriesheim and Tsui (1980). Respondents were asked to indicate how satisfied they were with six aspects of their job: current job, coworkers, supervisors, current salary, opportunities for promotion, and work in general. The scale for these questions ranged from 1 (*very unsatisfied*) to 5 (*very satisfied*). The reliability achieved in Study 1 was .76 and .70 in Study 2.

*Organizational commitment.* The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire suggested by Porter and Smith (1970) was used in this study. The scale, also known as the Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974) measure, is one of the most visible measures of affective commitment and has enjoyed widespread acceptance and use. In its shortened nine-item version, the measure reflects the following three dimensions of the definition of

commitment suggested by Porter et al.: (a) desire to retain membership in the organization, (b) belief in and acceptance of the values and goals of the organization, and (c) willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization. The following are sample items for this measure: (a) "I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization," (b) "I really care about the fate of this organization," and (c) "I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for the organization." The scale for this measure ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), and the reliability scores were very high: .89 in Study 1 and .90 in Study 2.

*Intentions of exit.* According to Farrell and Rusbult (1992), the exit-quitting category includes job movement within and across organizational boundaries as well as a variety of cognitive activities that precede leaving. This behavior is manifested by intentions of searching for a different job and thinking about quitting. Respondents in both our samples were asked to report how much they agreed with five items on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items are (a) "I often think about quitting" and (b) "During the next year, I will probably look for a new job outside this organization." Reliability was .83 in the first sample and .84 in the second sample.

*Voice.* The voice category includes informal methods of interest articulation and a formal mechanism for attempting to bring about positive change (Farrell & Rusbult, 1992). This behavior incorporates intentions to solve problems with others, suggesting solutions, and taking steps to improve quality of work. Voice was measured by a six-item scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items are (a) "I am not afraid to 'blow the whistle' on things I find wrong with my organization" and (b) "I have a great deal of say over what has to be done in my job." Reliability for this scale was .77 in the first sample and .62 in the second sample.

*Neglect.* The neglect category comprises reactions whereby the employee passively allows job conditions to worsen. Such a behavior is best described as reduced interest or effort at work or increased error rate. In developing this measure, we used the study of Leck and Saunders (1992) and produced a five-item scale ranging, like the others, from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items are (a) "Sometimes I don't fulfill all my duties at work" and (b) "Sometimes I postpone important assignments for an unlimited period of time." A reliability of .70 was achieved in the first sample and .63 in the second sample.

*OCB and in-role performance.* We applied a mixed scale of OCB and in-role performance, as did Williams and Anderson (1991) and Morrison (1994). This was done to define better the boundaries between the two performance measures, which are sometimes difficult to distinguish. Consequently, we clearly distinguished the two concepts both theoretically and methodologically. Although previous studies proved two fairly clear-cut factors of OCB (e.g., Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983), for the purposes of this article, we decided to combine them into one factor, namely, OCB. Hence, OCB implied more of a “good soldier” syndrome of doing things that were “right and proper” for the sake of the organization as well as for specific persons. In-role performance referred to the fulfillment of formal duties by individuals as evaluated by managers. Hence, a 20-item list taken from these studies was presented to the supervisors in both our studies. In Study 1, 21 supervisors and in Study 2, 16 supervisors completed the list and evaluated each of their employees’ behaviors during the past year. OCB was measured by 13 items, and the resultant Cronbach’s alpha was .90 in Study 1 and .81 in Study 2. In-role performance was measured by seven items, and its Cronbach’s alpha was .92 in Study 1 and .91 in Study 2. Each item was measured on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*).

*Personal influences.* The personal variables included one dichotomous variable, marital status (0 = married; 1 = not married); one ordinal variable, education, which was measured on a scale from 1 (partial high school education) to 5 (master’s or higher degree); and one continuous variable, age.

## FINDINGS

Table 2 shows Pearson’s  $r$  correlations among the research variables. First, it is noteworthy that ME and POF are highly correlated ( $r = .48, p < .001$ ) but can be treated as separate variables due to lack of multicollinearity. This is an important point due to some concerns on the overlap and between the two concepts. Additional support for the discriminant and convergent validity of these variables can also be found in previous studies (e.g., Vigoda, 2000a). Second, with the exception of voice in Study 2, ME in both studies showed a significant and consistent relationship with most of the outcome variables. It was positively related to job satisfaction in Study 1 and in Study 2 ( $r = .50, p < .001$  and  $r = .66, p < .001$ , respectively), organizational commitment ( $r = .47, p < .001$  and  $r = .49, p < .001$ , respectively), voice ( $r = .18, p < .01$  in Study 1), in-role performance ( $r = .13, p < .05$  and  $r = .26, p < .01$ , respectively), and OCB ( $r = .19, p < .01$  and  $.25, p < .01$ ,

**Table 2. Pearson's *r* Correlations Between POF, ME, and the Independent Variables**

	<i>Study 1</i> ( <i>Public Sector</i> )		<i>Study 2</i> ( <i>Third Sector</i> )
	<i>Person-Organization</i> <i>Fit</i>	<i>Met</i> <i>Expectations</i>	<i>Met</i> <i>Expectations</i>
Job satisfaction	.34***	.50***	.66***
Organizational commitment	.32***	.47***	.49***
Intentions of exit	-.18**	-.44***	-.41***
Voice	NS	.18**	NS
Neglect	NS	-.30***	-.30***
Perception of organizational politics	-.50***	-.56***	-.46***
In-role performance	NS	.13*	.26**
Organizational citizenship behavior	.13*	.19**	.25**
Person-organization fit	—	.48***	—

Note: *N* for Study 1 ranges between 217 and 244 due to missing values. *N* for Study 2 ranges between 125 and 155 due to missing values. NS = not significant.

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

respectively). It was also negatively related to intentions of exit ( $r = -.44$ ,  $p < .001$  and  $-.41$ ,  $p < .001$ , respectively), neglect ( $r = -.30$ ,  $p < .001$ , in both studies), and POPS ( $r = -.56$ ,  $p < .001$  and  $-.46$ ,  $p < .001$ , respectively). Beyond these, Study 1 showed that POF was positively related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and OCB ( $r = .34$ ,  $p > .001$ ;  $r = .32$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and  $r = .13$ ,  $p < .05$ , respectively) and negatively related to intentions of exit and POPS ( $r = -.18$ ,  $p < .01$  and  $r = -.50$ ,  $p < .001$ , respectively). Study 1 also found a strong and positive relationship between POF and ME ( $r = .48$ ,  $p < .001$ ). These findings provided a preliminary indication that the research hypotheses were oriented in reasonable directions.

Tables 3 and 4 present separate regression analyses of the two samples. These analyses provide limited yet noteworthy support for the relationship between POF and ME and a series of other work outcomes among employees from the nonprofit sector, as suggested in the research hypotheses. According to Study 1, POF and ME were positively related to job satisfaction ( $\beta = .15$ ,  $p < .05$  and  $\beta = .43$ ,  $p < .001$ , respectively) and organizational commitment ( $\beta = .15$ ,  $p < .05$  and  $\beta = .39$ ,  $p < .001$ , respectively). ME was also positively related to behaviors of voice and OCB ( $\beta = .25$ ,  $p < .01$  and  $\beta = .17$ ,  $p < .05$ , respectively). These findings are in line with Hypotheses 1 and 3. In addition, POF was negatively related to POPS ( $\beta = -.31$ ,  $p < .001$ ), whereas ME was negatively related to intentions of exit, neglect, and

**Table 3. Regression Summary for Study 1 (public sector): The Effect of Person-Organization Fit and Met Expectations on Work Outcomes (standardized coefficients)**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Job Satisfaction</i>	<i>Organizational Commitment</i>	<i>Intentions of Exit</i>	<i>Voice</i>	<i>Neglect</i>	<i>Perception of Organizational Politics</i>	<i>In-Role Performance</i>	<i>Organizational Citizenship Behavior</i>
Person-organization fit	.15*	.15*	.02	-.14	.09	-.31***	.01	.04
Met expectations	.43***	.39***	-.44***	.25**	-.33***	-.40***	.13	.17*
Age	.02	-.03	-.01	-.03	-.04	.01	.06	.10
Education	.01	-.13*	.08	.11	.03	-.13*	-.08	-.06
Marital status (1 = married)	.12*	.19**	-.07	-.03	.01	-.10	-.03	-.06
$R^2$	.28	.28	.20	.06	.10	.41	.03	.05
Adjusted $R^2$	.26	.26	.18	.03	.07	.39	.01	.03
$F$	15.34***	15.46***	9.87***	2.42*	4.12***	27.07***	NS	2.20*

Note:  $N$  for Study 1 ranges between 217 and 244 due to missing values.  $N$  for Study 2 ranges between 125 and 155 due to missing values. NS = not significant. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Table 4. Regression Summary for Study 2 (third sector): The Effect of Met Expectations on Work Outcomes (standardized coefficients)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Job Satisfaction</i>	<i>Organizational Commitment</i>	<i>Intentions of Exit</i>	<i>Voice</i>	<i>Neglect</i>	<i>Perception of Organizational Politics</i>	<i>In-Role Performance</i>	<i>Organizational Citizenship Behavior</i>
Met expectations	.67***	.50***	-.42***	-.03	-.30***	-.45***	.26**	.27**
Age	.10	.21**	-.29***	.01	-.03	.03	.14	-.02
Education	-.06	-.15*	-.01	-.04	.08	.05	.23*	-.01
Marital status (1 = married)	.03	-.02	-.01	-.03	.04	.02	.10	.19*
$R^2$	.46	.33	.26	.01	.10	.21	.13	.10
Adjusted $R^2$	.44	.31	.23	.01	.07	.19	.10	.07
$F$	26.74***	15.56***	10.89***	N.S.	3.55**	8.47***	4.05**	2.99*

Note:  $N$  for Study 1 ranges between 217 and 244 due to missing values.  $N$  for Study 2 ranges between 125 and 155 due to missing values. NS = not significant. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

POPS ( $\beta = -.44, p < .001$ ;  $\beta = -.33, p < .001$ ;  $\beta = -.40, p < .001$ , respectively). These findings strongly support Hypothesis 2 for the variable ME and, to a lesser extent, for the variable POF. Hypothesis 2 was not supported regarding the relationship between POF and intentions of exit, voice, and neglect. Furthermore, no relationship was found between ME and in-role performance or between POF and in-role performance. POF was not related to OCB, although ME showed a weak positive relationship with OCB ( $\beta = .17, p < .05$ ). Hence, we concluded that Hypothesis 3 was generally not supported except for the relationship between ME and OCB.

Findings of the second study reconfirmed the positive relationships between ME and several work outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intentions of exit, neglect, POPS, and OCB ( $\beta = .67, p < .001$ ;  $\beta = .50, p < .001$ ;  $\beta = -.42, p < .001$ ;  $\beta = -.30, p < .001$ ;  $\beta = -.45, p < .001$ ;  $\beta = .27, p < .01$ , respectively). These findings provided additional support for Hypotheses 1 and 2 regarding the variable ME. In addition, Study 2 also found a positive relationship between ME and in-role performance, as reported by supervisors ( $\beta = .26, p < .01$ ) and, again, a positive relationship between ME and OCB ( $\beta = .27, p < .01$ ). These findings supported Hypothesis 3 regarding the variable ME.

Note also that the achieved explained variance ( $R^2$ ) in both studies for most of the outcome variables was relatively high. For example, POF and ME accounted for most of the explained variance in job satisfaction (28%), organizational commitment (28%), and POPS (41%), as found in Study 1. Furthermore, in that study, ME alone accounted for most of the explained variance in intentions of exit (20%), voice (6%), neglect (10%), and OCB (5%). In Study 2, ME accounted for most of the explained variance in job satisfaction (46%), organizational commitment (33%), intentions of exit (26%), neglect (10%), POPS (21%), in-role performance (23%), and OCB (10%). These findings provide additional support for the effect of POF and especially for the important effect of ME in determining performances of employees in the nonprofit sector.

#### TOWARD IMPROVED CONGRUENCE IN THE NONPROFIT SECTOR: A KEY TO ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS?

The basic goal of this study was to explore the meaning of work congruence and its relationship with employees' performance in an organizational sphere outside the profit sector. Work congruence was suggested to embody

a certain level of POF and ME, and the study examined the effect of these constructs on various aspects of performance. The study also tried to elaborate further on the special meaning of work congruence for the nonprofit sector. We argued that the task of better matching of individuals and organizations in this sector grows more complex and more challenging with the years. The findings provided some empirical support for the research hypotheses. Work congruence had an effect on work attitudes and behavior dispositions as well as on actual performance measures. According to the relatively high correlation (but not so high as to cause multicollinearity) found between ME and POF ( $r = .48, p < .001$ ), we further suggest that these constructs represent different but related dimensions of work congruence worthy of examination and deliberation in the special context of nonprofit organizations.

What is the added value of our study to organizational behavior literature, in particular, the study of human resource management in the nonprofit sector? First, the findings presented here reconfirmed existing knowledge on the positive relationship between POF and ME and several work outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intentions of exit or turnover (Mueller et al., 1999; O'Reilly et al., 1991; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Vandenberghe, 2000). Here, existing knowledge from the for-profit sector proved relevant and useful. According to these findings, we suggest that at least some of the relationships between work congruence and work outcomes are transferable and generalizable across the private, public, and third sectors. However, in attempting to extend this knowledge, we went on to examine additional relationships between POF and ME and various dimensions of employees' performance that were overlooked in past studies. Among the variables found meaningful here and not investigated so far were neglect, POPS, and OCB.

The negative effect of ME on employees' tendencies to neglect job duties was consistent and relatively strong in both studies. The findings for POPS were even stronger and more impressive and, in addition, were supported by the relatively strong negative relationship between POF and POPS. In fact, both neglect and POPS represent a general negative perception of individuals' work sites (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Vigoda, 2000a, 2000b). When an employee does not fit the organization or when they are incapable of fulfilling a minimum level of expectations in the workplace, that employee may well perceive the organization as political in nature, as unfair, and as treating its members unequally. This may influence employees to react with negative attitudes to their surroundings and to the organization in general. As suggested by Vigoda (2000a), such attitudes and behavioral intentions

may be especially dangerous and harmful for public or nonprofit organizations. In these arenas, alternative reactions to job disapproval (e.g., voice or exit) are less acceptable and less realistic for most employees, who are usually greatly concerned with job security and tenure. To the best of our knowledge, no additional empirical evidence exists today on the effect of work congruence (ME or POF) on these variables in the nonprofit sector. Hence, another contribution of this study is its pointing to intentions of negligence and to POPS as possible outcomes of work incongruence. Future studies are thus encouraged to examine these relationships in other settings beyond the private sector. Such studies will also benefit from comparing their results with ours.

Note also that this study examined the relationship between work congruence and two fairly objective measures of performance reported by supervisors. Although the literature also elaborates on the importance of more objective measurements of performance (e.g., peer evaluations and a 360-degree approach), the method of supervisory evaluations is still the most dominant and effective despite its limitations. This is a significant contribution that deserves further elaboration. In addition, the most conspicuous relationship was found between ME and OCB across the two studies. Theories accumulated over recent decades (e.g., Organ, 1988; Van Dyne, Graham, & Dienesch, 1994; Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997) have treated the concept of OCB in various ways, but as far as we could find, they never closely investigated the possibility that OCB is related to work congruence. The findings of this research may contribute to OCB theory by suggesting that one way of bettering this positive behavior is to improve the interface between individuals and their work sphere by means of continuous assessments of fit and expectations. OCB may therefore be reinforced by improvements in strategies of human resource management such as sophisticated recruitment, selection, or job development programs that promote the fit of individuals to their organizational environment and the fulfillment of their expectations. Again, the findings of our study are especially relevant to the nonprofit sector but should attract attention in for-profit firms as well because most of them face fairly similar human resource problems and dilemmas.

In light of this, we believe it is important to elaborate on another question stemming from our findings that is related to the exact nature of the relationship between POF and ME and employee performance. Theories suggest that fit and expectations rely heavily on each other when better fitted employees are more likely to meet their expectations in the workplace and, on the other hand, that higher ME enhance the fit and adaptability to

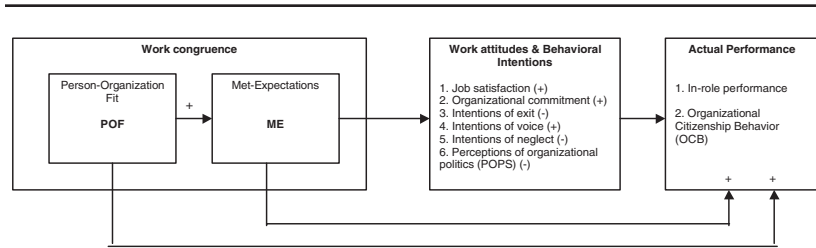


Figure 2. A Suggested Specific Model of the Relationship Between Work Congruence (POF and ME) and Work Performance

Note: POF = person-organization fit; ME = met expectations.

certain work sites. According to our analyses, ME in the public sector are more closely related to the outcome variables than is the POF variable. Because POF was not included in Study 2, we could not deduce its overall relationship with the outcome variables in the third sector organization that it investigated. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to suggest that the general relationship among all constructs examined here is  $POF \rightarrow ME \rightarrow Performance$ . Essentially this implies that POF leads to ME more than ME leads to POF. More specifically, Figure 2 suggests the following pattern of relationships among the research variables:

Still, this question of complex relationships was beyond the scope of this study. It was not tested empirically here, so it must remain a suggestion deserving comprehensive examination in future studies. One way this may be done is through mediation analysis strategy, as suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) and James and Brett (1984). Another is through structural equation modeling, which is specifically designed to test such hypotheses as well as to render causality implications based on comparison of competing research models in the social sciences.

Although not directly related to the research hypotheses, several findings on the effect of the control variables on performance also deserve some attention. Age had a positive effect on organizational commitment and a negative effect on intentions of exit. Employees with a low level of education showed a weaker tendency to be more committed to the organization than did higher educated employees. Married employees showed a higher level of job satisfaction and organizational commitment as well as a stronger orientation toward OCB than did unmarried employees. Nevertheless, as none of the control-demographic variables proved to have a significant relationship with work congruence (POF or ME), our study confirmed the results of Posner (1992), who found no mediating effect of demographic variables on the work congruence–work outcomes relationship.

No study, this one included, is free of limitations. First, although we tried to explain the meaning and importance of work congruence for the nonprofit sector, our two samples investigated a relatively narrow expression of this phenomenon. We used only two measures (POF and ME) and, in fact, the second sample could testify only about ME and its relationship with employees' performance. Further studies should try to develop the meaning of work congruence beyond ME and POF. It may be also useful to extend our view and to examine the relationship between work congruence and additional aspects of performance such as actual turnover or absenteeism. Control for variance in personality and behavioral dispositions and characteristics can be of merit with such a strategy. Second, despite our attempt to provide empirical evidence for one public and one third-sector organization, the external validity of our findings should be treated with caution. The two samples are not cross-sectional and refer to only one culture, the Israeli one. Future studies will benefit from more cross-sectional and cross-cultural data, which may also promote progress toward comparative examinations. Such data will undoubtedly yield better understanding of the actual meaning of work congruence in the nonprofit sector, its relationship with performance, and differences across sectors and cultures.

Beyond the limitations of this study lies a wider value for organizations in general and for human resource management in the nonprofit sector in particular. Although the harmony of values, expectations, and perceptions of individuals and organizations is not a new issue in the general theory of organizational behavior (Blau, 1964; Bretz & Judge, 1994; Vroom, 1964; Wanous et al., 1992), our study generally supports its desirability beyond the profit sector to public and third sector organizations. More congruence between individuals and organizations is especially important for nonprofit organizations, which work in a different atmosphere from for-profit organizations and in a distinct cultural environment. Whereas companies usually seek employees who directly contribute economic inputs to the work sphere, nonprofit organizations may gain even added benefits by recruiting and encouraging better fitted employees who share the organizational values in their wider context. Recruiting and retaining better fitted employees and maintaining a satisfactory level of ME is without a doubt good for organizations of all sectors. Nevertheless, although it is a recommended option for for-profit companies, it is a greater necessity for nonprofit agencies whose culture is more heterogeneous and vague and whose structure, work tradition, values, position, and role in society are more complex. Advancing congruence in the nonprofit sector is an ambitious challenge that has expediency beyond simple economic outputs.

Finally, the importance of work congruence for public and third sector organizations has communal, ecological, educational, and civic-cultural outputs that can be shared by all citizens and that are relevant for society in general. Our study implies the importance of such congruence, yet future endeavors should be dedicated to comparing these findings with similar data in the private sector. All in all, this article suggests that fit and expectations should be taken more seriously by human resource managers in the nonprofit sector on account of their influential and important role in determining multiple aspects of organizational performance.

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