

## PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND JOB PERFORMANCE: DOES THE NEED FOR CONTROL AND THE NEED FOR ACHIEVEMENT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

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This study examined the relationship between job performance and prosocial behavior at work using several variables that to date have received little or no attention in the literature. It focuses on employees' need for control, need for achievement, and the more commonly studied variable of organizational commitment as direct predictors of prosocial behavior and ultimately as indirect antecedents of job performance. Eight hundred and forty-six employees from 41 organizations participated in the study. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) supported a direct relationship between need for achievement and job performance. However, no relationship was found between need for control and job performance. Moreover, when both personality variables were controlled for, the effect of prosocial behavior and commitment on job performance disappeared. This finding suggests that further work on the mediating effects of prosocial behavior and commitment on job performance is needed. Additional suggestions are given about the relationships among, and implications of, prosocial behavior, job performance, attitudinal, and personality variables.

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Effective organizational functioning depends on many differing behavior patterns. As early as 1964 Katz identified patterns involving joining and staying in the organization as well as meeting or exceeding specific standards of performance. He also referred to those behaviors that go beyond specific role requirements, such as cooperating with coworkers, suggesting ways to improve the organization, and speaking favorably about the organization to outsiders. These patterns of behavior are particularly interesting in that they are clearly necessary for organizational survival - the effects of working to rule are rarely advantageous for organizations, and can be definitive in terms of organizational culture. Thus, if such behaviors could be demonstrably linked to job performance, it would be beneficial for organizations to include them in the selection, induction, and training of their employees.

The authors take the view, supported by Cappelli (1995), that certain personality variables may be just as salient as job characteristics or job attitudes and rewards as determinants of job performance. The research examines personality antecedents of prosocial behavior and their links with job performance. Other research using this view has been conducted by Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, and Sagler (1993), Hui and Law (1999) who found a relationship between negative affectivity and organizational citizenship, a concept closely related to prosocial behavior. Our study used the appraisal process as the source of job performance data and investigated the relationship between prosocial behavior and antecedents of performance that have been identified in the literature. The motivational factors include the need for achievement, the need for control, (McClelland, 1961; Stahl, 1986) and organizational commitment (Angle & Perry, 1993).

Although relatively little research has been carried out in this area, it merits study for two main reasons. Firstly, in line with Vroom and Deci (1974) it is likely that people believe that the additional effort involved in extrarole or prosocial behaviors may indirectly or directly improve their work performance, thus increasing their rewards. Secondly, without individuals making a direct, rational link between prosocial behavior and performance, personality traits such as the need for achievement or the need for control may influence task and prosocial behaviors equally well.

With reference to the first point, the demonstration of prosocial behaviors may be seen as an additional, effective way of achieving personal goals (Moorman & Podsakoff, 1992). Worthy (1986) suggested that prosocial behavior represented extra effort and conscientiousness at work. Accordingly he hypothesized a positive relationship between the need for achievement and prosocial behavior. However, Ward (1995) conducted an exploratory study of the motivational factors underpinning the use of competitive or cooperative strategies at work. He failed to find a significant correlation between *cooperation*, which he defined as

*prosocial behavior performed for the common benefit of the donor and the recipient* and the need for achievement. Ward's study also considered the relation between Locus of Control (LoC) and work motivation and found that the use of competitive strategies was negatively correlated with dimensions of control, particularly the belief in control by powerful others. However, it may be hypothesized that the need for personal control, similar to the need for autonomy, may be associated with a need for achievement.

### **PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR IN THE WORKPLACE**

In recent decades much work has been dedicated to the exploration of prosocial behaviors, elsewhere termed *good citizenship behaviors* or *extrarole behaviors* in the workplace (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986; Organ, 1988; Zellars, Tepper, & Duffy, 2002). Prosocial behavior in organizations is broadly linked with the notion of socially desirable behavior, since there are cultural beliefs that people *should* behave prosocially because it is socially desirable or "correct" in some sense. There is no clear-cut definition of the concept of prosocial behavior in the literature and, as mentioned above, considerable overlap exists with other, similar, concepts. This is largely because of the diffuse nature of such behaviors. For example, Brief and Motowidlo (1986) outlined 13 specific kinds of behavior that may be classified as prosocial. They point out that there are difficulties with a definition because the various behaviors may be organizationally functional, individually functional, or dysfunctional. Volunteering to coach a new employee, for instance, contributes to organizational goals. An example of an organizationally dysfunctional prosocial behavior might be offering individual support to a colleague who is publicly critical of the organization or even engaging in behaviors that clearly endanger the organizational goals or reputation in the eyes of other stakeholders (Vardi & Weitz, 2004).

Research has been inconclusive in the area, partly because of the varied consequences of prosocial behavior in organizations, such as improved communications, improved job satisfaction, improved customer/client satisfaction, and subsequently, improved organizational efficiency. These suggestions assume positive outcomes for prosocial behavior, and, by implication, negative outcomes for antisocial behavior. The possible negative implications of antisocial behaviors are inefficiency, poor decision making, and ineffective job performance, largely resulting from conflict between organizational and individual considerations. As a consequence of these considerations, any definition of prosocial behaviors in the workplace must be broad and nonspecific. For example, Brief and Motowidlo (1986) argued that prosocial organizational behavior is behavior that is a) performed by a member of an organization, b) directed toward an individual, group, or organization with whom/which s/he interacts and, c) performed with the intention of promoting the

welfare of others. In addition to these criteria, prosocial behavior is specifically that which is voluntary and not required by role definition. As such it is very similar to organizational citizenship behaviors (Organ, 1988).

### **PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND WORK PERFORMANCE: THE ROLE OF THE NEED FOR ACHIEVEMENT AND THE NEED FOR CONTROL**

Puffer (1987) found a modest relation between prosocial behavior and work performance, and found that the need for achievement was one of three variables specifically related to prosocial behavior. The other two were satisfaction with material rewards and a low level of perceived peer competition. This study also considers the role of the mediating factor of organizational commitment, regarded by Matthew and Zajac (1990) as critical for job performance. Although various studies have suggested that subfactors of organizational commitment (i.e., affective commitment and continuance commitment) have differential relations with job performance (e.g., Meyer, Pounonen, Gellatly, Goffin, & Jackson, 1989) we have decided, mainly for reasons of parsimony, to use the more frequent and general variable of organizational commitment. In addition, researchers such as O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) have suggested a framework in which two classes of dependent variables are related to performance. These are: a) in-role or job-prescribed behaviors, and b) extrarole or prosocial acts that are not of direct benefit to the organization or the individual and are not prescribed. The researchers present results suggesting that organizational commitment, based on identification with the organization and internalization of its values, will be related to extrarole, prosocial behaviors.

Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982) and Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974) have also specifically acknowledged this link, suggesting that organizational commitment indicates a predisposition to prosocial behavior. The broad concept of Organizational Commitment has also been related to other performance-related concepts, including *citizenship*, defined as *prosocial behavior towards the organization*. Moskal (1995) reports that the employees promoted most frequently earn high marks for job performance, engage more frequently in good corporate-citizenship behavior, are viewed as more committed to the organization, and are unlikely to express an intention to voluntarily leave the company. A field study conducted by Allen and Rush (1998) indicated that attributions by managers concerning employees' organizational-citizenship behaviors mediated their overall evaluation of performance. MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Fetter (1993) studied the impact of organizational-citizenship behavior on evaluations of salesperson performance and hypothesized that organizational-citizenship behaviors impacted on objective sales productivity. Thus the relationship between organizational commitment and extrarole citizenship or prosocial behaviors is worthy of further investigation.

### THEORETICAL MODEL

We examined a model integrating the variables mentioned above. The model is presented in Figure 1 and suggests that job performance, as measured by appraisal processes, will be directly affected by organizational commitment and by prosocial behavior, and indirectly affected by the personality variables of need for achievement and control. In addition, it is expected that need for achievement and need for control will be directly related to organizational commitment and to prosocial behavior, while organizational commitment will be directly related to prosocial behavior.

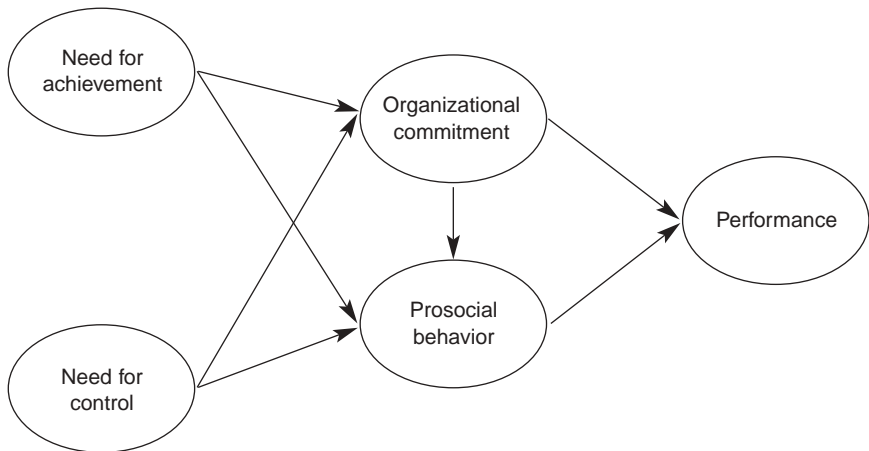


Figure 1: The theoretical model

## METHOD

### SAMPLE AND TOOLS

Questionnaires were distributed to 1540 individuals from a total of 41 organizations. All participating organizations were defined as being “hi-tech” (Baruch, 1997), had been in existence for more than 5 years, and employed more than 100 people. Thirty-nine of the organizations operated in Israel, and two were in the UK. The total response rate was 55%, with 846 questionnaires returned, above the average for similar studies (cf. Baruch, 1999; Roth & BeVier, 1998). Some 66% of the respondents had an academic degree; almost 90% had a professional or technical education. This level of education is higher than that usually reported in the literature. Nevertheless, this sample is considered representative of managers in hi-tech organizations. Demographically, 87% were males, their average tenure in the organization was 11.1 years (*SD* 7.4), and the

average age was 41 (*SD* 7.5). There were 726 male respondents and 111 female respondents. Nine of the responses were unusable. In most cases we applied established measures for the variables which resulted in reasonable reliabilities. Our scales of organizational commitment, need for achievement, and need for control were adapted from the study by Cook, Hepworth, Wall, and Warr (1981), while the scales of prosocial behavior and job performance were developed especially for this study based on previous works mentioned above. For job performance we used a combination of direct manager appraisal and self-perceived appraisal (Baruch, 1996). Therefore, the performance measure used was an average of performance appraisal scores from respondents' recent appraisals (standardized to a score out of 100) and a subjective estimate of what respondents believed their own score *should* have been.<sup>1</sup>

### PROCEDURE AND DATA ANALYSIS

Meetings were held with the Human Resources Manager (or equivalent) to determine hierarchical levels in the organization. The managers identified a stratified sample of professional and managerial staff from each level. Questionnaires were distributed to the identified individuals for return to the researcher via preaddressed envelopes. Confidentiality was assured, and reminder letters were sent two to three weeks after the initial distribution of the questionnaires.

Exploratory factor analysis was first conducted using the SPSS package to ensure that we were using separate reliable measures for assessing the variables. In order to investigate the possibility that some of the measures were essentially tapping into the same factor such as General Goodwill, we also used LISREL 8 to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis. Its results confirmed that the main set of variables comprised separate factors. Next, a correlation matrix was produced to analyze elementary relationships among the research variables. Only then was Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) used to test the hypothesized model. The data were analyzed using LISREL 8. A covariance matrix of all observed variables was prepared using PRELIS. In order that the measurement error of each latent variable could be assessed, each scale was split into two separate estimators, each containing half the items. Path coefficients were calculated for the hypothesized model using LISREL 8. The hypothesized model was subjected to two tests: first, that the hypothesized paths in the model were both positive and significant and, second, that the covariance matrix implied by the model was a close fit with the observed covariance matrix. The fit of each model to the data was assessed using five indices: the chi square statistic, the chi square/degrees of freedom ratio, the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI); the root mean square

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<sup>1</sup>Full details on the scales are available directly from the authors or on [http://poli.haifa.ac.il/~eranv/material\\_vigoda/publications.html](http://poli.haifa.ac.il/~eranv/material_vigoda/publications.html)

residual (RMSR) and the nonnormed fit index (NNFI). The overall goodness of fit of a model is assessed by comparing the sample covariance matrix with the estimated covariance matrix implied by the model.

## RESULTS

**TABLE 1**  
CORRELATIONS MATRIX AMONG THE RESEARCH VARIABLES

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Prosocial behavior	-								
2. Organizational Commitment	.42***	-							
3. Education	.01	-.05	-						
4. Age	.06	.25**	.08*	-					
5. Salary	.05	.23**	.37**	.33**	-				
6. Present hierarchical level	.07*	.16**	.25**	.25**	.54**	-			
7. Highest hierarchy level expected in career	.11**	.09*	.24**	.04	.40**	.68**	-		
8. Performance	.27**	.20**	.21**	.04	.14**	.00	.07	-	
9. Need for control/power	.28**	.19**	.05	.01	.20**	.23**	.29**	.16**	-
10. Need for achievement	.43**	.29**	.07*	-.04	.09*	.09*	.17**	.36**	.39**

*N*=846

\*\* .01<*p* \* .05<*p*

Table 1 presents the correlation matrix for the research variables. Significant and positive relationships were found between prosocial behavior and organizational commitment (.42 sig at .01), need for achievement (.43, sig at .01), need for control (.28, sig at .01), and job performance (.27, sig at .01). Organizational commitment was positively related to job performance (.20 sig at .01), need for control (.19 sig at .01), and need for achievement (.29 sig at .01). Job performance was positively related to need for control (.16 sig at .01) and need for achievement (.36 sig at .01). Finally, need for control and need for achievement were positively related (.39 sig at .01). This finding has led us to allow the errors of need for achievement and need for control to correlate in the tested model. All these relationships are supportive of the hypothesized model.

Figure 2 presents the tested model, its path coefficients, and the fit indices. As this figure shows, paths from need for control and from commitment to performance were nonsignificant. More importantly, the model fitted the data poorly as measured by all the fit indices. A second analysis was carried out to examine whether the model fit would be significantly improved by adding a direct path from need for achievement to performance. This reduced the chi squared by 47.2, a very significant improvement. Finally, need for control was discarded from the model, because paths from need for control were

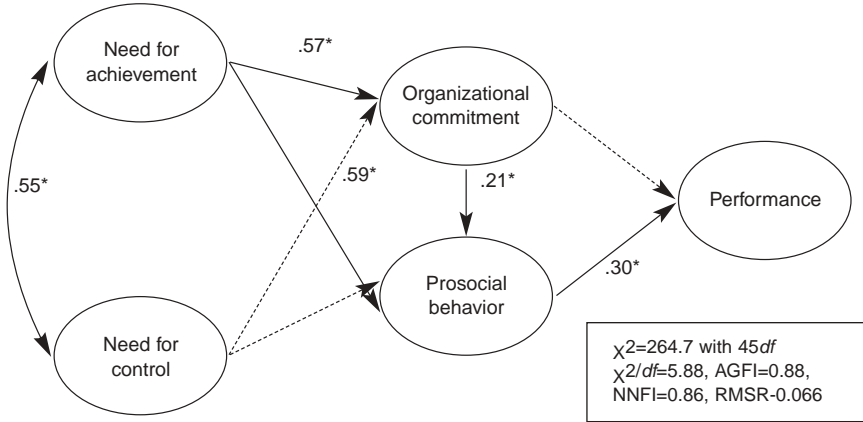


Figure 2: Original hypothesized model with path coefficients.

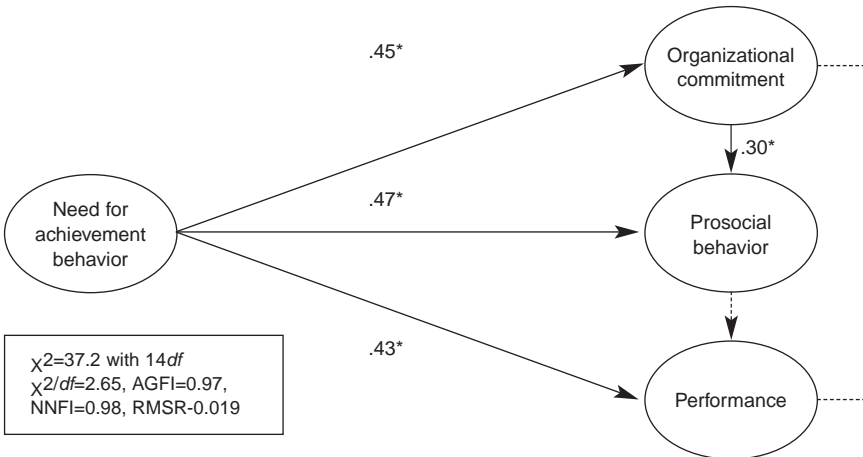


Figure 3: Corrected/final model with path coefficients

nonsignificant. The path coefficients for the model were reestimated and are presented in Figure 3. The final model shows a good fit to the data. However, with the addition of the path from need for achievement to performance, the path from prosocial behavior to performance becomes nonsignificant. In other words, when the effect of need for achievement on all three variables is controlled for, neither commitment nor prosocial behavior has any effect on performance (either directly or indirectly). However, when need for achievement is removed from the model, both organizational commitment and prosocial behavior show significant paths to performance.

## DISCUSSION

Motivation has been one of the most studied areas of research into the psychological processes underpinning work behavior, with a view to benefiting both individuals and organizations. Motivation has been viewed as a crucial variable in the relationship between individual determinants of behavior and job performance. Current thinking is readdressing the concept of motivation and broadening its scope. One recent development in this area is that of research into the self-regulation of behavior. This view sees individuals not simply as processors of information, but as sources of influence on behavior (Kanfer, 1990). All contemporary motivation paradigms have increased the emphasis on the goals of individuals and the effects of their self-systems of information processing and performance. In essence, this approach considers the affective basis of motivational processing and the implications of individuals' emotional and/or personal concerns upon work behaviors.

For example, Weiner (1982) has hypothesized that different forms of affect influence apparently nonrelated behavior patterns, such as helping others. This hypothesis may be extended to consider prosocial behavior in work organizations, as studied here. The self-regulation/metacognition paradigm stems from recognition of the "self-system" as a determinant of action. Research has linked this system to self-assessment and self-enhancement (Strube, Lott, Le-Xuan-Hy, Oxenberg, & Deichmann, 1986). One view of these cognitive processes is that these are in themselves goals and therefore motivators in achievement contexts (Trope, 1986). However, an alternative view has been suggested (Kuhl & Koch, 1984; Trope, 1986) proposing that these may be "metamotivational" strategies influencing work activities as part of a taxonomy of motivation. This view is supported by current research linking general social motivations and work outcomes (Cohen & Vigoda, 1998). The current study extends this approach to self-regulatory and metamotivational strategies by suggesting that prosocial behavior may form part of a metamotivational behavior pattern and may thus directly influence behavior.

The correlational clusters found in the study indicate that the individual's motivational base includes needs for control and power, achievement and affiliation, as suggested by McClelland (1961). Earlier literature (Dunnette, 1973) has established the lack of direct impact of an individual's measurable motivational base on work performance. However, our study challenges this approach by pointing to a direct relationship between need for achievement and at least three outcome variables: job performance, prosocial behavior, and organizational commitment.

Moreover, previous studies into the relationship between psychological commitment to an organization and consequent attitudes and behaviors have

indicated two broad categories of dependent variables that might be relevant – firstly, the antecedents suggested by Kanter (1972) such as motivation, willingness to expend effort, and so on, and secondly, the resulting variables such as the prosocial behaviors of loyalty, reduced absenteeism, reliability, organizational citizenship and so on (Bowlby, 1982). The correlational results of this study suggest that prosocial behaviors may be seen as a mediating variable between motivational processes and work behavior. Viewing such behaviors as a self-regulatory device does not require evaluation of these behaviors as positive or negative, although they may benefit both the individual and the organization.

The correlational results of this study did indicate that the model put forward could be supported. Prosocial behavior was found to be associated with the motivational basis of behavior, particularly the need for achievement and to a lesser extent the need for control. There were further associations found between prosocial behavior, organizational commitment and performance, in line with the results of recent studies (Randall, Cropanzano, Bormann, & Birjulin, 1999; Schaubroeck & Fink, 1999). Also, a weak but positive correlation was detected between organizational commitment and performance. This finding is in line with earlier work (Meyer et al., 1989), suggesting that these relationships are not simple or direct, but are confounded or moderated by other variables.

However, the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis carried out in this study emphasizes the complex and multilayered nature of these relationships. Need for achievement appears to be a primary indicator of performance, with need for control being of little relevance in the current sample. Thus, it is acknowledged that the professional hi-tech sample used in this study may not be typical in terms of the employees' need for control. When need for achievement is removed from consideration, both commitment and prosocial behavior do appear to be significantly related to job performance and to each other, supporting the earlier work of Mowday et al. (1982) suggesting that this is a relationship worthy of further investigation. The motivational picture is one of job performance being influenced by pro-organizational considerations on the part of the individual. Still, the analysis did not indicate a strong fit for this model.

The inclusion of a direct path from need for achievement to performance indicated clear and powerful relationships. It appears that a high need for individual achievement is associated with increased commitment, prosocial behavior, and performance as displayed by the individual within the organization. Similarly, organizational commitment proved highly relevant to the prediction of prosocial behavior and organizational citizenship behaviors (LePine, Erez, & Johnson, 2002). However, in this scenario the path from prosocial behavior to performance becomes nonsignificant, as does the relationship between commitment and performance. The motivational picture painted here is one of a

primary motivator of achievement as the major determinant of job performance. This primary motivator may embrace the variables of prosocial behavior and commitment, but as independent supports for the achievement of individual goals, not as an integrated motivational or value system. Thus, these results suggest that people with a strong need for achievement are in fact willing to help others, but only if doing so is not at the expense of their own success. Moreover, no inferences can be drawn from this relationship with regard to job performance. These conclusions have received support from other research such as that conducted by Wright, George, Farnsworth, and McMahan (1993). In addition, our study supported the notion of a positive relationship between organizational commitment and prosocial behavior as suggested by Randall, Fedor and Longnecker (1990), who found that organizational commitment is associated with high levels of behaviors such as a willingness to share with, and make sacrifices for, others. The results of our study could not support the notion that job performance is affected by prosocial behavior, despite the latter's positive social value. All in all, despite the weaknesses of the suggested theoretical model, our corrected model indicates some interesting relationships among need for achievement, prosocial behavior, organizational commitment, and job performance.

Finally, the hope is that this research will contribute to the literature regarding the relationship between prosocial behavior, job performance, several personality-motivated variables, and organizational commitment. In order to improve the understanding of these relationships, further research should be conducted to overcome some of the limitations of the present study. These limitations include (1) the fact that the present sample was drawn mostly from an Israeli population, all working in hi-tech organizations, (2) the use of self-report measures of performance and, (3) the exposure to common method bias. Therefore, further studies should cross-validate these results and also be conducted on a cross-cultural basis, with a broader spectrum of types of organizations.

Nonetheless, the results of this study appear to justify the consideration of need for achievement as a significant determinant of job performance. It would appear that the variables of organizational commitment and prosocial behavior are related to the motivational basis of job-related behavior (although we must be cautious with correlational data), but not directly to performance outcomes. This finding may have implications for organizations whose belief in the importance of engendering organizational commitment through expensive organizational socialization and induction programs may not be well founded. In order to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of the relationships between individual differences and organizational behavior, future studies should be undertaken to consider the broad and complementary range of variables

involved in different industrial sectors and at different hierarchical levels within those sectors.

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