

Predicting Committed Behavior: Exchange Ideology and Pre-entry Perceived Organisational Support

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A longitudinal field study conducted in a military setting examined the effects of exchange ideology, pre-entry Perceived Organisational Support, and their interaction, on initial and long-term committed behavior. The effect of exchange ideology was compared to that of a solidly validated biodata score which was assessed with a structured interview. The sample consisted of 1,276 conscripts to military service. Results showed that exchange ideology had effects on both initial and long-term committed behavior; these effects were stronger than those of pre-entry Perceived Organisational Support, and comparable to those of the biodata structured interview.

Une recherche de terrain longitudinale conduite dans un contexte militaire a porté sur les effets de l'idéologie de l'échange, du soutien organisationnel perçu avant l'intégration et de leur interaction sur l'implication initiale et à long terme. Les retombées de l'idéologie de l'échange ont été comparées à celles d'un score biodata correctement validé évalué à partir d'un entretien structuré. L'échantillon était constitué de 1276 conscrits. Les résultats montrent que l'idéologie de l'échange présente un impact à la fois sur l'implication initiale et à long terme, cet impact étant plus fort que celui du soutien organisationnel perçu avant l'intégration et comparable à celui de l'interview structuré portant sur les biodata.

INTRODUCTION

A certain degree of committed behavior, in the form of perseverance and tenacity in pursuing organisational goals, is absolutely essential in all work environments. Therefore, the *early* prediction of committed behavior has conceptual as well as practical significance. From a social exchange perspective, which construes enduring relationships in terms of mutual provision of benefits (Blau, 1964), such prediction is complicated when employment offers

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minimal financial rewards and harsh work conditions in exchange for commitment, as is the case in the current study. In such settings, the situational sources of committed behavior are not easy to identify, and individual differences play a prominent role. The present research is conducted in a military setting in Israel; it examines the relationships between an individual disposition (exchange ideology) and perception of the situation elicited long before entering the organisation on the one hand, and committed behavior exhibited a long time after entry.

From a social exchange perspective, committed behavior can be approached both from an individual differences approach and from a situational approach. The former considers exchange-related dispositions as determinants of ensuing committed behavior (e.g. Hom & Griffeth, 1995; Judge & Ilies, 2002; Lee, Ashford, Walsh, & Mowday, 1992; Orvis, Dudley, & Cortina, 2008; Zimmerman, 2008), whereas the latter views committed behavior as a response to the environment (e.g. Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Sheppard, Lewicki, & Minton, 1992; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). Accordingly, human resource practices that adopt an individual differences approach focus on identification and assessment of personal features that predict subsequent committed behavior (e.g. Landy & Conte, 2007). Practices that adopt a situational approach focus on the design of commitment-generating environments right from the start, and on projecting an image of an organisation to which members will feel obliged to contribute (e.g. Baker & Dutton, 2007; Edwards, Scully, & Brteck, 2000; Huselid, 1995; Nishii, Lepak, & Schneider, 2008; Phillips, 1998; Turban & Cable, 2003).

Committed behavior is a course of action that contributes to attaining core organisational goals (see also Lawler, Thye, & Yoon, 2006). The focus on behavior distinguishes this concept from the prevalent conceptualisation of commitment as an attitude (Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberghe, 2004; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). We chose to conduct the present study in an environment where committed behavior is maximally critical—a military organisation where service is compulsory and non-paid, though the choice of kind of service, as well as the decision to persevere in the chosen route, are voluntary. In this and similar military settings the prime behavioral indicator of commitment is engagement in combat duty. Combat (and defense) represent the core goal of military organisations. Their requirement for commitment is pronounced and organisationally more dramatic than in civilian organisations; “commitment to the point of death . . . [or] the unlimited liability clause of military members, remains a distinguishing feature of the military” (Cotton, 1990, p. 53). In such settings the choice, perseverance, and tenacity in combat duty, under conditions of free will and available service alternatives, in spite of hardship and danger, are prime manifestations of committed behavior (Ganzach, Pazy, Ohayun, & Brainin, 2002). They express the

essence of commitment as a force that binds an individual to a course of action (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001).

This study aims to predict committed behavior with exchange-related individual and situational determinants measured long before entry. Both dispositional and situational research on committed behavior focus on determinants measured close to entering the organisation, or later, whereas we extend the time frame and examine determinants measured much earlier. In addition, the predictive utility of the individual disposition (exchange ideology) will be gauged with the standard tool with which committed behavior is predicted in this setting. This tool is a biodata structured interview which assesses a composite of responsibility and independence orientations.

A unique contribution of the study is its strong operationalisation of committed behavior. Our measurement departs from the accepted triple-aspect view of commitment as an attitude (Meyer & Allen, 1997) and its assessment via self-report. Instead, we use behavioral measures—choice of and long-term perseverance in combat service—which we consider as committed behavior. These indices reflect real tenacity and adherence to the core mission in this context. They are explicitly regarded by military organisations as commitment to their fundamental goal, the backbone of their action and the *sine qua non* of their effectiveness (Cotton, 1990; Gal, 1986; Ganzach et al., 2002). Furthermore, perseverance is a strong behavioral indicator, and we measured it a relatively long time—20 months—after the measurement of the independent variables. These methodological strengths are important because most studies in this area relied on self-report. The few that used behavioral indicators (i.e. job attendance, punctuality) reported a short time span (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001) or period averages (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001), and it is unclear whether their independent variable was measured prior to or during this period.

We proceed to present our theoretical framework of a dispositional approach, a situational approach, and their interaction, in the prediction of committed behavior on the basis of measures taken much prior to entry.

A Dispositional Approach: Exchange Ideology and Committed Behavior

We propose that commitment-related individual dispositions are highly relevant to settings such as the military, where commitment is a fundamentally important concern (Cotton, 1990; Lang, 1990). Our purpose is to predict committed behavior with exchange ideology, an individual disposition which is critical to social exchange. Since dispositions are relatively enduring, the

individual differences approach is especially suitable to the pre-entry phase because it can guide early screening by stable commitment-related dispositions. Research indicates that dispositions like self-confidence and decisiveness (Barrick & Zimmerman, 2005), conscientiousness (Barrick, Mount, & Strauss, 1994; Ones, Viswesvaran, & Schmidt, 1993), and commitment propensity (Lee et al., 1992) influence commitment and voluntary turnover, even if measured before hiring (Barrick & Zimmerman, 2005).

Exchange ideology is defined as a set of global beliefs that work effort should depend on treatment by the organisation, and as such, it strengthens people's tendency to respond in reciprocity to support (Eisenberger et al., 1986). The essence of exchange ideology is the conditionality of effort. It can be classified as a characteristic adaptation, namely a general feature of human individuality that is more closely linked to motivation and cognition than are Big-5 type traits (McAdams & Pals, 2006).

The nature of exchange ideology and its relationship to effort can be illustrated by looking at the two ends of its continuum. The high end reflects a tenuous tendency to contribute, due to "increased willingness to base affective commitment and work effort on the favorableness of treatment received from the organization" (Eisenberger et al., 2001, p. 43). The low end reflects non-contingent willingness to contribute, regardless of treatment received. Individuals whose exchange ideology is weak "continue to work hard even if they perceive themselves to be poorly or unfairly treated" (Coyle-Shapiro & Neuman, 2004, p. 153), and "put forth effort without regard to what they receive from the organization (e.g. even if they perceive themselves as being treated unfairly, they will work hard)" (Witt & Wilson, 1990, p. 267). Thus, weak exchange ideology reflects a contribution propensity that is relatively insensitive to situational variation, probably shaped by personality or by value orientation. Note that, technically speaking, an ideology about the independence of contribution from treatment could also imply unconditional avoidance of contribution, regardless of treatment received, or perhaps random linkage between treatment and effort. However, since the latter two involve total rejection of the norm of reciprocity which is considered a universal principle (Gouldner, 1960), they are less plausible. Though such rejection is possible, it is unlikely to be captured by the self-report measures that are used in standard research.

We expect to find a direct (negative) relationship between exchange ideology and committed behavior. Several interrelated characteristics predispose those with high exchange ideology to be less committed to organisations in the long run. First, people with high exchange ideology carefully track obligations and prefer a *quid pro quo* basis of exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchel, 2005). They are, therefore, more likely to feel that they are being taken advantage of due to a self-serving bias, and be wary of committing themselves (Molm, Takahashi, & Peterson, 2003; Redman & Snape, 2005).

Second, high exchange ideology implies concentration on immediate transactions and close monitoring of what one receives in the short term (Huseman, Hatfield, & Miles, 1987), thus interfering in the creation of a sense of long-term obligation. Third, it implies preference for tangible outcomes, which inhibits the development of unspecified attachment and acceptance of delayed gratitude (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999). Finally, people with high exchange ideology tend to be less satisfied with their work (Takeuchi, Yun, Nason, & Wang, 2007). We therefore expect that they will be less committed, leading to Hypothesis 1:

Hypothesis 1: Exchange ideology will be negatively related to initial and long-term indicators of committed behavior, namely to choice of and perseverance in combat duty.

In addition, in order to assess the practical utility of exchange ideology as a predictor, we will compare its effect to that of another pre-entry context-specific tool criterion—a summary biodata score derived from a structured interview. The predictive ability of biodata is well established; it is based on the axiom that past behavior is a good predictor of future behavior, and it is indeed a good predictor of commitment-relevant variables like turnover and retention probability (Barrick & Zimmerman, 2005; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Mount, Witt, & Barrick, 2000). Moreover, many consider the structured interview a superior non-cognitive selection device (Ganzach, Kluger, & Kleiman, 2000; McDaniel, Whetzel, Schmidt, & Maurer, 1994; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998; Marchese & Muchinsky, 1993; Wiesner & Cronshaw, 1988). These strengths justify considering it a solid criterion.

A Situational Approach: Pre-entry POS and Committed Behavior

A second purpose of the study is to predict committed behavior with the initial perception of the organisation, thus employing a situational perspective. Specifically, we focus on the perception of support. The theory of organisational support is a prominent representative of a situational approach to the prediction of committed behavior, because it construes commitment as a response invoked through social exchange with another party, e.g. an organisation (Blau, 1964; Eisenberger et al., 1986). The theory maintains that employees reciprocate when they perceive their organisations as caring and supportive. The theory is corroborated by abundant evidence of positive links between Perceived Organisational Support (POS), i.e. the generalised beliefs concerning the extent to which the organisation values members' contribution and cares about their well-being on the one hand, and commitment along with other pro-organisational outcomes on the other hand (Eisenberger et al., 1986). A meta-analysis (Rhoades & Eisen-

berger, 2002) identified large overall effect sizes for POS on commitment, on desire to remain with the organisation, and on withdrawal behavior, and consistent evidence continues to accumulate (e.g. Saks, 2006). The theory implies that organisations should enhance fair treatment, supervisory support, and favorable job conditions, all primary antecedents of POS, in order to tighten the social binding of their workforce (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

The relevance of a situational approach to the pre-entry phase, particularly of a social exchange nature, is based on the notion that applicants form impressions of an organisation as supportive (or not) before they become members, what can be called *pre-entry POS*. In fact, forming such initial perceptions often does not require any interaction with the organisation. Scholars have long noted that organisations quickly become invested with psychological meaning for people through transference-like processes based on minimal or even imagined contact (Blau, 1964; Levinson, 1965; Selznick, 1957). The imperfect information generated during such contacts serves as signal of unobservable organisational characteristics (Rynes, 1991; Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991). For instance, research on the Realistic Job Preview indicates that applicants are impressed with their future employer even with little early contact (Phillips, 1998), develop attitudes about the job for which they are applying before they start working (Hom & Griffeth, 1995; Wanous, 1992), and create perceptions of the care and concern which emanate from this employer (Ganzach et al., 2002; Hom, Griffeth, Palich, & Bracker, 1999; Meglino, DeNisi, Youngblood, & Williams, 1988; Meglino, DeNisi, & Ravlin, 1993). In other cases, when the organisation is well known within a society (as is the case in our study), so that it has an image and reputation regarding many of its features, its perception among non-members—in this case, its pre-entry perception—is created through social influence even without direct interaction.

Thus, although POS research has focused primarily on post-entry POS, its relevance is by no means limited in a temporal sense. The social exchange process starts to operate when beliefs about the supportiveness of the organisation, however imperfect or rudimentary, are first formed, creating anticipated organisational support (Casper & Buffardi, 2004). We expect that these initial beliefs invoke commitment, and due to the robustness of early impressions they affect subsequent committed behavior.

Our second purpose is to focus on pre-entry POS in a military setting and test its relationships with post-entry committed behavior, leading to Hypothesis 2:

Hypothesis 2: Pre-entry POS will be positively related to initial and long-term indicators of committed behavior, namely to choice of and perseverance in combat duty.

The Interaction between Pre-entry POS and Exchange Ideology in Determining Committed Behavior

In addition to the main effect of exchange ideology on committed behavior, we also test a moderating effect of this variable on the relationship between pre-entry POS and committed behavior, expecting a positive sign for the interaction between pre-entry POS and exchange ideology. Exchange ideology is viewed in the literature primarily as intensifying (or attenuating) social exchange between employees and employers (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger et al., 2001), thus influencing employees' responsiveness to support. The effect of POS on various organisational outcomes is stronger when exchange ideology is high than when it is low. Indeed, research has shown that exchange ideology moderated the effect of POS on felt obligation to the organisation (Eisenberger et al., 2001), absenteeism (Eisenberger et al., 1986), extra-role performance and organisational citizenship (Ladd & Henry, 2000; Witt, 1991), and effort (Orpen, 1994).

The literature regarding the moderating role of exchange ideology on the reception of organisational support is equally relevant to the pre-entry phase. This disposition determines the degree to which people are ready to be committed without regard to what they will receive from the organisation. Hypothesis 3 is therefore:

Hypothesis 3: Exchange ideology will (positively) moderate the relationships between pre-entry POS and initial and long-term indicators of committed behavior.

Like Hypothesis 2, this hypothesis extends previous findings regarding POS to the pre-entry phase.

METHOD

Context

The study was conducted in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Military service in Israel is compulsory by law for 18-year-old citizens. All citizens legally defined as "Designated to Security Service" are screened through an intensive orientation and assessment process which starts about a year before the draft. The process consists of a series of cognitive, motivational, and physical tests, along with a biodata structured interview that assesses potential to be committed to the service. Placement to military units is based on current human resources needs and on individual interests and aspirations, and it is essentially completed before the actual draft. This makes the pre-enlistment processes highly important both for the prospective conscript and for the organisation.

Typically, prospective conscripts get to be familiar with the army well before their draft, due to their frequent encounters with its representatives at military sites, but mostly due to the prominence of the IDF in Israeli society and to the widespread familiarity with its image and practice (Ben-Eliezer, 1995; Horowitz & Lissak, 1989; Shalom & Horenczyk, 2004). Virtually the whole of the young generation in Israel is “familiar” with the IDF. Perceptions of the military service, its climate, and its choices, are formed long before young people are formally conscripted. Strong social forces almost solidify its image among candidates, so that pre- and post-entry perceptions are often not very different (Gal, 1986).

Following the initial assessment phase, 8 months before the draft, all prospective conscripts receive by mail a pre-enlistment questionnaire. In this questionnaire they are asked, among other questions, about their willingness to choose combat duty for the duration of their service. They are required to rank their three top chosen units out of a list of military units. Prospective conscripts typically take this questionnaire very seriously, fully aware that their responses will influence their placement during the service. As a result, the usual response rate for the pre-enlistment questionnaire approaches 86 per cent (Roziner, 1998).

Sample and Procedure

Our sample consisted of 1,276 prospective conscripts who were subsequently drafted, all physically fit young men. Eight months prior to the draft, close to the time when the pre-enlistment questionnaire was sent out, we administered an on-line survey on the IDF site to a random sample of candidates as part of a larger study. The study was presented by a research institute from Tel Aviv University, and assured respondents that it was not part of the recruitment process. The rate of response to the survey was 60.2 per cent. The survey included measures of exchange ideology and POS regarding the army. Data regarding category of service (combat or non-combat) one year after enlistment (i.e. 20 months after the on-line survey) were retrieved from the organisation database. Figure 1 presents the time line of the study.

Measures

Following Ganzach et al. (2002), we used initial and long-term measures as indicators of committed behavior: The initial choice to serve in combat duty, and the behavioral determination to persevere in combat service a year after joining the army. The IDF puts a high premium on combat duty. Though combat duty can fulfill several motives, initial interest in selecting combat service, as well as perseverance in combat duty, given the many hardships involved, is regarded as an unequivocal expression of committed behavior

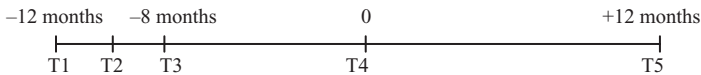


FIGURE 1. Time line of the study.

- T1: Assessment process starts.
- T2: Biodata structured interviews are conducted.
- T3: Participants receive pre-enlistment questionnaire and a request to participate in a separate on-line survey. They fill in the questionnaire and mail it back. They also fill in the on-line survey.
- T4: Enlistment.
- T5: Measurement of combat service perseverance.

(Gal, 1986). Indeed, the pre-enlistment selection process in the IDF is predominantly devoted to assessing predictors of perseverance in combat duty.

Choice of Combat Service. This variable (taken from the IDF database) is the answer to the lead question in the pre-enlistment mail questionnaire: “To what extent are you willing to serve as a combat soldier?” The answer is given on a scale ranging from “to a large extent” (5) to “to a small extent” (1). This answer is an important input to the IDF placement process. Combined with data on candidates’ top-ranked units and prioritised manpower needs, it results in a placement decision. Respondents are aware of this process, and know that their answer significantly influences their placement (in a combat vs. non-combat unit). Therefore we view their answer not merely as an intention, but rather as an indication of initial committed behavior. Though developmental and practical factors play some role in shaping combat aspiration in Israel, its essence is rooted in an extremely powerful normative system (Gal, 1986). For relevant psychometric properties of this measure see Ganzach et al. (2002).

Combat Service Perseverance. Information about the unit to which the participant belonged 12 months into his service was obtained from the army records. Based on standard army classification, this information was coded into two categories, combat (1) and non-combat duty (0). It is important to note that though military service in Israel is compulsory, combat service is to a large extent a matter of individual choice. Though the switch from combat to non-combat units is not easy and might carry some consequences, when soldiers are less committed and less adjusted to the combat conditions (as typically manifested in physical or psychological difficulties) they quit their unit through a formal process and get reassigned to non-combat or auxiliary service (reverse mobility from non-combat to combat is virtually nonexistent). Therefore, we regard combat service perseverance as a measure of long-term committed behavior.

Pre-entry Perceived Organisational Support. Eight items (on a 7-point scale) from the original POS questionnaire (Eisenberger et al., 1986) were translated into Hebrew, and adapted by replacing the terms “organisation” with “army” and “employee” with “soldier”. Sample item: “The army strongly considers the soldier’s goals and values”. The internal reliability of the pre-entry POS scale was .80. This scale was part of the on-line survey that was administered about 8 months prior to the draft. By then the respondents had had several encounters with the army and their notions regarding the service were well elaborated, especially since the population at large in Israel is very familiar with the IDF (Ben-Eliezer, 1995; Horowitz & Lissak, 1989).

Exchange Ideology. Five (7-point scale) items from Eisenberger et al. (1986) were translated into Hebrew and likewise adapted. Sample item: “A soldier’s effort should depend partly on how well the army deals with his desires and concerns.” Internal reliability of the scale was .79.

Biodata Interview Score. This structured interview for biodata assessment is designed specifically to predict adjustment and commitment to combat service. Its format was launched in the IDF more than 40 years ago, and considerable effort has since been invested in its construction, implementation, and validation. Its accuracy has been continuously monitored, especially with regard to predicting adjustment, endurance, and perseverance in combat duty (for a detailed description see Gal, 1986). The interview score consists of an overall judgment and the weighted average of six areas (i.e. activity, pride, sociability, responsibility, independence, promptness) that are assessed primarily on the basis of biographical questions. The interview lasts for 20 minutes on average, and is conducted by specialists who were trained in this method during an intensive 3-month program. A detailed manual provides examples for questions, specific guidelines on how to rate each dimension, and how to make an overall evaluation of the probability that the person will endure combat duty and will persevere for the duration of his service. Applying Chapman and Zweig’s (2005) factors, the structure of this interview is high on evaluation standardisation and on question consistency, and medium high on question sophistication. Due to its extensive validation, it is the most powerful predictor of combat duty perseverance and effective service in the IDF, with criteria validity averaging between 0.39 and 0.42 (Gal, 1986; Ganzach et al., 2000).

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the correlations among the variables. The main results of the study are evident from this table. Both exchange ideology and pre-entry POS were good predictors of the two dependent variables, supporting Hypotheses

TABLE 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Study Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Interview score	25.65	4.44	—			
2. Pre-entry POS	4.30	0.95	.23	—		
3. Exchange ideology	3.31	1.27	-.25	-.41	—	
4. Choice of combat service	3.73	1.55	.34	.30	-.37	—
5. Combat service perseverance	0.49	0.50	.26	.15	-.23	.43

Note: *N* varies between 1,276 and 1,003 due to missing values. All correlations are significant on the $p < .0001$ level.

TABLE 2
Standardised Regression Coefficients for Choice of Combat Service

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Interview score	.34***	.24***	.24***
Exchange ideology (EI)		-.25***	-.25***
Pre-entry POS		.14***	.12***
Pre-entry POS \times EI			.06*
R^2	.114	.216	.220
F	134.63***	95.79***	73.65***

Note: $N = 1,048$.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$; *** $p < .0001$.

1 and 2. Exchange ideology seemed to be a better predictor. Tests for difference between dependent correlations showed a significant difference between the correlations of exchange ideology and pre-entry POS both with choice of combat service, $t(1047) = 2.22$, $p < .05$, and with combat service perseverance, $t(1001) = 2.57$, $p < .01$. Note that because perseverance is a binary variable, significance tests may be somewhat biased, but we report below a logistic regression analysis that supports the results of the present test. Furthermore, exchange ideology was as effective as the biodata structured interview in predicting the two dependent variables. Tests for difference between dependent correlations indicated no significant differences between the correlations of exchange ideology and interview score both with choice of combat service, $t(1045) = 1.02$, $p > .3$, and with combat service perseverance, $t(1001) = 0.62$, $p > .6$.

Tables 2 and 3, respectively, present the results of regression models for choice of combat service, and logistic regression models for combat service perseverance, in which exchange ideology, pre-entry POS, and interview score are independent variables. The coefficients in these models are standar-

TABLE 3
Standardised Regression Coefficients for Combat Service Perseverance

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
Interview score	.56***	.46***	.47***	.32**
Exchange ideology (EI)		-.38***	-.40***	.12
Pre-entry POS		.07	.04	-.05
Pre-entry POS × EI			.23***	
Combat service choice				.92***
Nagelrkerke adjusted R^2	.087	.129	.143	.265
Wald F	61.19***	88.42***	91.21***	129.04***

Note: $N = 1,003$.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$; *** $p < .0001$.

dised to allow comparability of their magnitude. They indicate that both exchange ideology and pre-entry POS had unique effects on the dependent variables.

Consistent with Hypotheses 1 and 2, in the choice of combat service model both exchange ideology and pre-entry POS had unique significant effects. The effect of exchange ideology was larger than that of pre-entry POS; the marginal R^2 associated with exchange ideology was .05, whereas the marginal R^2 associated with pre-entry POS was only .015. The marginal R^2 associated with the interview score was .05, comparable to that of exchange ideology. In the combat service perseverance model exchange ideology had a significant unique effect, whereas pre-entry POS did not have a unique effect. Here, too, the marginal R^2 of exchange ideology was comparable to that of the interview. Thus, these results not only suggest that exchange ideology had a unique effect on committed behavior, but also suggest that its effect was larger than that of pre-entry POS. These results also suggest that the practical utility of exchange ideology in predicting committed behavior was comparable to that of the structured interview—the major variable currently used by the army to predict combat service perseverance (see also Ganzach et al., 2000; McDaniel et al., 1994; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998; Marchese & Muchinsky, 1993; Wiesner & Cronshaw, 1988, for a comprehensive discussion of the utility of the structured interview in predicting performance as compared to other predictors).

Model 3 in Tables 2 and 3 examines Hypothesis 3. In both tables the interactions between exchange ideology and pre-entry POS were significantly positive, $F(1, 1042) = 2.36, p < .02$, and $\chi^2(1) = 10.82, p < .001$, respectively, for testing the incremental variance of the interaction. The interactions are presented in Figures 2 and 3. When exchange ideology was above (below) the mean, the correlation between combat service choice and pre-entry POS was

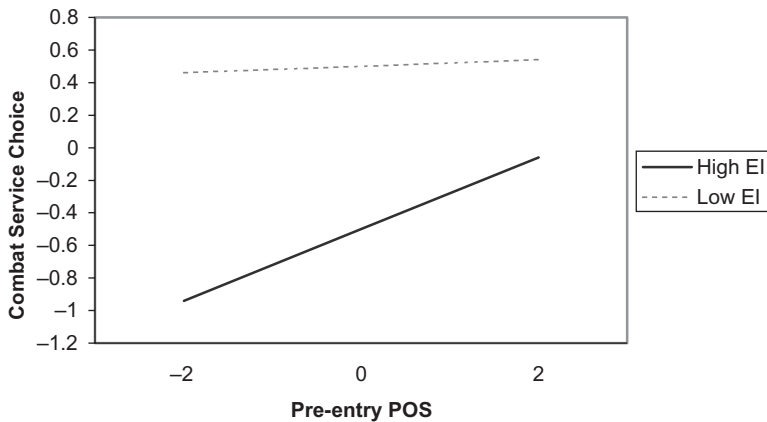


FIGURE 2. The interactive effect of pre-entry POS and exchange ideology in determining combat service choice.

Note: All variables were standardised.

High EI = 2 standard deviations of exchange ideology above the mean.

Low EI = 2 standard deviations of exchange ideology below the mean.

0.22, $p < .0001$ (0.13, $p < .003$). When exchange ideology was above (below) the mean, the correlation between combat service perseverance and pre-entry POS was 0.15, $p < .0001$ (-0.04 , $p > .4$).

These findings support Hypothesis 3. The positive sign of the interaction is consistent with previous research which suggests that the relationships between POS and commitment are stronger (i.e. more positive) when exchange ideology is high than when it is low (Eisenberger et al., 1986, 2001; Ladd & Henry, 2000; Witt, 1991). It is inconsistent with the negative interaction found by Redman and Snape (2005) among unionised nurses and water workers in the United Kingdom.

Finally, to examine whether combat service choice mediated the effects of exchange ideology and pre-entry POS on combat service perseverance, we examined a model in which combat service choice was added as a predictor of combat service perseverance. The results of this model (model 4 in Table 3) suggest that combat service choice fully mediated the effect of exchange ideology on combat service perseverance. This mediation effect is consistent with escalation of commitment in which pre-entry POS and exchange ideology predict initial choice of action (i.e. at T3 in Figure 1), and actors stay committed to their initial choice (at T5). However, two other explanations are no less plausible in this context. One is related to organisational administration. The IDF practice tends to assign candidates who score high on combat service choice to serve in combat units, and candidates who score

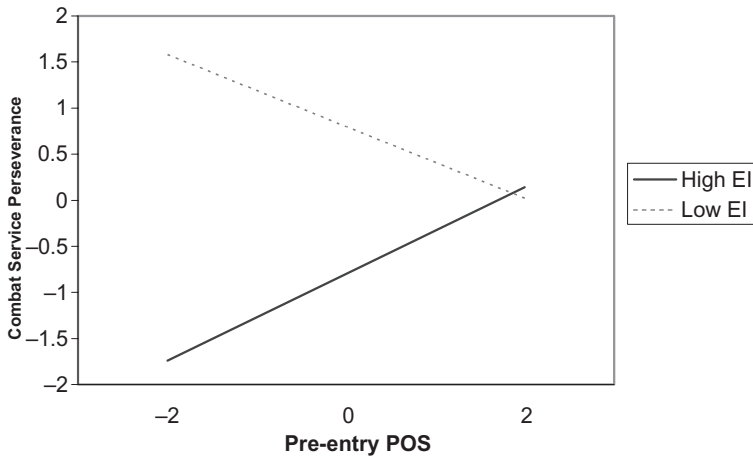


FIGURE 3. The interactive effect of pre-entry POS and exchange ideology in determining combat service perseverance.

Combat Service Perseverance is expressed in terms of the log odds of serving in a combat unit a year after enlistment.

Note: All variables were standardised.

High EI = 2 standard deviations of exchange ideology above the mean.

Low EI = 2 standard deviations of exchange ideology below the mean.

low to non-combat units. Another explanation is that both variables are indicators of the same underlying construct, in line with the logic of our operationalisation.

Interestingly enough, the effect of the biodata structured interview was only partially mediated by combat service choice. The fact that its score has an effect on perseverance after combat service choice is controlled for is most likely due to the fact that the structured interview measures adaptability to combat service in addition to potential commitment.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study are in line with previous evidence regarding the effects of POS on commitment which is expressed in combat service choice, as well as regarding the moderation of exchange ideology on this effect, and extend it to the pre-entry phase. To this extent, they lend support to a situational view of early committed behavior, and are consistent with the RJP literature (e.g. Meglino et al., 1993). Organisations that foster an image of

concern early on raise members' initial committed behavior in exchange for the care and concern that signal support, particularly among members who are highly sensitive to exchange.

The study identifies a strong main effect of exchange ideology on committed behavior, both initial and long term. This is consistent with a secondary finding reported by Eisenberger et al. (2001). Though not focusing on this effect, they included a table where exchange ideology was correlated with punctuality and job attendance. According to the conceptual framework that we present in this paper, soldiers whose exchange ideology is low are unconditionally ready to contribute (i.e. serve in combat). In the IDF such contribution is part of the normative aspect of the ethos which is tied to the historical, social, and national roots of the Israeli population (Gal, 1986). On the other hand, the exchange currencies of soldiers whose exchange ideology is high are likely to be similar to those in other organisations—in this context the currencies might be good relationships with the commander, better service conditions, training and development opportunities and the like.

In the context of our study exchange ideology was a better predictor of committed behavior than pre-entry POS. Moreover, the exchange ideology five-item on-line scale was as effective as the solidly validated, expert-conducted biodata interview in predicting perseverance in combat duty 20 months after measurement. Thus, exchange ideology emerges as a significant determinant of committed behavior, and an effective addition to selection instruments at least in military settings. Two strong aspects of the research, the behavioral indicators and the relatively long time frame, lend robustness to this conclusion.

The exchange ideology scale has several advantages due to its simplicity and low cost, as it typically consists of few—three to eight (five in the present study) items—that are easy to use. It is relatively immune to potential response distortion because of its disguised purpose format, as its content does not seem readily relevant to the predicted criterion (Barrick & Zimmerman, 2005; Sackett, Burris, & Callahan, 1989). These advantages are especially important for organisations, such as the one studied here, which continuously screen tens of thousands of candidates. In comparison to the high cost of one of the best predictors, the biodata structured interview, organisations with similar features are advised to consider this alternative in their selection process.

Let us turn to the issue of generalisability. Though exchange ideology is considered a global rather than a situation-specific disposition (Sinclair & Tetrick, 1995), it is necessary to test its contribution to the prediction of commitment in a variety of organisations. Indeed, the research on exchange ideology that was conducted in union contexts pointed to differences as well as similarities, thus indicating that context matters in this area of research (Redman & Snape, 2005; Sinclair & Tetrick, 1995).

Etzioni's classical typology of complex organisations (1975) is relevant to the generalisability of our findings. Etzioni classifies organisations into coercive, calculative, and normative control, and refers to combat organisations as primarily normative, with coercive power applied only when the normative is ineffective (unions are classified as utilitarian-normative). In normative organisations "normative power is the major source of control over lower participants, whose orientation to the organization is characterized by high commitment. Compliance in normative organizations rests principally on internalization of directives accepted as legitimate" (Etzioni, 1975, p. 40). One could claim that since a military organisation applies normative control, the soldiers in our study comply by commitment. However, the substantial variance in the correlation between exchange ideology and committed behavior is inconsistent with such critique and is more in line with an individual differences assumption.

Furthermore, as sensitivity to social exchange is the essence of exchange ideology, we suggest that its relevance transcends specific types of organisations. Even in the prevalent "utilitarian-calculative" type of organisations, in which "remuneration is the major means of control over lower participants and calculative involvement (i.e. mild alienation to mild commitment) characterizes the orientation of the large majority of lower participants" (Etzioni, 1975, p. 31), employees do notice the extent to which they are favorably treated by their employer (referred to as POS). They tend to react to favorable treatment by commitment, apart from the economic exchange on which their calculative involvement is based (see also Pazy & Ganzach, 2008). We therefore expect that the results of this study will be similar in other forms of organisations, and propose to test it in further research.

Limitations

Several features of the study limit our ability to present a full comparison of dispositional and situational influences. Reliance on a single organisation, albeit large and complex, and on a single layer of members, constrains the situational perspective. Similarity of organisational treatment might restrict true variance in pre-entry POS, thus increasing the weight of individual differences that influence this variance. Furthermore, a single early measurement of pre-entry POS is not sufficient, neither is a test of a single disposition. Though recruits form images of organisations very early, even more so when people are familiar with the organisation, such as the case is with the IDF (Ben-Eliezer, 1995; Horowitz & Lissak, 1989), it is still necessary to obtain several later measures of POS. Whereas the results concerning the relationship between pre-entry POS and choice of combat service are not constrained by this limitation, a later, post-entry measurement of POS is necessary with regard to combat service perseverance. As

an individual disposition, exchange ideology is not expected to vary with time, but POS may vary with changing circumstances and under different supervisors or work conditions. Indeed, another interesting research question concerns the stability of POS over time and the degree to which initial impressions determine later ones. Finally, we suggest that the effect of more dispositions on committed behavior be explored, and that criteria that are less context-specific than the structured interview for biodata assessment be utilised.

To conclude, though certainly both person and situation factors are essential for inducing committed behavior and maintaining it over time, in this study we point to a disposition, exchange ideology, which not only affects the susceptibility of people to situational support, but also directly affects their initial and subsequent committed behavior. Its ease of assessment and high validity, comparable to that of an established predictor, suggest that it should be considered for selection purposes. Our results additionally show that in certain settings exchange-related individual attributes might explain committed behavior more than anticipated organisational treatment.

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