

**Person–organization fit and helping behavior: How and when this relationship occurs**

## **Abstract**

Helping behaviors are vital for organizational effectiveness in highly changing and interdependent contexts, such as young, knowledge-intensive SMEs (small and medium enterprises). Therefore, the research on the conditions under which such behavior is promoted is of great importance. In this sense, this paper examined how and when the person–organization fit (PO fit) (i.e., perceived value congruence) influenced the employees' helping behavior in a sample of 320 employees and their supervisors from 21 knowledge-intensive SMEs in Spain. Results indicated that job engagement was a key mechanism that transmitted the effect of PO fit on employees' helping behavior. In addition, the level of perceived organizational support (POS) moderated the relationship between person–organization fit and job engagement. Thus, when employees did not feel supported by their organization, their agreement with the values of the organization did not lead them to greater job engagement. Finally, results showed that the indirect relationship between PO fit and helping behavior, through job engagement, was not significant when employees discerned a low level of POS. Important implications are derived from these findings from both a theoretical and practical point of view.

*Keywords:* Person-organization fit, job engagement, perceived organizational support, helping behavior

## **Person-organization fit and helping behavior: How and when this relationship occurs**

### **1. Introduction**

In the current environment, which is increasingly competitive and knowledge-based, employees' helping behaviors are especially relevant (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Grodal et al., 2015), in particular for young and innovative SMEs. Helping behavior is a key dimension of OCB (organizational citizenship behavior) that refers to "voluntarily helping others with, or preventing the occurrence of, work-related problems" (Podsakoff et al., 2000, p. 516).

It has been argued that in contexts where "work is complex, dynamic and interdependent" (Taber & Deosthali, 2014, p. 343), helping behaviors contribute to firms' effectiveness. Young and innovative SMEs are characterized by a high degree of informality and flexible structures. In the absence of rigid job descriptions and established role assignments, employees are expected to be flexible, performing multiple interdependent roles and changing tasks (Messersmith & Guthrie, 2010; Messersmith & Wales, 2013; Protopogrou et al., 2017; Rauch & Hatak, 2016) that demand cooperation and helping behaviors among employees (Psychogios et al., 2019; Uçanok & Karabatı, 2013). The cooperation and interaction required to complete the projects and coordinate interdependent and complex tasks make helping behaviors critical (Grant & Patil, 2012; Harari et al., 2016; Ng & Van Dyne, 2005). Encouraging helping behaviors allows these firms to make better use of their available human capital (Rauch & Hatak, 2016).

Research has found that helping behaviors are positively associated with relevant outcomes for high-tech and knowledge-intensive firms, such as organizational learning (Teh & Yong, 2011), employee innovative behaviors (Xerri & Brunetto, 2013), and team creativity (Hargadon & Bechky, 2006). The meta-analysis by Harari et al. (2016) found a corrected correlation of 0.46 between OCBI (organizational citizenship behaviors directed at other individuals in the firm) and individual creative and innovative performance. This results in an improved ability of the firms to adapt to a rapidly changing environment and contributes to their success and sustainability (Ko et al., 2018; Oo et al., 2018).

The extent to which the employees exhibit helping behaviors depends on both individual and contextual factors (Podsakoff et al., 2000). The perception of person-organization (PO) fit, defined as "the compatibility between individuals and organizations" (Kristof, 1996, p. 3), has been widely researched and supported as a determinant of employees' attitudes (Straatmann et al., 2020) and behaviors (Hoffman

& Woehr, 2006). In her review of the literature, Kristof (1996) distinguished two major approaches: complementary fit and supplementary fit. The first occurs when one person or organization provides the other with what it is needed (Kristof, 1996). This fit may mean that the employee possesses the set of skills that the job requires (demands–abilities fit), or that the organization offers the employee rewards that satisfy their needs (needs–supplies fit) (Cable & Edwards, 2004). The second, supplementary fit, occurs when the person and the organization have similar or compatible characteristics (Kristof, 1996). This fit is commonly represented by the perception of congruence between the employee's personal values and the organization's values and culture (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Cable & Edwards, 2004; Kristof, 1996).

In this paper, we focus on supplementary PO fit (i.e., perceived value congruence) for several reasons. According to Messersmith and Guthrie (2010), one of the concerns of the owner-managers of young entrepreneurial firms is to ensure that employees embrace the organization's culture and values. In addition, young SMEs rely less on rules to guide employee behavior (Young, 2012). Therefore, they tend to emphasize that applicants' values match with the firm's values and culture, particularly in the early stages of firm development (Krishnan & Scullion, 2017). Zu Knyphausen-Aufseß and Vormann (2009) confirmed that PO fit (i.e., value congruence) was one the most important selection criteria in German information technology ventures and that the firm's age moderated the impact of PO fit on the candidate's hireability, so that PO fit was more important in younger firms.

While research has consistently found a positive relationship of moderate significance between PO fit and overall organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) (see the revisions by Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; and Kristof-Brown et al., 2018), the influence of PO fit on OCBI, such as helping behavior, is less clear. Some studies (e.g., Wei, 2013) have confirmed a positive effect of PO fit on helping behaviors, but others have found no relationship between the two constructs (e.g., Stone et al., 2019; Vogel & Feldman, 2009).

Since the association between these variables is not conclusive (Kristof-Brown et al., 2018), recent calls have been made for the examination of mechanisms underlying this relationship, as well as its potential moderators (Ehrhart, 2018; Kristof-Brown et al., 2018; Straatmann et al., 2020). To our knowledge, the literature that has examined mediators between PO fit (value congruence) and helping behaviors is limited. In Lemmon and Wayne's (2015) study, altruistic concern mediated the relationship between PO

fit and citizenship behavior directed toward the organization, but not on helping behavior. Recently, Stone et al. (2019) failed to support the PO fit–job satisfaction–OCBI relationship.

In order to address the aforementioned research gap, on the basis of Kahn’s (1990) theory, the present study proposed job engagement as a potential intervening mechanism on the PO fit–helping behaviors relationship, with POS as a potential moderator. The framework by Kahn (1990) explains how personal and organizational factors influence the psychological work experience that drives attitudes and behaviors. For Kahn (1990), job engagement captures “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances” (p. 694). As such, it is considered a motivational construct (Newton & LePine, 2018; Rich et al., 2010) with significant effects on employee behaviors (see narrative review by Bailey et al., 2017 and meta-analysis by Christian et al., 2011).

PO fit enables employees to discover work meaningfulness and be willing to bring their full selves into the performance of their work roles (Kahn, 1990). It has been argued that engaged employees have a broader view of their work role (Matta et al., 2015; Newton & LePine, 2018; Rich et al., 2010), which will be conducive for them to engage in behaviors tending to help others (Matta et al., 2015; Morrison, 1994). Surprisingly, we have only found one study (Rich et al., 2010) that has analyzed job engagement as a mediator on the relationship between value congruence and overall OCB in a sample of firefighters in the USA. Our study extends and deepens this line of research, responding to the call by Tims et al. (2015) for further studies on the role of engagement on helping behavior.

Kahn (1990) also argued that job engagement flourishes when employees perceive that the environment is psychologically safe; that is, when they believe that they will not suffer negative consequences for the expression and employment of their true selves. POS, particularly in contexts in which employees perform complex, uncertain, and creative tasks that require cooperation, makes it possible to create such an environment of psychological safety (Frazier et al., 2017; Kahn, 1990). We reason that POS will amplify the effect of PO fit on job engagement, and that the indirect relationship between PO fit and helping behaviors (through job engagement) will be contingent on POS.

By examining the effect of the interplay between PO fit and POS on job engagement, and the subsequent helping behaviors, this study contributes to a more detailed understanding of the PO fit–helping behavior relationship. Moreover, this research is an attempt to alleviate the scarcity of studies on how to promote

employees' helping behavior in young technology and knowledge-intensive SMEs (Psychogios et al., 2019). We intend to contribute to filling this gap with this study.

## **2. Hypothesis development**

### *2.1. PO fit–job engagement–helping behavior*

In his ethnographic study, Kahn (1990) stated that the adjustment between the people's self-concept and the roles they must assume in the organization generates an experience of psychological meaningfulness, which he defined as a "sense of return on investments of self in role performance" (p. 705). To the extent that employees perceive that their values converge with those of the organization, they will experience self-concordance or consistency between their behaviors and their values in their work role performance and will discover meaningfulness (Rosso et al., 2010). When work roles allow employees to express their true beliefs and values, they feel more worthwhile, valued, and important (Kahn, 1990) and are willing to invest more of their physical, emotional, and cognitive energies in their job (Rich et al., 2010). Leiter and Bakker (2010) claimed that a strong connection between organizational and individual values is necessary for employees to be engaged in their work.

In addition, a values congruence environment satisfies relational needs because it strengthens links between employees and promotes social capital (Raja et al., 2018). These connections with others generate feelings of worth and appreciation that facilitate the investment of the self into the work role (Kahn, 1990).

Conversely, if employees perceive that their values are not aligned with those of the firm, they will withdraw their selves from the work role, they will avoid showing their values, beliefs and feelings, and they will be less willing to cooperate, give, and receive (Kahn, 1990). They may even experience feelings of alienation if the work role requires them to engage in behaviors contrary to their own values (Erdogan et al., 2004). All of this will reduce their level of job engagement.

Job engagement, as a positive emotion that reflects high pleasantness and activation (Rich et al., 2010), expands people's momentary thought–action repertoires (Fredrickson, 2001). As a result, engaged employees have more resources available to help others. In addition, the positive emotions experienced by engaged employees (Rich et al., 2010) energize them psychologically and induce them to act appropriately (Spector & Fox, 2002). According to Spector and Fox (2002), emotional responses determine the tendency to action. Therefore, employees who experience positive emotions are more likely

to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors, such as helping behaviors, while those who experience negative emotions tend to engage in counterproductive behaviors.

Several authors have suggested that employees who invest their personal selves in the job probably have a broader conception of their role (Kahn, 1990; Matta et al., 2015; Newton & LePine, 2018; Rich et al., 2010). This means that they will be willing to go beyond the formal boundaries of the job to become involved in organizational citizenship behaviors (Kahn, 1990; Newton & LePine, 2018; Rich et al., 2010), such as helping behaviors. According to Matta et al. (2015), this broadening is not simply a willingness to go beyond formal requirements, but to consider such behaviors “as a natural part of their role” (p. 1692).

The literature on role theory has postulated that employees’ behaviors in performing their roles are the product of motivational forces in response to their work experiences (Matta et al., 2015). Employees whose own values are congruent with those of the organization will be more motivated and enthusiastic. In turn, engaged employees, conceiving their work role in a broader way, will voluntarily help their co-workers, perhaps because they see it as part of their job role (Morrison, 1994). Based on these arguments, job engagement is expected to convey the effect of PO fit on helping behavior.

**H1.** PO fit will indirectly relate to helping behavior through job engagement.

## *2.2. Moderating effect of POS*

POS refers to the general perception that employees develop with respect to “the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being” (Eisenberger et al., 1986, p. 501). POS is a well-established construct that has been positively and significantly related to several attitudinal and behavioral outcomes such as job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment, and performance (see the meta-analysis by Kurtessis et al., 2017; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). POS enables employees to fulfill important socioemotional needs (esteem, affiliation, social approval, and emotional support) (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). With its support, the organization conveys to employees that it is proud of their achievements, that it considers them valuable members, is satisfied with their performance, understands their needs, and that it will provide them with the necessary resources to cope with stressful situations (Kurtessis et al., 2017).

According to Kahn’s (1990) theory, employees will invest more of their energies into their work role if they perceive a supportive and trusting work environment. A high POS helps employees to maintain

positive and confident expectations about the organization's likely reaction to their contributions and mistakes. As pointed out by Crawford et al. (2014): "Support perceptions foster increased safety because it gives employees the flexibility to take risks and perhaps fail without fearing negative consequences (Kahn, 1990)" (p. 63). Based on this theory, several authors (Biswas & Bhatnagar, 2013; Rich et al., 2010) have argued that job engagement takes place in environments that cultivate psychological safety (i.e., when employees believe that "the workplace is safe for interpersonal risk taking" Frazier et al., 2017, p.114). While PO fit is a key factor of experienced psychological meaningfulness, POS is an indicator of psychological safety (Frazier et al., 2017; Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010). Frazier et al.'s (2017) meta-analysis found an estimated corrected correlation of 0.49 between a supportive work context (including perceived organizational support or social support) and individual-level psychological safety. Although there is research that has examined PO fit and POS as antecedents of job engagement (e.g., Biswas & Bhatnagar, 2013; Rich et al., 2010), we are not aware of any study that has tested the interplay between the two variables. Crawford et al. (2014) highlighted the need for studies to better understand how factors related to psychological meaningfulness and safety interact to influence job engagement.

Even though experiencing psychological meaningfulness is considered necessary for employees to choose to put all their energies into their role performance, a supportive context signals to organizational members that they can express themselves freely without fear of negative reactions to their own image (Kahn, 1990). It is therefore to be expected that there will be a synergistic effect between the two variables. The greater perception of psychological safety derived from the POS will reinforce the positive relationship between PO fit and job engagement. Individuals with high PO fit will choose to bring more of themselves to the job when they consider that the firm will not penalize them for taking risks and when they believe that they can count on the necessary resources to perform their role. On the contrary, when the organizational environment is perceived as insecure or lacking in support, even if employees' values are similar to those of the organization, they will be more cautious about simultaneously putting their energies into the job and, consequently, their level of job engagement will be lower.

**H2.** The relationship between PO fit and job engagement will be stronger when employees discern a higher POS.

It has been argued that employees are more likely to help others when they view helping as part of their work role (Ehrhart, 2018). Since employees with a strong connection to their job (as a result of PO fit)

tend to define their work role more broadly than those with a weaker connection (Morrison, 1994; Rich et al., 2010), they are more likely to be willing to help co-workers who have work-related problems or to assist them with their duties.

However, the strength of this indirect relationship may be contingent on the level of support and safety that employees perceive in their environment (operationalized as POS). POS helps employees to assuage their concerns about behaviors that may be risky and enhances their perception of a greater pool of resources, supporting the creation of a safer and rich environment for helping others (Frazier et al., 2017). Based on these arguments, it is anticipated that the degree to which job engagement transmits the effect of PO fit on helping behavior will be contingent on the POS.

**H3.** The indirect relationship PO fit–job engagement–helping behavior will be stronger when employees perceive a higher POS.

Figure 1. shows the hypothesized model.

(Insert Figure 1)

### **3. Method**

#### *3.1. Data collection and participants*

The data were collected from a sample of 320 employees, and their respective immediate supervisors who were employed by emergent high-tech and knowledge-based SMEs in Spain. Several sources of information were used to choose the firms in which to perform the study: the record of Spanish firms associated with RedEmprendia (an Ibero-American University Network that encourages responsible entrepreneurship), the web records of the spin-offs of the main Spanish universities, and the directory of firms in the main technology parks in Spain. From the resulting list, the management divisions of 100 firms that met the following conditions were contacted: SMEs, from technology or knowledge-intensive industries (according to the EUROSTAT classification) and firms which were 10 years old or less. The 10-year limit for considering a firm as young is consistent with previous studies (McKelvie et al., 2017; Messersmith & Guthrie, 2010; ProtoGerou et al., 2017).

This study was conducted in the context of high-tech and knowledge-intensive SMEs because due to the highly changing and interdependent nature of work in these firms (Grodal et al., 2015; Taber & Deosthali, 2014), workers are more dependent on the helping behaviors of others to complete projects and innovate.

The choice of young SMEs was aimed at reducing heterogeneity with respect to the structural characteristics of the firms. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that the organizational practices and the emphasis on the PO fit could change at different stages of SMEs' development (Krishnan & Scullion, 2017).

Of the firms contacted, 21 agreed to participate in the study and provided their employees' contact details to the researchers to carry out the data collection. The respective managements informed employees about the study and gave them permission to voluntarily participate in it. An email was then sent to the employees requesting their cooperation, indicating the link to the online survey, which guaranteed the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. In order to match employee's responses with the evaluations of their immediate supervisor, each employee had to enter a pre-assigned identification number in the online survey. Finally, the supervisors were asked to rate the helping behavior of the employees who reported to them.

The employees' sample consisted of 116 women (36.25%) and 204 men (63.75%), with an average age of 32.09 years, an average organizational tenure of 3.17 years, and high formal education: a master's or a PhD degree (27.81%) and higher education degree (69.06 %). One hundred supervisors rated the helping behavior of their subordinates; each one evaluated 3.2 employees on average.

### *3.2. Measures*

All scales ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

*PO fit.* The 3-item scale developed by Cable and DeRue (2002) was used to measure PO fit. An example item is "My personal values match my organization's values and culture". The alpha coefficient of this scale was 0.973.

*Job engagement.* Job engagement was measured with the scale developed by Rich et al. (2010). For each dimension (physical, cognitive, and emotional), the four items with the highest factor loads were used. Examples of items are: "I devote a lot of energy to my job" for the physical dimension; "I am enthusiastic in my job" for the emotional dimension; and "At work, I focus a great deal of attention on my job" for the cognitive dimension. The alpha coefficient of job engagement scale was 0.930.

*POS.* POS was assessed with six items from Eisenberger et al.'s (1986) scale. An example item is "The organization really cares about my well-being." The alpha coefficient was 0.959. One reverse score item was worded positively.

*Helping behavior.* Finally, this variable was evaluated by the immediate supervisor with the four items of the organizational citizenship behavior scale (Lee & Allen, 2002) directed toward other individuals. An example item is "This employee assists others with their duties." The alpha coefficient of this scale was 0.897.

*Control variables.* Since age, gender, and organizational tenure could affect employees' helping behavior, they were incorporated as control variables in the analyses. It has been argued that older workers tend to exhibit greater citizenship behavior than younger employees (Ng & Feldman, 2008). As suggested by Carstensen et al., (1999), while for young people the search for future opportunities is their priority, older employees prioritize the establishment of emotionally satisfying social relationships. Moreover, helping behaviors, aimed at improving others' well-being, are considered typical of female stereotypes (Kark & Waismel-Manor, 2005; Kidder, 2002). According to Kark and Waismel-Manor (2005), traditionally, women have been considered more concerned about caring for others and more empathetic, a characteristic associated with greater helping behavior. Furthermore, long-tenured employees have acquired a great deal of job and organizational-related knowledge and skills (Becker, 1964), which makes it easier for them to help others.

### 3.3. Data analysis and results

The descriptive statistics and correlations are displayed in Table 1. The results of the bivariate correlations show that PO fit is positively correlated with job engagement ( $r = 0.455$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and with helping behavior ( $r = 0.155$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Also, job engagement is positively correlated with helping behavior ( $r = 0.146$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

(Insert Table 1)

The reliability and validity of the constructs were analyzed by CFA using Amos 23 for Windows. The fit of the job engagement measure as a second-order construct was acceptable ( $\chi^2(49) = 119.601$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.441$ ; CFI = 0.979; TLI = 0.979; RMSEA = 0.067). Results also revealed a satisfactory fit of the measurement model: ( $\chi^2(267) = 632.254$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.368$ ; CFI = 0.956; IFI = 0.957; RMSEA = 0.065).

As can be seen in Table 2, the reliability and validity of the scales were confirmed. The composite reliability index (CR) ranged from 0.855 to 0.974 and the average variance extracted (AVE) ranged from 0.665 to 0.927. Also, all lambda parameters were significant and acceptable, ranging from 0.677 to 0.983, thus confirming convergent validity. Finally, the discriminant validity between the variables was also supported. As can be seen, correlation confidence intervals (CI) excluded the unit value and their squared values were lower than AVE (Hair et al., 2010). Furthermore, comparison of the measurement model with an alternative model, in which PO fit and POS were collapsed into one factor, was performed. The fit of the alternative model was significantly worse ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 684.711$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), providing additional evidence of the discriminant validity of the constructs.

(Insert Table 2)

The hierarchical structure of the data, since employees were nested within supervisors, led us to analyze the convenience of using multilevel models. The comparison of the - 2 log likelihood of the null model with the random intercept model of both job engagement ( $\Delta - 2 \log \text{likelihood} = 65.612$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and helping ( $\Delta - 2 \log \text{likelihood} = 6.601$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) indicated that it was more appropriate to use mixed models. Therefore, to account for the potential non-independence of the data, we employed mixed model analysis in SPSS entering the supervisor as random variable. All predictor variables (except gender) were grand-mean centered to avoid potential problems of multicollinearity in testing the interaction effects and to facilitate the interpretation of the results (Heck et al., 2010).

Following the analytical procedure used by Tse et al., (2018), the hypotheses were tested in two steps employing mixed model analysis with fixed and random effects in SPSS. Firstly, a simple mediation model was analyzed following the procedure by Preacher and Hayes (2004) to examine Hypothesis 1. Secondly, a moderated-mediation model was tested including POS as moderating variable in the PO fit–job engagement relationship (Hypotheses 2 and 3). The Monte Carlo approach of resampling was used to estimate the confidence intervals of the indirect and moderated indirect effects (Preacher & Selig, 2012).

Results concerning Hypothesis 1 are reported in Table 3. As shown, PO fit was found to be positively linked to helping behavior ( $\gamma = 0.107$ ,  $p = 0.015$ ) and to job engagement ( $\gamma = 0.236$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and job engagement had a positive effect on helping behavior ( $\gamma = 0.186$ ,  $p = 0.029$ ) controlling for PO fit. It is also observed that the influence of PO fit on helping behavior became insignificant when controlling for job engagement ( $\gamma = 0.065$ ,  $p = 0.166$ ). These results provide initial evidence supporting the indirect

influence of PO fit on helping behavior via job engagement. The 95% confidence interval of the indirect effect based on 10,000 bootstrapping resamples excluded zero (CI = 0.005; 0.086), providing definitive support for Hypothesis 1.

(Insert Table 3)

Table 4. shows the results of the moderated mediation model (Hypotheses 2 and 3). The interaction effect between PO fit and POS was positive and significant ( $\gamma = 0.050$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), confirming Hypothesis 2. Figure 2., which was plotted using the process described by Dawson (2014), supports this interpretation of the moderating effect by showing that the PO fit–job engagement relationship was not significant when POS is low. Additionally, the simple slope test found that PO fit was positively related to job engagement when employees perceived a high POS (simple slope = 0.203,  $p < 0.001$ ), while this relationship was insignificant when employees perceived a low-level POS (simple slope = -0.022,  $p = 0.692$ ).

(Insert Table 4)

(Insert Figure 2)

Finally, the proposition of whether POS moderated the mediated relationship was tested. Using a program written in r by Preacher with 10,000 resamples, 95% confidence intervals of the indirect effects were calculated for low (-1 SD) and high (+1 SD) POS scenarios. The results obtained showed that the PO fit–helping behavior indirect relationship was significant among employees who perceived a high POS (CI = 0.029; 0.080), but insignificant among employees who perceived a low POS (CI = -0.026; 0.074). Consequently, Hypothesis 3 was confirmed.

#### **4. Discussion**

Young and innovative SMEs are the basis of economic growth (Messersmith & Guthrie, 2010; Protogerou et al., 2017). For these firms to compete with larger ones, they require a high degree of cooperation among their workers, who must help each other whenever necessary (Grodal et al., 2015; Taber & Deosthali, 2014).

Drawing on Kahn’s model, the first objective of this study was to analyze the mediating role of job engagement on the PO fit–helping behavior relationship. The results obtained confirmed that, in general,

if employees perceive congruence between their values and those of the organization, they will be more enthusiastic and willing to make an effort to perform their work role, which will lead them to behave in a more helpful way.

PO fit (perceived value congruence) has been considered a fundamental driver of job engagement because it generates an experience of psychological meaningfulness (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010). This finding is consistent with those of most of the previous studies carried out in other contexts which have analyzed this relationship (e.g., Alfes et al., 2016; Biswas & Bhatnagar, 2013; Rich et al., 2010). Furthermore, the positive influence of job engagement on helping behavior is congruent with the literature on role definitions (Matta et al., 2015; Morrison, 1994), according to which the job engagement experience causes employees to have a wider conception of their role. This broader conception leads engaged employees to invest their energies not only in task performance but also in assisting others who need help at work. In this regard, Eldor and Harpaz (2016) found that engaged employees tended to exhibit extra-role behaviors, such as sharing their knowledge with other colleagues or helping to problem solve.

As a whole, the support of the hypothesis of an indirect relationship evidences the role of job engagement as a motivational mechanism that relates contextual factors with the employees' helping behavior. Along these lines, Alfes et al. (2016) showed that employees' job engagement mediated the effect of PO fit on the assessments of performance that they received from their line managers. Rich et al. (2010) found that employees who perceived adjustment between their values and those of their organizations showed greater job engagement and, consequently, greater organizational citizenship behaviors (measured globally). However, to our knowledge, this is the first study to examine and support the role of job engagement as an intervening mechanism in the PO fit–helping behavior relationship. Therefore, with this finding, we have advanced the literature on PO fit and helping, responding to how this relationship occurs.

Another important contribution of the study is that it confirms POS as a variable that maximizes the effect of PO fit on job engagement and, indirectly, on helping behavior. In accordance with Kahn's (1990) theory, although PO fit can encourage job engagement and subsequent helping behavior, it is not enough. To be fully engaged, employees must perceive that the organization supports and values them. In fact, the results of this research show that the effect of PO fit on job engagement was complemented by the support and care that employees perceive from their organization. Overall, POS strengthened the

influence of PO fit on job engagement. The perception of fit between one's own values and those of the organization will lead to a higher level of job engagement among employees who feel that their organization cares about them and their well-being. Additionally, the slopes test showed that when employees felt that their organization showed little concern for them and did not value their contributions, their sense of fit with their organization did not result in greater job engagement. Consequently, the indirect effect of PO fit on helping behavior (via job engagement) was also not significant when POS was low.

Furthermore, these results could partially explain the absence of relationship between PO fit and job engagement found in some studies (e.g., Saks & Gruman, 2011). The results of Saks and Gruman's (2011) research on a sample of newcomers did not support the influence of PO fit on engagement. The study of moderating variables (POS, in this case) allows the proposal of possible explanations for the diversity of results. It is possible that, since they were newcomers, they did not have the time to perceive that their organization supported them and cared about their well-being; consequently, their PO fit did not lead them to greater engagement.

With this finding, we have improved knowledge about the interactions between job engagement drivers and respond to previous research calls (Alfes et al., 2016; Crawford et al., 2014). It is surprising how little attention has been paid to the study of the interactions between the potential antecedents of job engagement from Kahn's (1990) perspective. According to Kahn (1992), it is the simultaneous experience of the psychological conditions that influences how psychologically present employees are in their work; that is, their level of job engagement. Moreover, as Crawford et al. (2014) noted, while some studies have analyzed the interactive effects of availability factors and the meaningfulness or safety factors (e.g., Hakanen et al., 2005), the interactive relationship between meaningfulness and safety factors was neglected.

The interplay between the antecedent factors was one of the suggestions of the job demands–resource model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). However, their proposed interactions focused on the combined effects of job demands and job resources (e.g., Bakker et al., 2007; Hakanen et al., 2005) or of personal resources with job demands (e.g., Xanthopoulou et al., 2007), thus neglecting the possible interactions between different job resources. The results of our study, from this perspective, showed that the synergistic effect of two job resources (PO fit and POS) lead to greater job engagement than the addition

of their individual effects. They also showed that in situations of low POS, PO fit alone did not influence job engagement. That is, a certain threshold of support is necessary for the fit between employee and organizational values to lead to higher engagement and, in turn, to helping behaviors.

From a practical perspective, this study makes several recommendations to promote employees' helping behavior in knowledge-intensive young SMEs.

First, attention should be devoted to aligning employees' values and beliefs with those of the organization. This congruence is especially relevant in young firms as it facilitates coordination, communication, and cooperation (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Schneider et al., 1995), which are all fundamental aspects for helping behavior.

According to the ASA (Attraction–Selection–Attrition) theory (Schneider et al., 1995), individuals are attracted and selected by organizations with values similar to their own. Over time, the perception of adjustment facilitates their permanence in the organization.

For future employees to be able to value their affinity with the organization's values, it is essential that organizations provide realistic information to candidates about their values (Kiazad et al., 2014). It is also recommended that firms consider the candidates' PO fit perceptions in the selection process (Cable & DeRue, 2002).

The socialization process is also key to aligning the employee's values with those of the organization. Structured and formalized socialization processes (i.e., institutionalized socialization) have proven to be effective in facilitating the adjustment of newcomers to the organization's values and culture (Saks & Gruman, 2011). Although formalized human resource practices are not common in SMEs, their implementation can be very beneficial (Messersmith & Guthrie, 2010). Encouraging leaders to apply a transformational leadership style may also foster a collective vision and contribute to the employee's values converging with those of the organization (Raja et al., 2018).

Furthermore, since the impact of PO fit on job engagement and helping behavior is conditioned by POS, it is imperative that management act so that employees perceive a context of support and safety. The perception of justice and transformational leadership have proven to be strong determinants of POS (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). It is therefore recommended that decision-making

be participatory and impartial, that the distribution of resources be equitable, and that this style of leadership be promoted.

The fulfillment of the explicit promises made by the organization, and of the implicit expectations that the employees have, is of vital importance, since a contract breach would generate a low perception of organizational support (Kurtessis et al., 2017). In this sense, promoting two-way communication can facilitate the maintenance of psychological contracts.

## **5. Limitations and future research**

This study presents several limitations that could be solved in future investigations. First, the design of the study does not allow the verification of the causality between the proposed relationships, which would only be possible with a longitudinal study.

Second, this study was focused on analyzing how and when PO fit influences helping behavior. Future studies could include other types of supplementary fit, such as adjustment to the supervisor or to teamwork, and examine through what mechanisms and under what conditions they influence employees' helping behavior.

Third, as in other previous studies based on Kahn's framework (e.g., Crawford et al., 2014; Rich et al., 2010), this research considered PO fit and POS as factors of psychological meaningfulness and safety, respectively. Nevertheless, future studies could perform a more accurate validation of this theory by explicitly including psychological states.

Finally, the results could be affected by the national cultural context. According to Hofstede's (2019) cultural dimensions, Spanish culture, in relation to the USA, is characterized by a lower degree of masculinity and individualism (although it is far from the collectivism of Asian cultures), which could favor the employees' collaboration and helping behavior at work. Furthermore, Spain scores high on avoiding uncertainty, which could lead to a more positive response to the signs of support from organization (Chiaburu et al., 2015; Frazier et al., 2017). Consequently, the particular characteristics of the study context prevent the generalization of results and highlight the need for future studies to analyze whether this pattern of results holds in other cultural contexts.

## 6. Conclusion

This study contributes to the organizational behavior literature by clarifying how and when the PO fit–helping behavior relationship occurs. The results suggest that PO fit (perceived value congruence) can lead employees to invest their full energies in their work role and this will encourage their involvement in helping behavior to a greater extent. However, for PO fit to foster a high level of job engagement, it is important that it is accompanied by POS. Consequently, this study highlights the importance for young knowledge-intensive Spanish SMEs of aligning employees' values with those of the firm and of a management sensitive to staff concerns in order to promote high levels of job engagement and helping behaviors among their employees.

**Data Availability** The data is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

### Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of Interest** On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

**Ethical Approval** The procedures involving human participation were developed with rigor and integrity.

**Informed Consent** Participation in the study was voluntary. By responding to the online questionnaire, participants gave consent to the use of the data for academic purposes.

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Figures

Fig. 1. Hypothesized model.

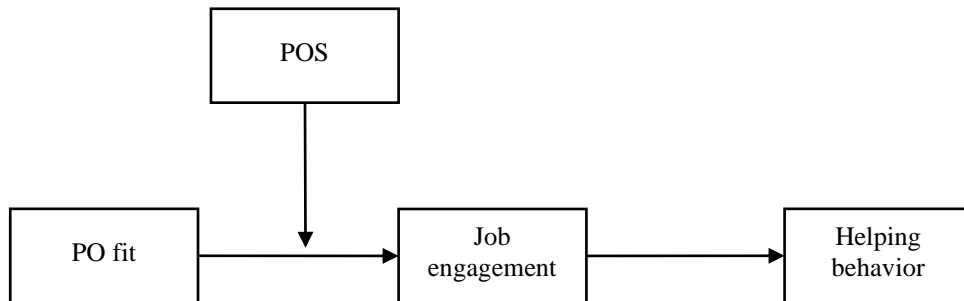
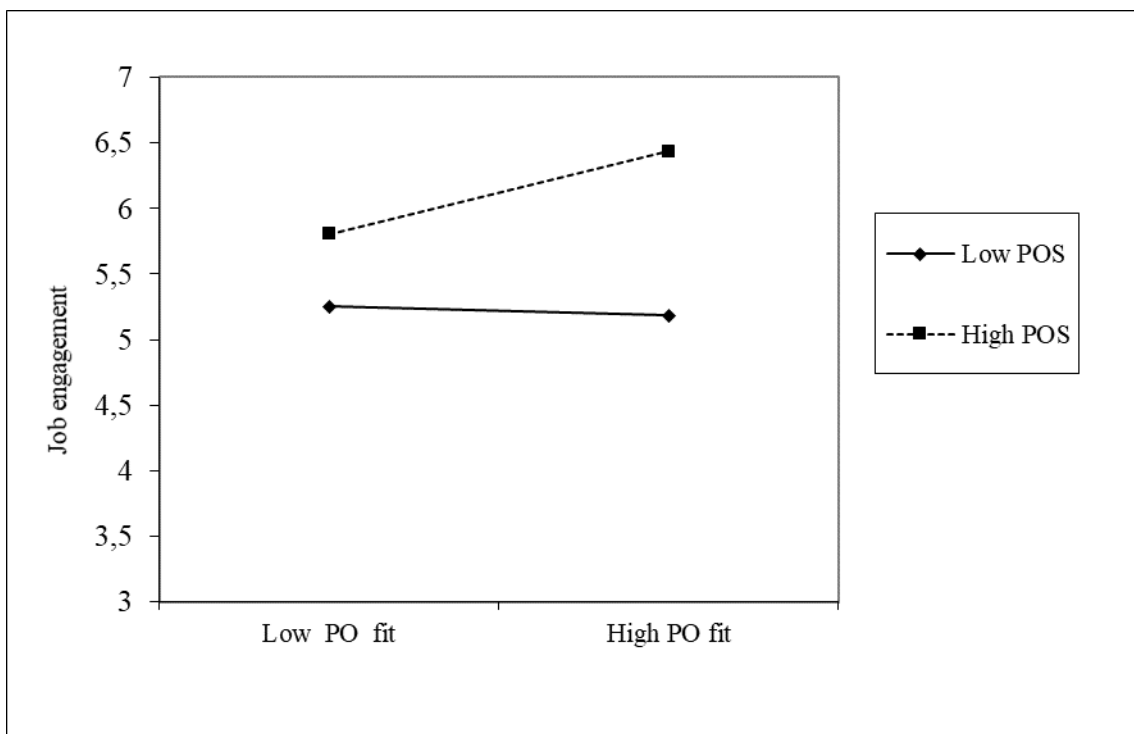


Fig. 2 Conditional effect



Tables

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Age	32.09	6.18						
2. Gender	-	-	-0.092					
3. Tenure	3.17	2.53	0.369***	-0.185**				
4. PO fit	4.30	1.56	-0.002	0.037	-0.156**			
5. POS	4.74	1.46	-0.005	0.039	-0.176**	0.798***		
6. Job engagement	5.78	0.82	0.036	0.108	-0.095	0.455***	0.480***	
7. Helping behavior	5.51	1.22	-0.079	-0.149**	0.078	0.155**	0.097	0.146**

Notes: n = 320. \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001.

Table 2. Reliability and validity of the scales

	PO fit	POS	Job engagement	Helping behavior
PO fit	CR = 0.974 AVE = 0.927			
POS	SC = 0.664 [0.764; 0.866]	CR = 0.959 AVE = 0.797		
Job engagement	SC = 0.160 [0.286; 0.514]	SC = 0.186 [0.327; 0.535]	CR = .0855 AVE = 0.665	
Helping behavior	SC = 0.025 [0.047; 0.267]	SC = 0.008 [-0.030; 0.206]	SC = -0.017 [-0.001; 0.265]	CR = 0.907 AVE = 0.711

Notes: AVE, average variance extracted; CR, composite reliability; SC, squared correlation

Table 3. Results of mixed models for simple mediation

Variables	$\gamma$	SE	t	p	LL 95% CI to UL 95% CI
Direct and total effects					
Helping behavior regressed on PO fit	0.107	0.043	2.457	0.015	0.021 to 0.192
Job engagement regressed on PO fit	0.236	0.027	8.806	<0.001	0.183 to 0.289
Helping behavior regressed on job engagement, controlling for PO fit	0.186	0.085	2.193	0.029	0.019 to 0.353
Helping behavior regressed on PO fit, controlling for job engagement	0.065	0.047	1.390	0.166	-0.027 to 0.158
	<b>Value</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>LL 95% CI to UL 95% CI</b>		
Bootstrap results for indirect effect	0.044	<0.05	0.005 to 0.086		

Notes: n 320. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. The control variables were introduced in the models whose dependent variable was the helping behavior. Bootstrap sample size = 10.000. LL, lower limit; CI, confidence interval; UL, upper limit

Table 4. Results of mixed models for the moderated-mediation model

<b>Predictor</b>	$\gamma$	<b>SE</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>LL 95% CI to UL 95% CI</b>
<i>Job engagement</i>					
Intercept	5.682	0.049	115.862	< .001	5.585 to 5.779
PO fit	0.094	0.042	2.223	0.027	0.011 to 0.177
POS	0.204	0.045	4.500	< .001	0.115 to 0.293
PO fit X POS	0.051	0.016	3.202	0.002	0.020 to 0.083
<b>Parameter</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Wald Z</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>LL 95% CI to UL 95% CI</b>
Residual	0.497	0.044	11.328	< .001	0.418 to 0.591
<i>Helping behavior</i>					
<b>Predictor</b>	$\gamma$	<b>SE</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>LL 95% CI to UL 95% CI</b>
Intercept	5.634	0.101	55.530	< .001	5.433 to 5.835
Age	-0.035	0.011	-3.102	0.002	-0.058 to -0.013
Gender	-0.395	0.142	-2.772	0.006	-0.675 to -0.115
Tenure	0.076	0.030	2.536	0.012	0.017 to 0.134
PO fit	0.065	0.047	1.390	0.166	-0.027 to 0.158
Job engagement	0.186	0.085	2.193	0.029	0.019 to 0.353
<b>Parameter</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Wald Z</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>LL 95% CI to UL 95% CI</b>
Residual	1.024	0.097	10.588	< .001	0.851 to 1.232
			<b>Value</b>	<b>LL 95% CI to UL 95% CI</b>	
<i>Conditional indirect effect at POS = M+1 SD</i>					
- SD			0.017	-0.026 to 0.074	
+ SD			0.035	0.029 to 0.080	

Notes: n 320. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 10.000. LL, lower limit; CI, confidence interval; UL, upper limit