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The impact of organizational culture and leadership performance on PR professionals' job satisfaction: Testing the joint mediating effects of engagement and trust

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the impact of critical organizational factors (organizational culture and excellent leader performance) on public relations professionals' overall job satisfaction by focusing on testing the joint mediating effects work engagement and trust could generate. A national online survey of 838 public relations professionals working in a variety of organizations was used as the empirical data to test the relationships in a proposed conceptual model. Results confirmed the strong impact organizational culture and leader performance could have on public relations professionals' work engagement, trust, and job satisfaction. More importantly, results revealed the significant joint mediating effects of engagement and trust on professionals' job satisfaction, when supportive organizational culture and excellent leader performance were achieved. The study concludes with research and practical implications.

1. Introduction

As the importance of strategic public relations practice has become recognized, so too has the need for a supportive institutional environment to enhance the productivity and work quality of public relations professionals and the overall efficiency and value of practice (e.g., Deetz, Tracy, & Simpson, 2000; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). In addition, recent research has extended the discussion on leadership effectiveness and organizational performance into public relations practice, identified the key dimensions of leadership, and confirmed that excellent leaders are crucial to maximizing the strategic influence and value of public relations in and for the organization (e.g., Aldoori & Toth, 2004; Choi & Choi, 2009; Meng & Berger, 2013; Werder & Holtzhausen, 2009; Zerfass & Huck, 2007).

Though the capacity of supportive organizational culture and leadership in facilitating effective public relations practice is recognized at the organizational level, little research has explored the specific consequences (e.g., engagement and trust) and traditional employee outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction) that such conditions might generate at the individual practitioner level, let alone the complicated relationships those organizational factors could possibly build into each other. To create organizational conditions for public relations practice to succeed, it is necessary to determine how organizational culture and leadership performance can foster professionals' work engagement, trust, and overall job satisfaction. It seems likely that when organizational conditions are supportive

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and satisfactory, engagement and trust could be the key drivers of increased job satisfaction among professionals, among other outcomes. Therefore, the dynamic nature of the situation itself leads us to take a holistic view of all the possible influences or relationships it could predict.

Following this argument, our study focuses on supportive organizational culture and excellent leader performance as two related and essential conditions for fostering professionals' work engagement, trust, and job satisfaction. The three main objectives of the study are to: (1) analyze the influence of two related organizational conditions—supportive culture and excellent leader performance—on professionals' work engagement and trust in their organization; (2) examine the effects of engagement and trust on professionals' job satisfaction as a classic employee outcome (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Macey, Schneider, Barbera, & Young, 2009); and (3) explore the joint mediating roles of engagement and trust in the relationships between organizational conditions and professionals' overall job satisfaction.

To achieve these objectives, we first proposed a conceptually grounded model to depict the relationships between crucial institutional environment (organizational culture and leadership performance) and their consequences (engagement, trust, and job satisfaction). Then we conducted a national online survey of public relations professionals in the U.S. (N = 838) to test proposed relationships. After presenting the methodology and results of the statistical analysis, we conclude our argument by building a holistic model that reveals such dynamic relationships based on empirical tests. Research and practical implications are discussed.

2. Literature review, theoretical background and hypotheses

2.1. Organizational culture theory

Organizational culture has widely researched in strategic management, organizational behavior, and corporate communications (e.g., Ouchi, 1981; Tsui, Zhang, Wang, Xin, & Wu, 2006; van Riel & Fombrun, 2009). Pettigrew (1979) addressed that research on organizational effectiveness needs to pay attention to identify the vital role internal organizational context could generate. Such internal organizational context includes broad and relatively stable categories of organizational characteristics such as structure, culture, and power and political characteristics where organizational activities take place. The argument is the fit between organizational culture and organizational strategy can explain variances in organizational performance (Pettigrew, 1979).

According to Schein (1990), organizational culture is defined as a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that are shared by members of an organization. Such shared values have an influence on the behavior of organizational members as they rely on the values to guide their decisions and behaviors, which further generate an impact on an organization's effectiveness (e.g., Barney, 1986; Tsui et al., 2006; van Riel & Fombrun, 2009). By seeing organizations as socio- and rational-structural systems, organizational members develop a set of mutually acceptable ideas and beliefs about what is real, what is important, and how to respond (Trice & Beyer, 1984). Schein (2010) further expands the definition of organizational culture by describing its characteristics as a shared learning pattern of behavior, which can be transmitted from one generation of organizational members to the next.

Existing literature implies a positive relationship between organizational culture and effectiveness. Denison and Mishra (1995) identified and validated that four dimensions of organizational culture can positively contribute to organizational effectiveness, which are adaptability, consistency, involvement, and mission. Gold, Malhotra, and Segars (2001) confirmed the importance of a flexible culture and structure in fostering the sharing and collaborating culture across boundaries within the organization. Grunig et al. (2002) also suggested that an open and supportive organizational culture enhances the effectiveness of communication practice.

Generally, organizational culture theory posits that organizational culture exerts its influence through shaping the behavior of organizational members (Schein, 1990, 2010). Therefore, organizational culture emerges as a necessary organizational condition to improve organizational members' job engagement and performance. Consequently, organizational members' trust in organization will be reinforced. The relationship between organizational culture and organizational members' behavior is the theoretical basis for our assertion. With this foundation, we also predict that engagement and trust will generate a joint mediating effect when linking to professionals' job satisfaction. Therefore, our first set of hypotheses is the following:

H1a. Supportive organizational culture will increase professionals' work engagement.

H1b. Supportive organizational culture will increase professionals' trust in organization.

H1c. Professionals' work engagement and trust in organization have a joint mediating effect between supportive organizational culture and their overall job satisfaction.

2.2. Leadership in public relations

Leadership is another important organizational condition since leaders have great impact on the direction of, and decision-making within, their organizations (Porter & Nohria, 2010). Long an area of research in management, organizational studies, and sociology (Northouse, 2012), only recently have studies in public relations begun to explore leadership in depth. Some studies, for example, have found that preferred leadership styles among public relations professionals vary by gender (Aldoory & Toth, 2004). Others found that transformational leadership style is preferred by many professionals (Werder & Holtzhausen, 2009).

Zerfass and Huck (2007) pointed out that leadership communication should encompass affective, cognitive, conative, and social dimensions. Waters (2013) suggested the use of stewardship strategies to predict leadership orientation in relationship building. Meng, Berger, Gower, and Heyman (2012) and Meng and Berger (2013) identified crucial qualities and characteristics of excellent

leadership in public relations and developed a seven-dimensional, integrated model of excellent leadership. Berger and Meng (2014) expanded leadership research into a global context to investigate how excellent leadership in public relations can manage emerging issues and how the profession can better prepare communication leaders for a dynamic and uncertain future.

Moreover, research underscores the relationship between leadership and organizational culture. Porter and Nohria (2010) pointed out that executive leadership is the primary shaper and builder of organizational culture. Kouzes and Posner (2012) confirmed the importance of leadership in transmitting the organization's culture and values from one generation to the next, as well as from leaders to followers. Public relations studies have revealed similar findings; an open and participative communication system facilitates excellent leadership and practice (Berger, Reber, & Heyman, 2007; Meng, 2014).

Based on this and related research, we predict that when a communication leader demonstrates great leadership in practice, it helps PR professionals in the organization increase work engagement and trust in organization. In other words, excellent leader performance in public relations has a direct effect on professionals' engagement and trust. Similarly, we predict that the effect of excellent leader performance on job satisfaction will be mediated jointly by engagement and trust. Our second set of hypotheses is the following:

H2a. Excellent leader performance will enhance professionals' work engagement.

H2b. Excellent leader performance will enhance professionals' trust in organization.

H2c. Professionals' work engagement and trust in organization will have a joint mediating effect between excellent leader performance and their overall job satisfaction.

2.3. Engagement, trust and job satisfaction

Employee engagement has received a great deal of attention in industrial research (e.g., Gallup's Q¹² Employee Engagement Survey). Academic research has linked employee engagement to organizational commitment and citizenship behavior (e.g., Saks, 2006). Empirical research on engagement has identified some psychological conditions such as meaningfulness, safety, and availability associated with engagement at work (Kahn, 1990). Work engagement also is associated with important areas of work-life, such as workload, control, recognition and reward, communication and social support, perceived fairness, and valued work (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) suggested that engaged employees likely have a greater attachment to their organization and are less likely to leave their organization. Results confirmed that engagement is important in predicting employee outcomes, organizational performance, and organizational reputation (Gruman & Saks, 2011; Saks, 2006).

Recently, engagement has become one of the popular paradigms in public relations research. Research has explored various aspects of engagement and its relationship to public relations practice, including the important role of corporate social responsibility initiatives in engaging organizations when building business-society relationships (Wang & Chaudhri, 2009), the impact of CEO credibility on organizational reputation and employee engagement (Men, 2012), the expanded role of PR executives in strengthening internal communication to build trust and engagement with employees (Mishra, Boynton, & Mishra, 2014), and the positive impact of internal communication satisfaction on employee engagement (Verčič & Vokić, 2017). Thus, we would like to test whether professionals' engagement will be positively linked to their trust and overall job satisfaction.

H3. Work engagement will have a positive influence on professionals' trust in organization.

H4. Work engagement will have a positive influence on professionals' job satisfaction.

Trust is one of the major indicators in understanding the public's perceptions of its relationship with an organization (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Trust is not only considered an important enabler of successful relationships (e.g., Yuan, Feng, Lai, & Collins, 2018) but also a resource to generate sustainable competitive advantages for relationship partners, both internally and externally (e.g., Weber, Bauke, & Raibulet, 2016; Weber, Weidner, Kroeger, & Wallace, 2017). The critical role in building trust has been verified from a relational view in various communication contexts (e.g., Ki & Hon, 2007; Ki & Shin, 2006). Thus, we predict that trust will have a direct effect on professionals' job satisfaction.

H5. Professionals' trust in organization will have a positive influence on job satisfaction.

Finally, existing research on employee engagement offers inclusive results on how to establish a supportive culture and environment within the organization to favorably influence engagement (Saks, 2006). The above discussion has presented arguments to support the existence of positive relationships among organizational culture, leader performance, and professionals' perceived job engagement. In addition, we suggest that enhanced engagement could serve as a driving force for greater trust and increased job satisfaction for public relations professionals. Given the predicting roles of perceived job engagement, it is possible that engagement could further mediate the relationship between professionals' trust and overall job satisfaction. Such a mediating role has been identified in previous research on employee engagement and work outcomes (e.g., Saks, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Therefore, we propose the final hypothesis as the following.

H6. Work engagement could further mediate the positive relationship between professionals' trust in organization and their overall job satisfaction.

Fig. 1 summarizes all the predicted relationships and depicts the proposed conceptual model with engagement and trust jointly

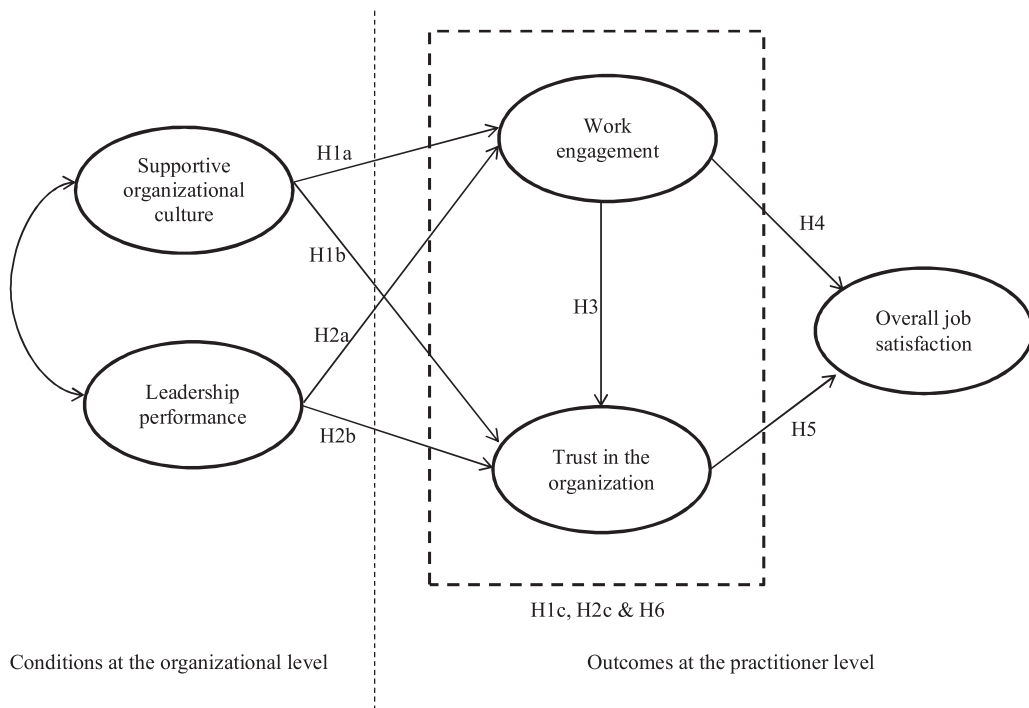


Fig. 1. The proposed conceptual model: The relationships between the key constructs.

mediating the relationship between supportive organizational culture, excellent leader performance and overall job satisfaction. The proposed conceptual model also indicates that engagement further mediates the relationship between trust and overall job satisfaction. The following sections explain the research design of the study, measures of tested constructs, and results of hypothesis testing.

3. Method

3.1. Sampling design

An online survey of public relations professionals nationwide was employed to test all proposed hypotheses. To increase the generalizability of our research results, we used a random sampling strategy to recruit public relations professionals working in diverse organizations through the most current email and newsletter databases of a public relations executive search firm. The current active database of the executive search firm with whom we partnered includes nearly 17,000 valid email addresses of newsletter subscribers who are currently working in the PR profession in the U.S. Many of these professionals are experienced mid- and upper-level managers and leaders who hold or seek top-level positions.

3.2. Recruitment procedure

To recruit participants, the research team sent out the first email invitation to the entire active database (roughly 17,000 valid email addresses). The initial invitation email generated 488 responses with 423 completed ones. The research team sent out the second and third reminders in order to increase completed responses. The online survey was active for one month. By the time the online survey was closed, a total of 949 clicks were recorded with 838 completed responses, which represented a high retention and completion rate of 88.30%. All the data analyses were conducted based on the final sample of 838 completed surveys.

3.3. Sample profiles

The key demographic questions in the survey included gender, age, organizational type, years of experience in the profession, reporting levels, ethnicity and memberships in professional organizations and associations. The descriptive data of the final sample indicated that 51.2% of participants were females (n = 429) and 48.8% were males (n = 409). A significant percentage of participants have worked in the communication profession for more than 20 years (n = 511, 61.0%), and about three-quarters indicated that they are the top communication leader in the organization (n = 253, 30.2%). Caucasians (n = 730, 87.1%) and African Americans (n = 47, 5.6%) were the main ethnic groups in the sample. A substantial percentage of the participants indicated that they are members of the Public Relations Society of America (n = 349, 41.6%), followed by the International Association of Business

Table 1
Sample profiles on key demographic variables (N = 838).

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	429	51.2%
Male	409	48.8%
Age group		
< 36 years	54	6.4%
36–45 years	193	23.0%
46–55 years	349	41.6%
More than 55 years	242	28.9%
Organization type		
Publicly held	342	40.8%
Private	113	13.5%
Agency	119	14.2%
Nonprofit, government, educational or political	234	27.9%
Self-employed	26	3.1%
Other	4	.5%
Years of experience		
Less than 11 years	74	8.8%
11–20 years	253	30.2%
More than 20 years	511	61.0%
Reporting level		
I am the top leader	253	30.2%
One reporting level	382	45.6%
Two reporting levels	138	16.5%
More than two levels	65	7.8%
Total	838	100%

Communicators (n = 130, 15.5%) and the Arthur W. Page Society (n = 71, 8.5%). Table 1 displays a detailed report on the sample profiles.

3.4. Measures

All measures used in this study were drawn from established previous research and specially adapted and tailored for public relations professionals in order to accurately represent their understanding and perceptions of organizational culture, excellent leader performance in public relations, work engagement, trust in the organization, and overall job satisfaction.

3.4.1. Supportive organizational culture

Five items adapted from previous research on organizational culture (Grunig et al., 2002) were used to measure supportive organizational culture. When adapting the measures, we focused on items (or features) best describing the philosophy and the style of management in supporting public relations functions within the organization. Items were adapted and written to assess participants' perceptions of how supportive the organizational culture is in shared mission, shared decision-making power, two-way communication, diversity, and appreciation of the value of public relations. A sample item for supportive organizational culture is, "My organization shares decision-making power among employees/members." All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from (1) I don't agree at all, to (7) I agree to very great extent.

A principal components factor analysis without adding any rotation resulted in one solid factor on supportive organizational culture. The standardized factor loadings for all five item measures ranged from .72 to .84. The Eigenvalue for the extracted single factor was 3.06, explaining 71.17% of variance in the data. The reliability analysis showed strong internal consistency ($\alpha = .84$). All items demonstrated high item-total correlations. The scale mean for supportive organizational culture was 24.57 (*S.D.* = 6.33) with a grand mean of 4.91.

3.4.2. Excellent leader performance in public relations

Excellent leader performance in public relations was measured by using seven items adapted Meng and Berger's (2013) PR leadership scale with six items corresponding to six core dimensions describing excellent leadership in public relations—e.g., self-dynamics, ethical orientation, team collaboration, relationship building skills, strategic decision-making, and communication knowledge management. A seventh item was created to summarize the overall performance of the communication leader. A sample item is "My communication leader provides a compelling vision for how communication can help the organization." Similarly, participants self-reported their assessments on the performance of the top communication leader in the organization. For those who identified themselves as the top leader, the seven items served as self-evaluations.

Factor analysis using the method of principal components indicated a single solid factor describing leader performance. The standardized factor loadings for all seven items were .70 or higher, ranging from .74 to .94. The Eigenvalue for the extracted single factor was 5.37, explaining 76.73% of variance in the data. Reliability analysis showed strong internal consistency ($\alpha = .95$). All

items demonstrated high item-total correlations. The scale mean for leader performance was 36.40 (*S.D.* = 10.93) with a grand mean of 5.20.

3.4.3. Engagement

Work engagement was measured by using the 12 items from the Q¹² employee engagement survey developed and tested by Gallup, Inc. (Adkins, 2015; Robison, 2012). Although Gallup's Q¹² employee engagement survey has been implemented in hundreds of organizations and completed by more than 25 million employees in the U.S., we have carefully adapted the languages of all 12 items to ensure they are highly relevant to PR professionals' job functions and expectations. An adapted sample item is, "I have the resources I need to do my job effectively," rather than "I have the tools and materials I need to do my job effectively." Participants indicated their responses on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from (1) I don't agree at all, to (7) I agree to very great extent.

To further check the compatibility of the 12 engagement items within the context of public relations practice, the researchers carried out a principal component factor analysis with the oblique rotation. The results indicated poor fits of some items within the sample (e.g., high cross-factor loadings or extremely low factor loadings). Therefore, the researchers removed the poorly fitted items from the engagement scale and retained the six items which showed strong and consistent factor loadings. All six retained engagement items loaded .60 or higher, ranging from .63 to .88. The Eigenvalue for the retained single factor on engagement was 3.72, explaining 62.02% of variance in the sample. The follow-up reliability test indicated a high level of internal consistency for the reduced six-item engagement scale ($\alpha = .88$ on standardized items). All six items demonstrated high item-total correlations. The scale mean was 32.12 (*S.D.* = 7.24) with a grand mean of 5.35.

3.4.4. Trust in the organization

We adapted the trust measures from Hon and Grunig's (1999) research. Participants were asked to indicate the perceived level of trust they have with their current organization by using the 7-point Likert scale. A sample measure item is, "Whenever my organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me." Factor analysis with the method of principal components analysis indicated a single factor of perceived trust in organization. All six trust items loaded .70 or higher, ranging from .83 to .92. The Eigenvalue for the single trust factor was 4.65, explaining 77.45% of variance. The reliability analysis showed a significantly high level of internal consistency ($\alpha = .94$). The scale mean was 28.36 (*S.D.* = 9.40), with a grand mean of 4.73. **Job satisfaction** was measured by a single item adapted from the original three-item scale developed by Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh (1983). The single item we used is, "All in all, I am satisfied with my job (Mean = 4.96, *S.D.* = 1.77)."¹

4. Results

4.1. Data analysis and analytical approach

A structural equation modeling (SEM) approach, specifically the maximum likelihood method, was employed to assess the relationships between constructs and to determine the predictive power of the proposed conceptual model in addressing the critical functions of such constructs in improving public relations professionals' overall job satisfaction. We used LISREL 8.8 to process data. The analysis and interpretation of the proposed model followed a suggested two-step process (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). The first step is to estimate the measurement model of all measured constructs by using confirmatory factor analysis, to assess the reliability and validity of the theoretical constructs. Then estimation of the structural model examines the path associations (relationships) among constructs in the proposed conceptual model.

4.2. Measurement evaluation

Assessment of convergent and discriminant validity determines the validation of the measurement model. The results revealed that the convergent validity of measured constructs satisfied the suggested three criteria (Fornell & Larcker, 1981): (1) all indicator loadings should exceed .65; (2) composite reliabilities (CR) should exceed .80; and (3) the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct should exceed .50. As displayed in Table 2, all the indicator loadings are above the recommended value of .65. The CR values range from .84 to .95. The AVE values range from .63 to .78. Therefore, all three conditions for convergent validity hold in the measurement model. Moreover, all the indicator loadings were significant and were highly related to their respective constructs, further demonstrating its convergent validity.

To evaluate discriminant validity, the suggested cutoff of .90 in the correlation matrix was used as implied distinctness in construct content (e.g., Bagozzi & Fornell, 1982). As displayed in Table 2, the off-diagonal elements are estimated correlations between all constructs, and their values were significantly less than .90. In addition, Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggested that the square root of the AVE of a latent variable should be greater than the correlations between the rest of the latent variables. As listed in Table 2, the diagonal elements in the correlation matrix showed that the square root of the AVE for each construct is greater than the correlations between the variables that form the construct. Thus, the measurement model holds solid discriminant validity.

¹ Due to the space, the full list of measurement items are not listed here but can be provided upon request.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics of the constructs and the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement model (N = 838).

Constructs	Mean	S.D.	Range of loadings	CR	AVE	Correlation between constructs				
						OC	LP	EN	TR	JS
Organizational culture (OC)	4.09	1.05	.72-.84	.84	.71	.84				
Excellent leadership performance (LP)	5.20	1.56	.74-.94	.95	.77	.65**	.88			
Engagement (EN)	5.35	1.21	.63-.88	.88	.63	.69**	.71**	.79		
Trust in organization (TR)	4.73	1.57	.83-.92	.94	.78	.73**	.71**	.78**	.88	
Overall job satisfaction (JS)	4.96	1.77	–	–	–	.64**	.68**	.79**	.80**	1.00

Note: All indicator loadings are standardized and significant with $p < .01$. The diagonal elements (in bold) in the correlation matrix are the square roots of the AVE of the four constructs (OC, LP, EN and TR). Off-diagonal elements are the correlations between the constructs. Since the construct of overall job satisfaction was a single-item measure, the CR and AVE were not calculated. The path for the overall job satisfaction in the measurement model was fixed.

** $p < .01$.

4.3. Structural model and hypothesis testing

After confirming the quality of the measurement model, we tested the relationships between all constructs by conducting the structural model analysis. Overall, the estimation and fit indices of the structural model indicated an excellent fit between the data and the model itself: $\chi^2 = 14.67, df = 2; p = .0007; SRMR = .012, GFI = .99, RMSEA = .087$ with 90 percent confidence interval for [.05; .13]. Fig. 2 displays the results of the structural model analysis, showing the path coefficients along with their significant levels ($p < .01$). Table 3 shows the decomposition of effects (total, direct and indirect effects). The decomposition analysis of the structural model offered support for all predicted relationships, both direct effects and mediating effects of tested constructs. We used Diamantopoulos and Siguaw’s (2000) criteria to classify path coefficients: it is considered a moderate effect if the path coefficient is below .30; from .30 to .60 is strong; and above .60 is very strong. The following paragraphs further explained the results of hypothesis testing.

Hypotheses H1a to H1b, respectively, predict that supportive organizational culture will be positively related to work engagement and trust in the organization. Our analysis confirmed positive direct impact with H1a and H1b. Therefore, supportive organizational culture demonstrates a strong, positive, significant direct effect on work engagement (path coefficient = .40, $p < .01$). The more supportive an organizational culture is, the better the work engagement is (H1a). Similarly, supportive organizational culture has a strong, positive, significant effect on trust (path coefficient = .46, $p < .01$) (H1b). The decomposition of the total effects indicates that supportive organizational culture has a moderate, significant direct effect on trust (path coefficient = .29, $p < .05$), as well as a moderate, significant indirect effect on trust, through its positive relationship with engagement (path coefficient = .17, $p < .05$). Hence, H1a and H1b received strong empirical support from the data.

Although the observation of the structural model does not reveal supportive organizational culture having a direct, significant effect on overall job satisfaction, the model estimates still show positive total effects (path coefficient = .38, $p < .01$). A decomposition of the total effects confirms that the direct effect of organizational culture is completed mediated by engagement (OC EN SA)

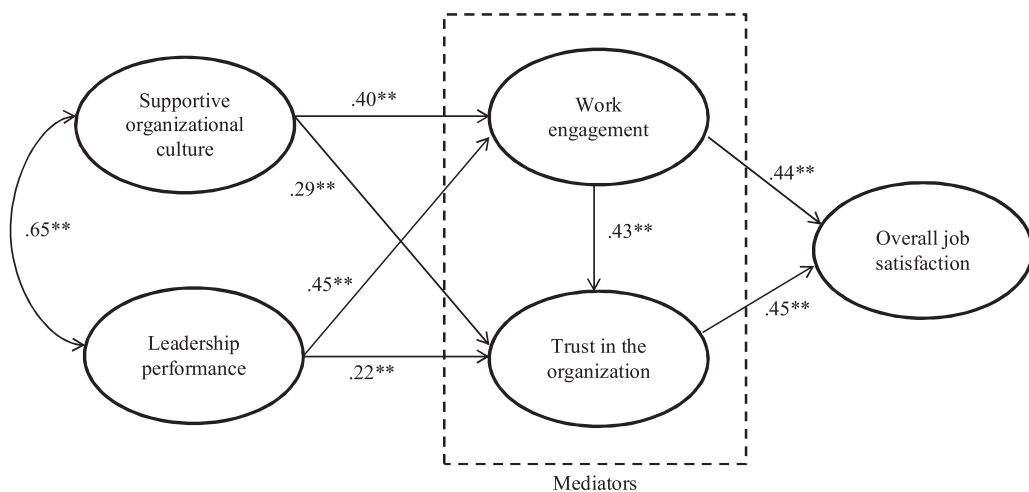


Fig. 2. Final structural model: The impact of supportive organizational culture and excellent leader performance on practitioners’ job satisfaction as jointly mediated by engagement and trust.

Note: All the path coefficients displayed in the final structural model are direct effects and some total effects. All indirect effects (the mediating effects of engagement and trust) and some total effects are explained in the results.

Table 3
Final structural model: decomposition of total, direct and indirect effects (N = 838).

Parameter	Standardized path coefficients (t-values)			Hypothesis support
	Total effects	Direct effects	Indirect effects	
OC Engagement (H1a)	.40 (13.63 ^{**})	.40 (13.63 ^{**})	–	Yes
OC Trust (H1b)	.46 (16.30 ^{**})	.29 (10.34 [*])	.17 (9.89 [*])	Yes
OC Job satisfaction (H1c)	.38 (16.34 ^{**})	–	.38 (16.34 ^{**})	Yes
LP Engagement (H2a)	.45 (15.61 ^{**})	.45 (15.61 ^{**})	–	Yes
LP Trust (H2b)	.41 (14.66 ^{**})	.22 (7.58 [*])	.19 (10.57 [*])	Yes
LP Job satisfaction (H2c)	.38 (16.52 ^{**})	–	.38 (16.52 ^{**})	Yes
Engagement Trust (H3)	.43 (14.37 ^{**})	.43 (14.37 ^{**})	–	Yes
Engagement Job satisfaction (H4 & H6)	.63 (24.77 ^{**})	.44 (14.47 ^{**})	.20 (10.40 [*])	Yes
Trust Job satisfaction (H5)	.45 (15.08 ^{**})	.45 (15.08 ^{**})	–	Yes

Note: Selected model fit indices: $\chi^2 = 14.67$, $df = 2$; $p = .0007$; SRMR = .012, GFI = .99, RMSEA = .087 with 90 percent confidence interval for [.05; .13]. All the indirect effects marked the mediating effects of engagement and trust in the predicted relationships.

* $p < .01$.

** $p < .001$.

and trust (OC TR SA). Therefore, we can confirm that supportive organizational culture presents a positive, significant indirect effect (path coefficient = .38, $p < .01$) on job satisfaction through its positive relationships with engagement and trust (H1c). Hence, H1c was supported.

Our second set of hypotheses (H2a to H2b) predicts that excellent leader performance in public relations will enhance public relations professionals’ work engagement, trust in organization, and job satisfaction. The results indicate that excellent leader performance in public relations has a strong, positive and significant direct effect on engagement (path coefficient = .45, $p < .01$). Thus, H2a was supported. Similarly, the results also suggests excellent leader performance has a significant direct effect (path coefficient = .22, $p < .05$) and a significant indirect effect (path coefficient = .19, $p < .05$) as mediated by engagement on trust. We can conclude that excellent leader performance has a strong, positive and significant total effect on professionals’ trust in organizations (path coefficient = .42, $p < .01$). H2b was supported.

The results of H2c revealed a similar pattern of the strong mediating role of engagement and trust in the relationships of tested constructs. The direct effect of excellent leader performance on job satisfaction was completely mediated by engagement (LP → EN → SA) and trust (LP → TR → SA), resulting in a strong, positive and significant indirect effect (as well as a total effect) on job satisfaction (path coefficient = .38, $p < .01$). Thus, H2c was supported.

H3, H4, H5 and H6 obtained empirical support from the data. H3 predicts that perceived job engagement will enhance trust in the organization. The path coefficient is strong, positive and significant (path coefficient = .43, $p < .01$). A similar result emerges for trust (H5), which also has a positive, significant direct effect on overall job satisfaction (path coefficient = .45, $p < .01$). Finally, the decomposition of the total effects of engagement on overall job satisfaction indicates both a direct effect (path coefficient = .44, $p < .01$) (H4) and an indirect effect (path coefficient = .20, $p < .05$) via the positive relationship with trust (EN → TR → SA) (H6). We conclude that engagement presents the strongest total effect on job satisfaction (path coefficient = .63, $p < .01$) through its positive relationship with trust. Hence, hypotheses 3–6 were supported.

In addition, to further confirm the joint mediating effects engagement and trust have already presented in the final structural model, we created two submodels that are related hierarchically to our final model. In Submodel 1 (as displayed in Fig. 3), we tested the impact of organizational factors (supportive organizational culture and excellent leader performance) on professionals’ overall job satisfaction by looking into the single mediating effect of trust. Results confirmed positive relationships among the tested

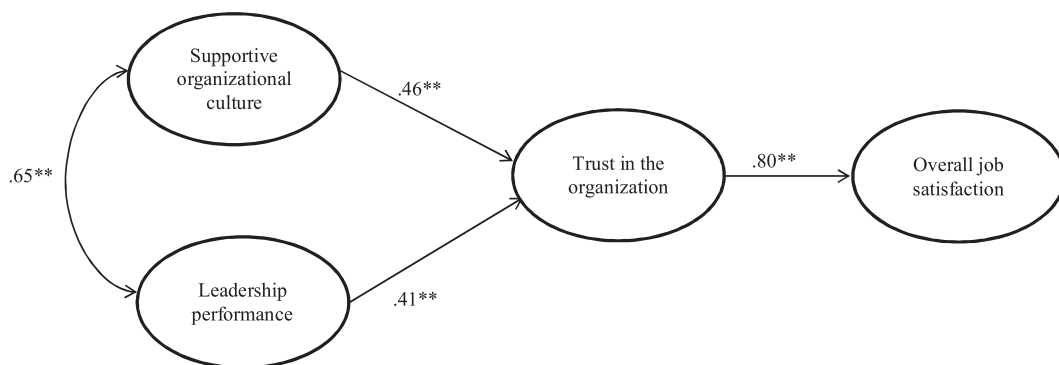


Fig. 3. Submodel 1: The impact of supportive organizational culture and excellent leader performance on practitioners’ job satisfaction as solely mediated by trust in organization.

Note: ** $p < .01$.

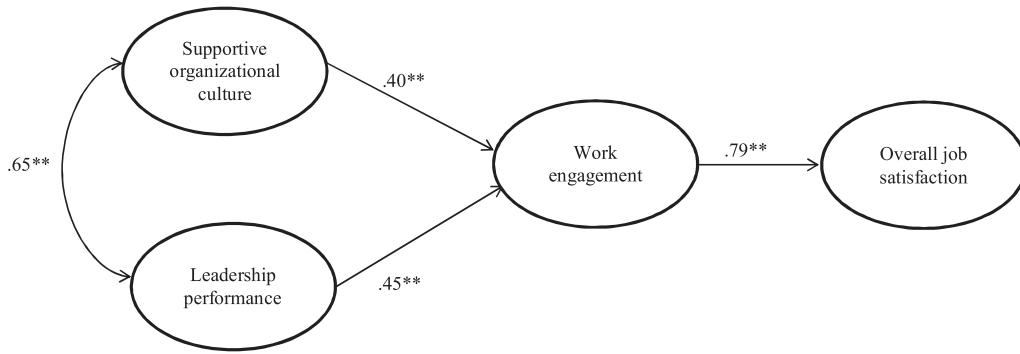


Fig. 4. Submodel 2: The impact of supportive organizational culture and excellent leader performance on practitioners’ job satisfaction as solely mediated by engagement.

Note: ** $p < .01$.

variables ($\beta = .46, .41, \&.80$, respectively, $p < .01$) and showed strong single mediating effect of trust between organizational factors and professionals’ job satisfaction. Supportive organizational culture generated a positive indirect effect ($\beta = .36, p < .05$) on job satisfaction via the mediating role of trust. Similarly, excellent leader performance also generated a positive indirect effect ($\beta = .33, p < .05$) on job satisfaction via the mediating role of trust. Thus, we can confirm that trust is an important mediator in helping professionals leverage their job satisfaction.

In Submodel 2 (as displayed in Fig. 4), we tested similar relationships by looking into the single mediating effect of work engagement. Results confirmed positive relationships among supportive organizational culture and excellent leader performance on professionals’ job satisfaction as mediated by engagement ($\beta = .40, .45, \&.79$, respectively, $p < .01$) and showed strong single mediating effect of trust between organizational factors and professionals’ job satisfaction. Supportive organizational culture generated a positive indirect effect ($\beta = .31, p < .05$) on job satisfaction via the mediating role of engagement. Similarly, excellent leader performance also generated a positive indirect effect ($\beta = .36, p < .05$) on job satisfaction via the mediating role of engagement. Thus, we also confirm that engagement is an important mediator to improve professionals’ perceived job satisfaction.

Thus, the comparison between the two submodels and the final structural model showed that, when organizations build up a supportive culture in communication and demonstrate excellent leadership performance in public relations, professionals’ overall job satisfaction increase as a consequence of the joint mediating effects of trust and job engagement. More importantly, engagement is such a crucial individual indicator that could further mediate the role of trust in improving job satisfaction. Therefore, we concluded that the final structural model is the best of the three nested models: trust in organization and work engagement will have an important joint mediating effect on professionals’ job satisfaction when supportive organizational culture and excellent leader performance are achieved. Table 4 shows the goodness-of-fit indexes of all three nested models and Chi-square difference tests.

In conclusion, the measured constructs present strong positive relationships as proposed in the conceptual model. Though the results did not yield positive, direct effects of supportive organizational culture and excellent leader performance on overall job satisfaction, it is important for us to identify the strong mediating roles of engagement and trust in the relationships. Therefore, we can conclude that as two strongly correlated constructs, supportive organizational culture and excellent leader performance have significant impact (both direct and indirect) on public relations professionals’ work engagement and trust in their organizations. Meanwhile, work engagement and trust significantly mediate the impact of organizational culture and excellent leader performance on overall job satisfaction. Additionally, engagement mediates the impact of trust on job satisfaction, which further confirms the importance of enhancing engagement. Fig. 2 displays the results of the structural model analysis, showing the path coefficients of some total and direct effects along with their significant level. The path coefficients of all total, direct and indirect effects can be found in Table 3.

Table 4
Submodels and final structural model (N = 838): the single and joint mediating effects.

Model summarization	χ^2	NFI	NNFI	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Submodel 1: the single mediating effect of trust	68.82	.97	.92	.97	.04	.20
Submodel 2: the single mediating effect of engagement	79.83	.97	.90	.97	.05	.21
Final model: the joint mediating effect of trust and engagement	14.67	1.00	.99	1.00	.01	.09

Note: Chi-square difference tests indicated that the final model showing the joint mediating effect of trust and engagement was preferred to submodel 1 ($\Delta\chi^2 = 54.14, p < .01$) and submodel 2 ($\Delta\chi^2 = 65.16, p < .01$) when trust and engagement was presented separately as the single mediator in the relationships. In addition, all the model fit indexes showed the final model represented the preferred and most acceptable model.

5. Discussion

There has been a great deal of interest in employee engagement recently in public relations research. Verčič and Vokić (2017) confirmed the critical role of having satisfactory internal communication in increasing employee engagement. At the same time, the volume of research on how best to develop organizational factors (e.g., supportive organizational culture and excellent leadership in public relations) to improve effective practice in public relations is growing. Such factors have been confirmed as critical ways of establishing a clear direction for effective communication management (Berger & Meng, 2014). Therefore, a central question is raised: Can supportive organizational culture and excellent leader performance contribute to creating the conditions (e.g., enhanced engagement and trust in the organization) to improve professionals' overall job satisfaction?

From this perspective, our research has explored the complicated relationships among those critical organizational factors (i.e., organizational culture and leadership effectiveness), and professionals' work engagement, trust and job satisfaction. Of all the possible influences these constructs can exert on each other, work engagement has perhaps the greatest impact (direct, indirect, single mediating, and joint mediating) at the individual level. Thus, our study makes a number of contributions to this emerging and important area.

The first objective of our study was to analyze the extent to which supportive organizational culture could generate a positive impact on professionals' work engagement and trust. Results confirmed that the existence of such organizational factors is antecedent to enhanced engagement and trust. In this regard, a supportive culture that understands the value of public relations, shares decision-making power, practices two-way communication, and embraces diversity is crucial. This kind of culture leads PR professionals to believe that their engagement and trust are essential for organizational performance and development.

Second, our study confirmed that strong performance demonstrated by the top communication leader in the organization affects professionals' engagement and trust. In this regard, excellent leader performance in the communication unit drives the organization to value the importance and contribution of public relations, resulting in increased confidence among professionals. Critical attributes and qualities of excellent leadership in public relations leaders such as 1) providing a compelling vision for how communication can help the organization, 2) being actively involved in the organization's strategic decision-making processes, and 3) possessing strategic communication knowledge, enhance professionals' work engagement, which further increases their trust. Hence, organizations with an effective communication leader who can articulate and create the conditions for strong leadership seem to be more effective in engaging professionals and increasing their trust level.

Third, the results of this study indicated that crucial organizational conditions (i.e., supportive organizational culture and excellent leader performance) still have an indirect influence on professionals' overall job satisfaction, through positive mediating relationships with engagement and trust. Such results confirm the strong mediating role of engagement and trust in predicting satisfaction. In particular, engagement and trust predict job satisfaction when the organization presents a supportive culture for public relations practice and when the communication leader is effective.

Furthermore, results suggested that engagement is a much stronger predictor of professionals' job satisfaction through its direct influence on building trust in organization. As the hypotheses proposed, when an organization is characterized by supportive culture and strong communications leadership, it is more conducive to employee engagement, which, in turn, positively affects trust and job satisfaction. Such findings are consistent with previous research on employee engagement: engagement mediates the relationship between antecedents and consequences within the organizational context (e.g., Saks, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Finally, as indicated in the structural model, the results of this study suggest that engagement is an important factor in fostering professionals' positive attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. Professionals who perceive higher organizational support and stronger communication leadership are more likely to be actively engaged in their work and organization. In addition, professionals who have higher perceptions of engagement are more likely to trust their organization and the organization's decisions and capabilities, which contribute to their overall job satisfaction in a reciprocal manner.

6. Implications for research and practice

In part, this research supports a growing and historical body of evidence that the quality and type of organizational culture, along with the quality of supervisors and leaders in organizations, influences employee engagement, trust, job satisfaction, retention, productivity, and internal reputation, among other factors as suggested in previous research (Berger, 2014). Thus, perhaps some critical questions for future research in this area are: Why don't organizations act on this research knowledge and develop richer, more supportive cultures and more excellent leaders? What are the barriers to achieving such cultures and leaders, and how can they be reduced or eliminated?

Similarly, the antecedents or drivers of employee engagement have been well documented by the Gallup studies and other researchers (e.g., Robinson, Perryman, & Hayday, 2004; Saks, 2006; Verčič & Vokić, 2017). Some of these drivers include the quality of employee-supervisor relationship, communication climate, quality of internal communication, training and development, and a sense of future possibilities in an organization—all of which contribute to the central construct in engagement, i.e., feeling valued and involved (Robinson et al., 2004). Future research could consider the same questions as above: Why have organizations failed to act on this knowledge, and what are the barriers that must be overcome?

In the end, our research focuses on the role of leadership as demonstrated by PR leaders. We want to better understand what constitutes excellent leadership and how we might enhance the development of young leaders to prepare them for a challenging and uncertain future. Leadership represents a rich source of human capital that, as our findings here suggest, can yield positive benefits for organizations in terms of trust, engagement, job satisfaction and cultural factors. So how, for example, can public relations leaders

help create a rich, supportive culture for their teams and organizational employees? How can leaders become more effective change agents? Professionals are certainly aware of the importance of managing change as evidenced in a recent global study, where improved change management skills were listed as one of the top two areas of greatest skills/needs for future leaders (Berger & Meng, 2014).

The results of our study also have some practical implications. A supportive culture and a strong leadership performance in public relations facilitate the organization's communication and development initiatives to increase professionals' work engagement. This type of productive work environment leads professionals to believe that their active engagement, via their enhanced trust in organization, is essential not only for their own job satisfaction at the individual level, but also for competitive advantage at the organizational level (Porter & Nohria, 2010). Thus, PR leaders who wish to improve professionals' engagement should focus on advocating a supportive culture that encourages open communication and shared power within the organization, as well as building their own leadership capabilities as expected by the professionals.

At the same time, PR leaders who better understand the antecedents of employee engagement, and who strategically act on them, may help strengthen engagement, trust and job satisfaction among their team members and organizational employees. Public relations managers and leaders can help their organizations create processes and practices that encourage and involve employees in decision-making and best-practice sharing. The payoff is likely greater trust, higher levels of engagement, a more inclusive culture, and better decisions. Professionals can also help arm front-line supervisors with skills to help them facilitate power sharing in their teams, as well as across the organization.

An additional contribution of this paper is to delve into the theory on the holistic relationships between organizational factors—organizational culture and excellent leader performance—and employee outcomes—engagement, trust, and job satisfaction through an extensive literature review and empirical test. A number of anticipated effects among these constructs were tested and confirmed in our study. These provide a strong foundation to further develop organizational theories that would better explain how leadership in PR practice can influence conditions at the organizational level and performance at the individual level.

7. Limitations and future research

Similar to other empirical research in public relations, the results of our study should be interpreted in light of its limitations. Though we were able to obtain a final sample of higher-level professionals in the field to ascertain their views and perceptions about organizational culture, leadership, engagement, trust, and job satisfaction, the research design of this study is cross-sectional and self-reported, which may suffer the effects of common method bias and limit the conclusions. Future research can address this issue by using a longitudinal design and a mixed design of self-report data and observed data.

Second, our study analyzed professionals' general perceptions on work engagement by adapting a common engagement measure developed by Gallup. Other studies have demonstrated that such views and perceptions may vary by years of experience, hierarchical level, age, and gender, among other demographics. In this regard, future studies can explore more specific scenarios of engagement in public relations practice in order to take full advantage of each engagement approach to maximize professionals' performance.

Our survey centers on organizations and public relations professionals in the U.S., so potential cultural limitations may exist. Therefore, future research could target different cultural contexts, in order to validate the results and the predicting power of our model for a broader spectrum of cultures and societies. Finally, this survey research also is limited in that it doesn't provide a qualitative context and depth insights about the key constructs and relationships examined. Qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews could illuminate such barriers and provide more informed implications for practice.

In conclusion, our study confirms the strong effects (both direct and indirect) of organizational culture and leader performance on public relations professionals' work engagement and trust, with an ultimate goal of increased job satisfaction. The significant joint mediating function of trust and engagement in increasing professionals' job satisfaction cannot be underestimated. In today's organizational environment, organizational leaders must utilize all possible sources and approaches in engaging employees in order to establish their trust in organization in such a rapidly changing communication environment. With such focus, professionals will perform at their highest level within and across the organizations.

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